

## **Jeremiah 4:1-7 – What does real repentance look like?**

Poole, Delitzsch, Gaebelein, Armstrong, HebrewLexicon, TSK, Geneva, Trapp, Barnes, JFB, Clarke, INT, Henry, Calvin, Gill?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: **God's bride sinned greatly. She became a serial spiritual adulterer – an idolater.** Graciously, God called her to repent. But God did not want fake repentance from her. It had to be real. It had to be known. It had to be visible.

This is what you will hear about today.

Our headings are:

**The Word of Repentance**

**The Work of Repentance**

**The Urgency of Repentance**

Our goals are: **You will challenge the Church of Jesus Christ to repent in word and deed, and to do so urgently, so the church can be spared from more severe suffering and resume the work of multiplying and building God's kingdom.**

### **The Word of Repentance**

1 **"If you will return,** O Israel," says the LORD, "Return to Me; And if you will put away **your abominations** out of My sight, **Then you shall not be moved.** 2 And **you shall swear,** 'The LORD lives,' **In truth,** in judgment, and in righteousness; **The nations shall bless themselves in Him,** And **in Him they shall glory.**"

**1. God promised his bride if she repented, she would permanently remain in the marriage home – she would never be moved.**

God didn't have to take his adulterous bride back and offer her an opportunity to repent, but love caused him to do it.

**She was a provable idolater!**

Ezekiel 14:3 "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?"

**Yet God promised his bride would never be moved! He would never divorce her and she would avoid captivity.**

She would not be moved to and fro, like the Jews who ran to every green tree to offer abominable sacrifices to their idols.

**2. God's bride had to repent on oath, not just say a simple "I repent!"**

Swearing is an act of worship in which you use God's name, you speak the truth, and you do it solemnly.

What did she have to swear?

**a. She had to swear she would remove her abominations from before God's face.**

**b. She had to swear that God lives in truth (integrity), judgment, and righteousness.**

**c. She had to swear it was God who brings blessings to the nations, not Baal!**

Baals were detestable gods...abominations.

Genesis 12: 3 **I will bless those who bless you**, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God repeated that promise of the other nations coming to him not only to Jeremiah but **before captivity and after captivity.**

Isaiah 2:3 **Many people shall come** and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; **He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.**" For **out of Zion shall go forth the law**, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Zechariah 8:22 Yes, many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, And to pray before the LORD.' 23 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days **ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man**, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

**d. She had to swear the nations which comes must give glory to God, not to Baal!**

## **5. Lessons:**

**a. While you are required to confess your sins with your mouths, it is too easy to merely say you are sorry for your sins. You must make it a solemn promise (Profession of Faith) and actually show it by actions.**

So if you are sorry for adultery, you have to be faithful to your spouse! If you are sorry for dishonoring your parents, you have to love and support them. If you are sorry for breaking the Sabbath, you have to gather for worship and stop abusing the Sabbath by shopping.

In other words, God's election and salvation must never be taken to mean you can live however you want.

**b. Confessing with your mouth and then staying close to God, is the only way the church will multiply and bring praise to God.**

**c. As God used Israel to be a blessing to the nations, so must you be.** Are you? Are you welcoming the stranger? Are you teaching them? Do you invite them to your house? Are you urging them to repent? That's what promotes God's kingdom.

### **The Work of Repentance**

3 For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: "**Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns.** 4 **Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,** And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings."

**1. In order to show repentance, God's people had to "break up fallow ground" and not "sow among thorns."**

**a. "Fallow ground" was ground that was not planted.** The grains that fell off the plants the year before were allowed to grow without plowing.

So God meant **Jewish hearts had become hard as fallow ground and needed to be dug-up so the soil of their hearts could produce fruits. God wanted his seed to grow in good hearts.** They only had scraps of ritual obedience.

**b. "To sow among thorns"** meant the good plants were choked.

So the good seed of the word would be choked out by worldly cares. **God wanted his seed to grow without the encumbrances of the world. The Jews had to set aside their craving for wealth and success and other lusts of life – things that crowded the word.**

This was what **God said to the northern 10 ½ tribes before their captivity.** This is what he wanted from Judah.

Hosea 10:12 **Sow for yourselves righteousness;** Reap in mercy; **Break up your fallow ground,** For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

**c. God's people had to circumcise their hearts, not just their bodies.** Circumcision took courage. Circumcision of the heart is what God demands today! This takes courage too. His bride needed to focus on the spirit, not just the letter of the law.

Romans 2: 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter**; whose praise is not from men but from God.

The heart had to be spiritually receptive.

James 1:21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

**Remember, there were many non-Jews who were not circumcised in body but were circumcised in the heart.** That was more important! In Philippians 3, Apostle Paul stated how he was happy that he was circumcised, but his greater joy was the work done in his heart – circumcision of the heart.

## **2. So what did “breaking up fallow ground,” “sow among thorns,” and “circumcising the heart” look like in practice?**

The bride had to **remove and destroy her abominations** – those Baals.

The bride had to **welcome the nations and teach them the ways of God.**

The bride had to **teach the nations to sing praises to God.**

The bride had to **teach the nations to pray.**

The bride had to **teach the nations of the coming sacrifice of the Savior**, using the animal sacrifices of that time.

The bride had to **raise her own children with all this awareness** too!

## **3. If the Jews did not show repentance, God was going to burn them up.**

## **4. Lessons:**

**a. Living for Jesus does not mean freedom from work.** It means freedom (from sin) to work! You were made to work! You can't grow without work. You have to feed yourself God's Word. You have to be willing to be corrected. You have to multiply.

Hebrews 4:12 For the **word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit**, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

So feed yourself.

**b. In showing signs of repentance, focus on the spirit of the law, not the letter, or you will not properly obey.**

**c. The Jews were rebellious, however, and rejected Jesus, and many of them were burned with fire (again) when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in AD70.** They became obsessed with trade rather than teaching.

That is the direction we are going today in North America!

**d. Don't rely on your baptism or church membership to save you.** They are just outward things. God wants you to have baptized hearts – hearts that have been washed by the blood of the Lamb, hearts that would live for him...and show it!

### **The Urgency for Repentance**

5 **Declare in Judah and proclaim** in Jerusalem, and say: "**Blow the trumpet** in the land; **Cry, 'Gather together,'** And say, 'Assemble yourselves, And let us go into the fortified cities.'

**1. God called on Jeremiah to blow the trumpet and call Judah to repent.**

The warning meant the Babylonian army was ready to pounce on Judah.

**2. Judah had to get together in unison – showing the corporate nature of God's church - and repent.**

6 **Set up the standard** toward Zion. Take refuge! Do not delay! For I will bring disaster from the north, And great destruction."

**3. Then God gave a list of things to show urgency:**

**a. Set up the standard.** This was a signal (flag) to get people together for an important reason. **And they were to look toward Zion, the place where God was!**

**b. Take refuge.** Get away from danger and take time to meet with their God and pray.

**c. Do not delay.** Destruction was at the door.

But the Jews did not show urgency and did not do these things, and look what happened.

**2 Kings 25:4** Then the city wall was broken through, and **all the men of war fled at night** by way of the gate between two walls, which was by the king's garden, even though the **Chaldeans were still encamped all around against the city.** And the king went by way of the plain.

7 The **lion has come up from his thicket**, And the destroyer of nations is on his way. He has gone forth from his place to make your land desolate. Your cities will be laid waste, Without inhabitant.

**4. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian lion, managed to get out of the hole he was in (or break out of the gates) where God had limited him.**

He was ready to make Judah desolate. He would destroy the land, the people, and the king.

**2 Kings 24:1** In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, **and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years**. Then he turned and rebelled against him.

**5. Lessons:**

**a. Live and let live is not a Christian principle.** If you let people live in the state they are when they are apart from God, it is sentencing them to death. Warn them today before they are wounded by God. **Urgently call them to repent.**

**b. The physical gathering of God's people is essential.** Together you speak to God and you let him speak to you. Listen to his warning. Let him feed you and encourage you. Let him teach you to multiply. Petition him for help to live as the bride. **Here is where you get his warning when you are falling short of his demands.**

**c. Those who are careless about how they live, are in mortal danger.** God is angrier with you than with those who know nothing about him. **He expects better from you his covenant child.** This is why I believe God is angrier with his church now than with the world.

**Conclusion:**

God wanted his bride to **repent** (using an oath), and he wanted her to **repent by her work**, and to do so **urgently**.

Beloved in the Lord:

**1. Take seriously God's call to repent when you sin.** Think about it when you confess your sins every week. Urge your children to think seriously about it when you teach them to pray. **Call on the North American church to pray and show her sorrow for her sins.** God is not pleased with her now! Do it now. **Don't shame the bridegroom.** Live as an honorable bride.

**2. Let that repentance first be seen in your life.** The wrong things you use to do, don't do them anymore. If you lied, stop. If you treated worship as unimportant, make it important. If stealing was common, make it uncommon. If you frivolously used God's name, use it with respect. If you didn't take time in the Word and in prayer privately, start

doing so. **You will set the tone for revival. You will establish the ground for spiritual and material blessings.**

Finally: Since living apart from God is death, if you want to come close to God for life, you must ask him to count Jesus' work on the cross as yours. Then, and only then, will you have life.