

## **Jeremiah 5:23-31 – The Link Between Wickedness and Wheat**

Trapp, TSK, HebrewLexicon, Delitzsch, Armstrong, Gaebelien, Geneva, Barnes, JFB, INT, Eclectic, Clarke, Calvin,

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: **Generally, poverty is linked to wickedness and generally prosperity is linked to obedience.** This is what God told the Jews when they entered the Promised Land.

**Regarding prosperity linked to obedience:** Deuteronomy 28:1 *"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. 2 "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God: 3 "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. 4 "Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. 5 "Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl."*

**But sometimes there is an overlap** and blessings might still be around for a time as wickedness increases! (This is why the wicked seem to be prospering; but indeed, they are on slippery ground. Ps 73) This overlap in blessings must not confuse us into thinking God is pleased with what his people are doing. In fact, those blessings often soon disappear.

**This was the situation in Judah. This is the situation now in North America.** So this sermon is most appropriate for today!

Our headings are:

**Wheat became limited**

**Because Wickedness was unlimited**

Our goals are: **That you will learn that out of love for his church, if she continues in sins, God may remove from her the things she cherishes in order to get her attention and cause her to return to him.**

### **Wheat Became Limited**

23 But this people has a **defiant and rebellious heart**; They have **revolted and departed**. 24 **They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD** our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest." 25 **Your iniquities have turned these things away, And your sins have withheld good from you.**

**1. God's people did not listen to the rebuke of good prophets like Jeremiah.**

They acted as if God would never do what he threatened because they were so

important to God.

They had a lot of money and people who have a lot of money often see themselves as being blessed by God.

**They should have looked to see if they were doing good to justify God's blessings.**

**They should not have looked at the blessings and assumed they were doing good!**

**2. Because the Jews thought they were good, they became defiant when prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Obadiah called them to repent.**

**They even refused to acknowledge Yahweh was the one who controlled every creature and every action,** including when the **early and latter rains came.** It did not even cross their minds!

**In other words, they refused to acknowledge God controlled their food!** The latter rains that were good for planting, and the early rains that were important for fattening the grain, they thought were outside of God's control. They forgot...

Job 28:26 When **He made a law for the rain,** And a path for the thunderbolt,

Psalms 147:8 Who **covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth,** Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.

**God's providential provisions were acts of love,** but they were acts of love that were ignored by his bride.

Look at God's control of rain and food!

**This was what God said would happen at the beginning of the Jewish nation.**

Deuteronomy 28:12 "The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.

**This was exactly what God has said before the northern 10 ½ tribes were taken into captivity by Assyria in 722BC.**

Amos 4:7 "**I also withheld rain from you**, When there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city...

**This was what God said long after the Babylonian captivity of 586BC...around 30AD.**

Matthew 5:45 "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for **He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.**

**3. God made it clear the Jews' sins and their transgressions caused them to not get the things they desperately needed.**

Isaiah 59:2 But **your iniquities have separated you from your God**; And your sins have hidden His face from you, **So that He will not hear.**

**4. Lessons:**

**a. God will take away blessings of those who have his name but turn away from serving him.** You are contemptible when you do this. God could legitimately starve you to death for rebellion!

**So warn your Christian brothers who feel they can live they way they want and expect God to go along with it.** God could take away **anything you hold to dearly: a spouse, children, food, job, health, looks, freedom, worship, etc.**

God knows the things you prize the most, and he could take them

**b. Is it a surprise God took away worship from the church for almost 2 years?** It should not be. Why would God meet with people who love wealth and comfort more than they love him? **Look how easily people stopped worshiping!**

**c. There are many people who deny God's sovereignty over everything.** Don't be one of them! Warn those who do. God is sovereign over everything...over rain and the snow...over flowers and fires...over PM Trudeau and Putin.

**d. But be careful not to conclude that every time someone loses something it is because of sin.** Sometimes God takes away things in order to sanctify – not because he wants to punish.

Or it maybe God is just about to bless them!

### **Because Wickedness was Unlimited**

26 'For among My people are found wicked men; They lie in wait as one who sets snares; They set a trap; They catch men.

#### **1. The Jews, God's bride, started with an uncontrolled lust for money.**

**They abused widows**, orphans, and foreigners to make more money.

**They then ignored worship and abandoned the Sabbath** to make more money.

**Their sins started there, but they did not end there: They then worshiped idols because idols have no morality!**

Amos 5:12 For I know your manifold transgressions And your mighty sins: **Afflicting the just and taking bribes; Diverting the poor from justice at the gate.**

Micah 7:2 The **faithful man has perished from the earth**, And there is no one upright among men. **They all lie in wait for blood; Every man hunts his brother with a net.**

27 As a cage is full of birds, So their houses are full of deceit. Therefore, they have become great and grown rich.

#### **2. The Jews, like their northern brothers, then started to set traps for men and hunt them like they did wild birds and animals and kept them in baskets.**

Habakkuk 1:15 **They take up all of them with a hook, They catch them in their net**, And gather them in their dragnet. Therefore they rejoice and are glad.

Those made in the image of God were treated as wild birds and other beasts for the financial advantage of others.

28 They have grown fat, they are **sleek**; Yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked; **They do not plead the cause, The cause of the fatherless**; Yet they prosper, And the right of the needy they do not defend.

#### **3. The wicked then got fat (and shiny) at the expense of the poor and were more wicked than the pagans.**

Their wickedness overtook the sins of others. Instead of pleading for the poor, they squeezed them for more labor.

(Fatness was a sign of wealth there!)

Isaiah 1:23 Your princes are rebellious, **and companions of thieves;** **Everyone loves bribes,** And follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, Nor does the cause of the widow come before them.

What should the Jews have done? Like Job did!

Job 29:12 Because **I delivered the poor who cried out,** The **fatherless and the one who had no helper.** 13 The blessing of a perishing man came upon me, And **I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.** 14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban. 15 **I was eyes to the blind,** And I was **feet to the lame.** 16 I was **a father to the poor,** And **I searched out the case that I did not know.** 17 **I broke the fangs of the wicked,** And **plucked the victim from his teeth.**

29 Shall I not punish them for these things?' says the LORD. 'Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?'

#### **4. Obviously God had to punish his bride for her abuse, not just of the poor, but of God himself.**

He even did so after their return from Babylonian captivity. So this was a constant failure.

Malachi 3:5 And I will come near you for judgment; **I will be a swift witness** Against sorcerers, Against adulterers, Against perjurers, **Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans,** And against **those who turn away an alien** — Because they do not fear Me," Says the LORD of hosts.

30 "An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land:

#### **5. And God described his bride's sin as an "astonishing and horrible thing."**

God did not expect this from his bride. He knew she knew better. She was taught better. He provided everything she needed. But then she turned and abused others to get more. She acted as if her husband were poor or dead. So she left him.

31 The **prophets prophesy falsely,** And the **priests rule by their own power;** And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?

#### **6. And God described those who aided and abetted his bride in her sins.**

**The prophets lied.** They gave rosy predictions of the future: “You will not go into captivity. You will not stay in captivity long!”

**The priests abused the people.** They robbed them of their sacrifices and did not teach them properly.

**So the people didn’t care.** They lost all sense of morality. They did not realize they were being fooled.

In fact, they liked it when there was no demand placed on them.

## **7. Lessons:**

**a. You can see many who claim to be Christians but abuse the poor and needy with the excuse they are capitalists – as if economics was out of God’s sovereignty.** Often these poor people are trapped in poverty...and even literally trapped in factories. Don’t abuse others in your business or those under you at work.

**b. Don’t ignore worship.** You are starving yourself. But worse, you are making God jealous. Who can stand God’s jealousy?

**c. You can expect disorder and corruption in a church when ministers and elders are weak or deceptive...**and when they refuse to speak the truth and warn Christians of the coming dangers. **The message needs to be clear: Get rid of wickedness or prepare to lose your wheat!** God loves you too much to leave you in wickedness and must act to get you back.

**d. You are called to catch men with the Gospel so they would have the richest life imaginable!** Luke 5:10...And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." **Blessings come from hard work!**

## **Conclusion:**

God took away the wheat from Judah because of their wickedness. They trusted in their business, but God busted their business. They were cruel to their employees, God crushed them by the Babylonians. They abandoned the Sabbath to make more money, so God abandoned them.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus:

**1. God has no limit to his power and can remove any troubles we have in this world. But why should he?** If his church continues to ignore the sheep by feeding them improper food, and if the sheep are contented with straying over every new patch of grass,

why would God not punish them to make them come to their senses? In fact, he promised he would.

**2. So take this warning!** You could lose everything if you don't get your own life in order and focus on the worship of God and in showing kindness to the weak. **And pass this warning to others.** If you know other Christians who are living for their own pleasure and profit, be a friend and speak up!

**3. The greatest reason you live well and leave wickedness is because Jesus died on the cross for your sins.**

Finally: If you are not a Christian, you can't love God and your neighbor. You need a heart transplant to do this, something only God can do. He can count Christ's life as yours! This will give you new life. Ask him today.