

SHALL NOT MY SOUL BE AVENGED?

TEXT: JEREMIAH 5:1-31

INTRODUCTION:

1. Chapter 5 is the continuation of the message begun in Jeremiah 3:6.
2. There is a statement found twice here in chapter 5, and again in 9:9.
3. "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (5:9, 29; 9:9).
4. Jerusalem would soon fall at the hands of the Babylonian army, referred to here in Jeremiah 5:15 as "a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not..."
5. Jeremiah 5:19 says, "And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours."
6. The name of this strange land is not given. Back in chapter 1, the LORD warned that this enemy would come "out of the north" (1:14; cf. 1:13, 15).
7. It is not until chapter 20 that Babylon is identified by name (20:4-6).
8. Soon Babylon would destroy the city of Jerusalem, including the temple, and take the people into captivity. It was the judgment of God upon an impenitent, backslidden people.
9. "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (5:9, 29; 9:9).
10. "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far..." (5:15).
11. The judgment would be devastating. Note the repetition in verse 17 -- "And they shall eat up... they shall eat up... they shall eat up... they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword."
12. "Nevertheless" (5:18) a remnant would return and rebuild. This promise of a remnant is repeated throughout the book of Jeremiah (cf. 4:27; 23:3-6; 30:11; 31:7; 43:5; 46:28).
13. This promise is also seen throughout the prophecies of Isaiah, Micah, and the other Old Testament prophets.

I. INCREASED BACKSLIDING (5:6b)

1. The LORD instructed the prophet Jeremiah to "run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem," and seek out a good man, "if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth" (5:1).
2. God says if one such man can be found, "I will pardon it" (5:1b).
3. This reminds us of Abraham's pleading with God for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:22-33).

4. H.A. Ironside said, "Does not this tell us what might have been had Abraham but had faith to plead further for Sodom? He stopped at ten (Genesis 18). Ten could not be found. Here, judgment could be averted for one. Alas, they had all alike despised the chastening of the Lord (vs. 3), and turned from the truth. This amazed Jeremiah the prophet. He could scarcely credit the utterly apostate condition of his nation. There must surely be righteous ones somewhere. He would seek them out" (*Notes on the Prophecy of Jeremiah*).
5. Jeremiah searched the streets of Jerusalem and could not find even one righteous person, so he thought he would find him some "great men -- "for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God" (5:5).
6. But these "great men" had "broken the yoke, and burst the bonds" (5:5); i.e., broke away from God and His Word.
7. There are many people like that today. Psalm 2:1-3 says, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."
8. "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."
9. No restraints. No restrictions. Anything goes.
10. Jeremiah 5:6 says they broke their yoke only to get killed by wild animals. "Every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased" (5:6b).

II. ANIMALISTIC BEHAVIOUR (5:7-9).

1. The people were lewd and crude. They were like wild horses neighing after their neighbor's wife.
2. Back in the 1960's fornication, adultery, homosexuality, X-rated movies, and other sexual sins became widely acceptable. The media called it "the new morality," but it wasn't new because God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah 4,000 years ago.
3. And Jeremiah lived 2,600 years ago. And in Jeremiah's day, just like today, adultery was prevalent (5:7).
4. The men "assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses" (5:7). The NKJV says, "They were like well-fed lusty stallions; Every one neighed after his neighbor's wife."
5. The idolatrous Canaanites worshipped sex, and temple prostitutes were part of their religious ritual. This sort of degenerate worship found its way into Israel and Judah.

III. HOPELESS CORRUPTION (5:9-14, 22, 23).

1. There was no fear of God (5:22, 24). Therefore the people thought they could sin with impunity. "They have belied (lied about) the LORD, and said, It is not He; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine" (5:12).
2. They rejected the warnings from God's messengers, the prophets. To them it was just "wind" (5:13).
3. We see the same thing today. Sinners scoff at the judgment of God. They deny the existence of hell. Billy Sunday said, "You may not believe in hell now, but you'll believe in it a few minutes after you get there!"
4. They were hopelessly corrupt, and Jeremiah used different expressions to warn them: foolish, without understanding, spiritually blind and deaf (5:21), revolting and rebellious (5:23), full of iniquity and sin (5:25), wicked (5:26, 28), and full of deceit (5:27).
5. Once again, the LORD asks, "Shall I not visit for these things? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (5:29; cf. 5:9).

CONCLUSION:

1. The last two verses in Jeremiah 5 are frightening, and remind us of the USA in the year 2012!
2. H.A. Ironside said, "Their moral condition is further exposed in words too plain to need comment (vss. 20-29), and all summarized in the last verse. "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (vss. 30, 31).
3. "Solemn words! Ponder them carefully, my reader, and see if they be too severe to describe the great world-church of today" (*Notes on the Prophecy of Jeremiah*).