

STAND IN THE GATE OF THE LORD'S HOUSE

TEXT: JEREMIAH 7:1-34

INTRODUCTION:

1. Jeremiah 6:30 is the conclusion of Jeremiah's second message. Jeremiah 7 begins another sermon, which continues through chapters 8, 9, and 10 with the same theme, i.e., a call to repentance.
2. This was a word that came to the prophet Jeremiah from the LORD (7:1; cf. 1:2; 2:1; 3:6), and he was told to preach in the gate of the LORD'S house, through which they entered in "to worship the LORD" (7:2).
3. Matthew Henry says, "It would affront the priests, and expose the prophet to their rage, to have such a message as this delivered within their precincts; but the prophet must not fear the face of man."
4. Perhaps Jeremiah delivered this message during "one of the national religious festivals when the entire kingdom attended" (Merrill Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).

I. THEY NEEDED TO AMEND THEIR WAYS (7:3-5).

1. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, "The general character of the message in the temple gate is, like the first and second messages, one of rebuke, warning, and exhortation."
2. Jeremiah was told to stand in the gate of the LORD'S house because this confrontation would expose their religious hypocrisy. They were using their ritualism and externalism as a cover for sin.
3. They were trusting in the temple, but they were not trusting in God (7:4). Today people often talk about their church, but they know nothing about God, and nothing about the Bible.
4. They needed to get right with God because of their empty ritualism. The repetition, "The temple of the LORD" (7:4) is meant to emphasize their hypocrisy and confidence in the temple.
5. F.B. Meyer says, "There was an evident divorce between religion and morals; and whenever that comes into the life of a nation or an individual, it is fatal. Satan himself has no objection to a religion which consists in postures and ceremonies and rites."
6. They imagined God would never allow a heathen nation to invade Jerusalem and destroy the temple, but that is precisely what He did.
7. Jeremiah 7:6 and 7 indicate that if the people would have amended their ways the captivity could have been avoided (cf. 4:1).

8. The people were living very wickedly, but they were not ashamed to stand before God in His house, which is called by His name, and say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations" (7:8-10).
9. Our Lord quoted Jeremiah 7:11 and Isaiah 56:7 when He chased the moneychangers out of the temple (cf. Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).
10. Our Lord compared their situation to the apostate days of the Judges. The tabernacle had been set up in Shiloh. Joshua 18:1 says, "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there." But the people started backsliding after the death of Joshua.
11. Psalm 78:58-61 says, "For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand."
12. The LORD "forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh" (Psalm 78:61) because the people of Israel "provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images" (Ps. 78:58).
13. So here in Jeremiah 7:12, the LORD says, "But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel."
14. And just as Shiloh was destroyed, the LORD promised that He would also destroy the temple in Jerusalem (Jer. 7:13-17).
15. Verse 16 is very sad. God told Jeremiah not to pray for the people any more because they are too far gone into sin.

II. THEY PROVOKED GOD WITH THEIR IDOLATRY (7:17-19).

1. All throughout the Bible, idolatry is condemned.
2. The second commandment says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:4-6).

3. God judged Israel and Judah for their idolatry (cf. 1:16; 2:11, 23, 28; 3:1; etc.), but here in Jeremiah 7:18 we see the first reference to the "queen of heaven" (cf. 44:15-25).
4. The Scofield Study Bible says, "Jeremiah refers to Ashtoreth as the 'queen of heaven'" (page 289).
5. Other names given to this female deity are Ishtar, Semiramis, Diana, and Aphrodite. She was thought to be the wife of Baal and a fertility goddess.
6. Judges 2:13 says the Israelites "forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth."
7. Worship of this "queen of heaven" was rampant among the pagan nations and even became popular among the Israelites as well (cf. Acts 19:23-29).
8. Over time, Roman Catholic popes started referring to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as "the Queen of Heaven" and "the Mother of God."
9. But the teaching that Mary is the queen of heaven has absolutely no scriptural basis.
10. Alexander Hislop wrote a very interesting and informative book entitled, *The Two Babylons* (published in 1917).
11. Hislop traces the worship of the Queen of Heaven back to Babylon. This is why his book is called, *The Two Babylons* (cf. Rev. 17).
12. Nimrod is referred to four times in the Bible (Genesis 10:8, 9; I Chron. 1:10; Micah 5:6). He is considered an ancient king of Babylon.
13. After Nimrod's death, his wife, Semiramis, was determined to retain her power and wealth. She concocted the story that Nimrod's death was for the salvation of mankind. Nimrod was touted as "the woman's promised seed, who was destined to bruise the serpent's head, and in so doing, was to have his own heel bruised."
14. This story is obviously a counterfeit to the true prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. To enable the Babylonian people to better worship this mother and child, a woodcut portrait was created, depicting the child in his mother's arms.
15. Over time, the highest titles were bestowed upon Semiramis, including "the Queen of Heaven." This ancient Queen of Heaven eventually became a pagan counterfeit of the virgin Mary.
16. It does not take much discernment to see the problem with Mary-worship. While Mary was certainly a godly young woman greatly blessed in that she was chosen to be the mother of our Lord, she was not divine.

17. And contrary to the claims of the Roman Catholic Church, she was not sinless.
18. Nor is she to be worshipped, revered, venerated, or prayed to.
Confused Roman Catholics some times say, "We do not pray to Mary; we pray *through* Mary. We pray to God *through* Mary." But this is totally unscriptural (cf. I Tim. 2:5).
19. Roman Catholics refer to Mary as their "mediatrix," but Jesus is our only Mediator.
20. To offer worship, reverence, or veneration to anyone but God is idolatry.
21. In Luke 1:46 and 47, Mary said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."
22. Only sinners need a Saviour.
23. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
24. In Luke 11:27, we read that, "a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked."
25. If the Roman Catholic doctrine of the veneration of Mary is proper and Scriptural, our Lord would have said "Amen" to this "certain woman's" comments.
26. But instead of commending her, he corrected her and said, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28).
27. Our Lord's mild rebuke tells us it is blessed to hear the word of God and obey it, but there is no blessing in worshipping Mary.
28. The people in Jeremiah's day were obstinate and hard-hearted. Therefore, nothing remained but the judgment of God (7:19-29).

III. TOPHET IS A PICTURE OF HELL ITSELF (7:30-34).

1. Tophet is referred to nine times in the Bible -- once by the prophet Isaiah, and the other eight times by the prophet Jeremiah (cf. 7:31, 32; 19:6, 11, 12, 13, 14).
2. Isaiah 30:33 says, "For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."
3. Tophet was located "in the valley of the son of Hinnom" (7:31). It was a place where backslidden, idolatrous Israelites would go "to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire" (7:31).

4. This wicked place was defiled by King Josiah. Second Kings 23:10 says, "And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech."
5. This "valley of Hinnom" (Jer. 7:31) was located just south of the city of Jerusalem. It was a well-known place in Jeremiah's day and in our Lord's day.
6. Psalm 106:37-41 says, "Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them."
7. No one knows for sure where the word "Tophet" came from or even what it means. Many Bible teachers think the name comes from the Hebrew word *toph*, which means "drum."
8. When these demon-possessed idol-worshippers started sacrificing their babies to Baal and Moloch, they would place the screaming babies in the fire (Jer. 7:31).
9. As the babies screamed and cried, the idolaters would beat on their drums to try and drown out their cries. By the way, these same horrible drum beats are used today in rock music.
10. John Milton refers to these drums in *Paradise Lost*:
 "Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears,
 Though for the noise of Drums and Timbrels loud
 Their children's cries unheard, that past through fire."

Milton correctly saw Tophet as a picture of hell itself, for he goes on to say:

"The pleasant Valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence
 And black Gehenna called, the Type of Hell."

11. King Josiah "defiled Topheth" (II Kings 23:10). What this means is he turned it into a cesspool and garbage dump. It became the receptacle for waste matter and all sorts of putrefying filth from the city of Jerusalem.
12. The dead bodies of criminals and animals were thrown there to be eaten by dogs. When the dogs were through with them, their mangled

- corpses were put in the fires that were kept burning to consume all of the rubbish from the city.
13. This horrible place forms the background to the prophet Jeremiah's message in Jeremiah 19 (cf. 19:1, 2) and helps us to understand our Lord's warnings about hell in the New Testament.
 14. In the New Testament, the Hebrew word *Hinnom* is called by the Greek name *Gehenna*, and is translated in our English Bible as "hell."
 15. The word is used twelve times in the New Testament, and it always refers to eternal punishment in the fires of hell.
 16. Eleven out of the twelve references to Gehenna come from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5).
 17. The other reference is James 3:6.
 18. When our Lord referred to Gehenna as a picture of hell, his listeners knew exactly what He meant. That our Lord was referring to literal torment is obvious if we take the Bible literally (cf. Mark 9:44, 46, 48).
 19. The worms (maggots) in the valley of Hinnom died and the fires eventually were quenched. In fact, no one is even sure today of the precise location of the valley of Hinnom.
 20. But the "worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" in hell.
(Unsaved friend, are you prepared to go there?)

CONCLUSION:

Sinners need to realize the unspeakable horror that awaits them if they die in their sins. Unless they repent and turn to Christ they will be damned forever in the pit of hell – a place infinitely more terrible than Tophet.