

## JEREMIAH 14 INTERCEDINGS IN THE MIDST OF DROUGHT

The reign of the now-deceased King Josiah's son, Jehoiakim (609-598 BC), was still in its early years. Pharaoh Necho was back home in Egypt, the city of Nineveh was tottering to her fall, and the empire of Babylon was slowly growing upon the horizon as the rival of each great kingdom – and also as the future destroyer of the nation of Judah. Meanwhile, God's chosen people – like a tree whose heart is eaten away by insects – were corrupted by innumerable evils. As a premonition of coming destruction, and as if the Almighty would make one last effort to arouse them to the awfulness and imminence of their peril, a terrible drought cast its dreadful mantle over the land. It had often been predicted among the other results of disobedience (Lev. 26:20; Deut. 11:17; 28:23), but it had probably never fallen with such desolating effect before. The whole land was filled with mourning. In the places of public concourse, the people gathered in the burning sunshine and sat in black garments upon the hard ground. The bitter cry of Jerusalem ascended – a mingling of the anguish of men, women, and children, whose parched lips could not be moistened. All the land baked like an oven; and the sun, as he daily passed through the sky, looked down upon scenes of unutterable horror.

It was at such a time that the lover of his fellow human beings gathered himself together to commune with the Almighty (verse 7). The prophet was endeavoring, if possible, to secure a mitigation of the reign of the sky of brass, and a return of those times of blessing that can only come from the presence of Jehovah. His face was set with a resolved purpose. With his two hands, he was prepared to come to close dealings with God – just like Jacob, when he made supplication with the Lord. Let us draw near and overhear the colloquy between Jeremiah and the Almighty.

“My God,” begins the pleading prophet (verses 7-9), “I come into Your presence to acknowledge my own sin, and the sins of my people. I stand before You as their priest, to confess the sins which have separated between You and them – and which have incurred Your Divine displeasure, and closed the avenues of communion. Our iniquities testify against us, and our backslidings are many. At one time, You seemed to abide in our midst; but lately, Your visits have been few and far between. And yet You have not really changed! You are our Savior; You are still in the midst of us! We bear Your name, and Your own honor is at stake in what happens to us. It is true that You cannot do anything on our behalf for any merit of ours, but do it for the credit of Your name. Do it for the sake of Your Son, and for the cause of Your Church upon earth!”

### Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ A description of the terrible drought that Judah was experiencing – verses 1-6
- ❖ A conversation between Jeremiah and the Lord, in which the prophet intercedes for his people, and the Lord replies – verses 7-22

What was the answer of the Divine Spirit to Jeremiah's prayer? If we may dare to put our impression of His words in our own phrase, there are times when God seems to speak to the soul in this way (verses 10-12): "My dear servant, My grace is infinite! My mercy endures forever; My fullness waits to pour forth its tides, and to make the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose. I have no pleasure in the parched wilderness; I Myself desire that it would be springs of water. But as long as people cling to their sins, and as long as they willfully perpetrate abominations, it is impossible for Me to cause rain or give showers. Beneath the appearance of religious worship and decorum, evils are lurking that separate between Me and My people, and hide My face from them. These must be dealt with! You must begin to search the chambers of their hearts with candles – to show My people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins."



Jeremiah continues (verses 13): "Ah, Lord God! True – sadly, too true – are Your words. Your people deserve all that You have said. Their iniquities alone are the cause of their sorrows. But in mercy, remember how falsely they have been taught! The land is full of false prophets who hide Your truth under a cloud of words. They say that the outward rituals of worship are sufficient, no matter how far the heart is from You. There is grievous fault indeed, but surely it lies at the door of those who mislead the fickle crowd. So spare Your people!"

The Lord assured Jeremiah that the doom of the false prophets would be terrible, for they had not been sent by Him with a message to His people. And the people had loved to have it that way. It was the people's corrupt morals that had produced a corrupt priesthood and a whole crop of false prophets. The men of whom Jeremiah complained were only the product of their times! The people would not endure the simple truth of the Divine Word, and this evil band of false prophets had been bred and nurtured in the stifling corruption of the age. Therefore, until the people themselves had put away their sins, and returned to the Lord in penitence and consecration; they would still be held guilty in His sight, and suffer the consequences of their sinful rebellions.

This chapter closes with Jeremiah continuing to intercede for the souls of his people (verses 17-22). "O God, You are indeed just and right, but You cannot utterly reject! There is a tie between You and us which our sin cannot break. There are claims which we have upon You as our Father, which the far-country wanderings of the prodigal cannot annul. Remember the Covenant! Remember Your promise to Your Son! Remember Your Bride, whom You cannot put away! Remember that we have no help except in You! We are not worthy to be called Your children, but we still claim Your kiss and Your affection!" And how does the Lord reply to this? We will find out in the next chapter!

*Lord, we pray for our nation, that we – as a united people – may put away our sins, and return to our merciful Savior in true repentance and consecration! Amen.*