

Rejected Silver (Jeremiah 5:1- 6:30)



Jeremiah 3:6-6:30 is part of the early collection of his prophecies. (627BC – Jeremiah’s call, 609BC – Josiah’s death). This prophecy may be given in the mid-620BC.

Jeremiah began his ministry one year after Josiah began his reform in 628BC (2 Chr 34:3). Although Josiah brought a sweeping political reformation to Judah, the people did not experience a heart-changing revival (c.f. 2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chron 34:22-28).

keywords - ‘justice’ and ‘truth’. God seeks truth in our hearts and lives, not an external religious activity.

A. Chapter 5

1. Justice and Truth (v1-3)

Chapter 5 opens with God telling Jeremiah to go through the streets of Jerusalem to find one good man who seeks ‘justice’ and ‘truth’. Justice and truth are God’s covenantal requirement. God further tells Jeremiah, *‘If you can find just one as I require truth among My people, then I will pardon her.’* (v1, C.f. Gen 18:23-32) This is an incredible offer of mercy.

- a. God tells Jeremiah, *‘You will find that the people of Judah speaks in eloquent religious language, but all for a front, not from the sincerity of the heart. Surely they swear falsely by My name.’* (v2)
- b. Summary verse of Jeremiah’s finding (v3). The people of Judah rejected God’s disciplining hand three times, repeatedly. *‘You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to return.’* (v3)

2. Jeremiah’s Initial Response (v4-6)

- a. Therefore, I said, *‘Surely these are poor. They are foolish; For they do not know the way of the LORD, the judgment of their God. I will go to the great men and speak to them, for they have known the way of the LORD, the judgment of their God.’* (v4-5)
- b. However, to Jeremiah’s dismay, he found no more truth among the ruling class than among the poor and uneducated lot. *Judah’s problem was not ‘education’, but ‘wilful rebellion.’*
- c. Like wild animals that could not be restrained, they broke the restraining yoke and went off into the wild. *‘Therefore, (Jeremiah warns) a lion (devastating force) from the forest will slay them, a wolf (voraciousness) of the deserts shall destroy them; a leopard (swiftness) will watch over their cities.’* (v6). *‘Everyone who goes out of there will be torn in pieces...’*

3. The Root of Judah’s sin: (v7-9)

- a. *‘When I had fed them to the full, then they have committed adultery and assembled themselves by the troops in the harlot’s houses (spiritual and physical). They were like well-fed lusty stallions; everyone neighed after his neighbour’s wife.’* (v7-8) This is God’s indictment against the people of Judah. *‘Shall I not punish them for these things?’ says the LORD. ‘And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?’* (v9 c.f. v29)
- b. How about the affluent Christian West today? David Wilkerson had a vision of a wager where the devil asked God to bless Americans with a material blessing and then they will turn away from God.

4. God’s Chastisement of Judah (v10-13)

- a. God begins to ‘disown’ them though it was not for total destruction (C.f. v18): *‘Take away her branches, for they are not the LORD’s’* (v10).
- b. God reveals Judah’s specific ‘treachery (deceit)’ against Him. They have ‘lied about the LORD’. How did they lie about the Lord? They said, (1) *‘It is not He.’*; (2) *‘Neither will evil come upon us.’* Nor sword or famine; (3) *‘the prophets are wind (hot air), the word of God is not in them.’* They had a scoffing spirit,

despising any word of chastisement, *'God doesn't do that anymore. That's not God. He doesn't judge. Judgment won't come from God. We will always experience plenty and be at ease.'*

- c. Therefore, God tells Jeremiah that instead of His word coming to them like medicine and the shepherd's rod to heal and guide them into the righteous path, God's word will come to them as raging fire to devour them all together like a piece of wood (v14).
5. Babylonian Invasion Prophesied (v15-17)
 - a. *'It is a mighty nation; it is an ancient nation whose language you do not know...'* It won't be Assyria whose language they know, but another ancient nation whose roots go all the way back to Babel (C.f. Gen 11:1ff). Despite all their denial, Judah will experience both the 'sword' and the 'famine' through the foreign invasion. There will be food shortage and destruction of the fortified cities they trusted in, Jerusalem in particular. (v17)
 - b. But God will have mercy in the midst of the judgment. It will not be the complete end of Judah (v18 c.f. v10). On that day they will finally ask, *'Why does the LORD our God do all these things to us?' (v19)* Only after the judgment they will begin to see that it was God's hand of chastisement that brought such destruction upon them (C.f. 'It is not He?' v12), and they will begin to ask the right questions. God's answer is: *'Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.'* It was poetic justice (c.f. Deut 28:49-52). God is faithful to His covenant word and promise.
 6. Call to Fear God (v20-25)
 - a. God's call goes out to the spiritual ignorant Judah who was blind and deaf (v20-21), to look at nature and fear God. 'Do you not fear Me?' (v22) Think about how God manages the ecosystem of this earth. How God keeps in balance the vast body of the ocean water, which can annihilate civilisations if unchecked, but brings the moisture gently on the land in droplets in the form of rain, so we can bring in the harvest year after year. (c.f. Rom 1:20)
 - b. *'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.'* (v24 C.f. Lev 23:10ff) Note that the 7-week period from Passover to Pentecost is the reserved weeks of harvest.
 - c. There are 3 stages to God's judgment: Stage 1 – Judgment of God explained, e.g. drought - *'Your iniquities have turned these things away, and your sins have withheld good from you.'* (5:25) Stage 2 and Stage 3 will follow swiftly. Stage 2 – Foreign invasion. Stage 3 – Exile into a foreign land.
 7. Warning against Wicked Elites in Judah (v26-29)
 - a. *'For among My people are found wicked men.'* (1) They lie in wait as one who sets snares...trap... their cage is full of birds (men)...their houses are full of deceit...' (v26); (2) *'...they have become great and grown rich* (fat and sleek)...*they surpass the deeds of the wicked...*' (v27); (3) *'...they do not plead the cause of the fatherless...the right of the needy they do not defend...'* (v28) They pervert justice.
 - b. *'Shall I not punish them for these things?' says the LORD. 'Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?'* (v29 C.f. v9) This is a personal matter to God, and a timely word for our time.
 8. Astonishing and Horrible to God (v30-31)
 - a. Who opened the door to the wicked elites in Judah? The prophets and the priests opened the door. Prophets prophesied falsely and the priests ruled by their own power.
 - b. *'And My people love to have it so.'* (v31)

B. Chapter 6

1. Jeremiah's Warning – Blow the Trumpet (v1-9)
 - a. Jeremiah warns the Benjamite tribe, who lived in the northern part of Judah, to flee Jerusalem (v1). *'Blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a signal-fire in Beth Haccerem* (house of the vineyard)' (v1).

Tekoa was 10 miles and Beth Hacerem 3 miles south of Jerusalem) (v1) The southern hillside will be safer than the city of Jerusalem they trusted in (C.f. v17).

- b. Israel is likened to an unsuspecting vulnerable young girl conned by a group of shepherds (v2-5). They are so voracious that they cannot wait until the morning to begin their attack (5:6). They will carry out a stealth attack and thoroughly destroy Israel's palaces.
 - c. How is it going to be destroyed? It will take the form of siege. *'Cut down trees and build a mound against Jerusalem.'* (v6) It was an 18 months siege (588-586BC). C.f. There was another siege against Jerusalem centuries later, in 70AD.
 - d. *'This is the city to be punished...'* Why? 'Oppression and wickedness' wells up like the 'spring water' from within the city with a continual cycle of 'violence and plundering' and the 'grief and wounds' (v6-7). *'Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from you, a land not inhabited.'* (v8) They will be dislocated, alienated, and torn from the land.
 - e. *'They shall thoroughly glean as a vine the remnant of Israel; as a grape-gatherer, put your hand back into the branches'* (v9) God is speaking to the invaders to go back and 'glean' again the remnant of Israel. It took three waves of 'gleaning' and the best of the remnant was carried away to Babylon with whom the Lord was going to continue His purpose after 70 years of 'reset'.
2. Jeremiah's Dilemma (v10-15)
- a. *'To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear?'* (v10) Judah's greatest problem was that they could not hear the word of the Lord because it is a harsh word. *'Behold the word of the LORD is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it.'* (v10)
 - b. Therefore, Jeremiah was filled with the fury of the LORD. His word was like fire. He was weary of holding it in, so he poured it out on the streets of Jerusalem. Jeremiah sees all five classes of people burn up like dry wood as he speaks the word. (1) children playing outside; (2) youth assembling together; (3) young husband and wife; (5) aged men and women full of days (v11).
 - c. Jeremiah sees their houses, lands, and wives being taken by the occupying forces (v12) The very object they worshipped instead of God, was being taken from them (c.f. 5:6-7). This was a just punishment because everyone in the land, including the prophets and the priests, was given to covetousness. Both commerce and religion were corrupted. They spoke only the words of 'false peace' (v14). What was worse? They didn't even know how to blush anymore. They were not even embarrassed or ashamed (v15). Does this sound like today's society?
 - d. Their temple worship ritual looked fine with the best frankincense to burn from Arabia and the sweet cane for the anointing oil (v20). But God says, *'Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet to Me.'* (v20) *Religion without justice and truth is worse than worthless to Me. So, I will destroy the temple, so that I don't have to endure such false worship.*
3. Jeremiah's Advice (v16-26)
- a. *'Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it. And you will find rest for your souls.'* (v16)
 - b. *'Also, I set watchmen over you, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet.'* (v17) They will give you the warning in due season. 'He who has ears to hear let him hear.' At this point Jeremiah sees the invading armies marching into Jerusalem on swift horses from the north. They are a mighty army without mercy. Jeremiah is hearing the anguish and the pain of the people of Jerusalem like a woman in labour. Pandemonium. Fears on every side. (v 21-25)
 - c. *'O daughter of my people, dress in sackcloth and roll about in ashes! Make mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation. For plunderers will suddenly come upon us.'* (v26) Mourn in repentance! This month of September 2020, many are calling for the prayer of repentance, especially in the USA. How timely is Jeremiah's word for our day!

4. Sad Conclusion of Jeremiah 3:6-6:30

- a. God has set Jeremiah as an assayer and assessor of silver to know and test their way. (v27) To look for justice and truth. Their problem was not the lack of religious knowledge, but stubborn rebellion (v28).
- b. God has sent a series of chastening, e.g. drought, in hope that the nation would be purified, and the dross would be drained from the mixture. However, the process yielded no purified silver, but only rubbish. *'The bellows blow fiercely the lead is consumed by the fire; The smelter refines in vain (v29)* Lead was used as a flux to collect impurities. *'People will call them rejected silver because the LORD has rejected them.'* (v30) They were the 'refuse silver' because they 'refused' God. They were the 'rejected silver' because God 'rejected' them.