



Know Your God (Jeremiah 8:4-9: 26)

1. Key verse: 9:23-24, Main theme: 'Knowing God'

There was a 'huge gulf' between what the people of Judah believed about God, and what God revealed about Himself. In particular, there were two BIG GAPS:

- i. What God said of Himself vs What the People said about God
(Scriptural view of God vs Sentimental view of God)

'Thus, says the Lord...' is mentioned 15 times. One of them says, *'I will give you water of gall (venom, poisoned water) to drink...'* (8:14, 8:17, 9:15) This was contrary to the people's view of God. It is not much different today.

- ii. What the People said about Themselves vs What God said about Them

Judah *'What have I done wrong?' (I have done nothing wrong.)* (8:6)
'We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us.' (8:8 c.f. 2 Chr. 34:14)

God *'And they do not know Me.'* (9:3)
'Through deceit they refuse to know Me.' (9:6)

God's counsel to Judah and to the nations was to prepare for the coming judgment – a very relevant prophetic word for today. Let's consider the USA and Australia.

2. Six Movements in the Voice

<u>Reference</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Target Audience</u>	<u>Subject</u>
A. 8:4-13	God	Jeremiah	The people of Judah
B. 8:14-17	Jeremiah	Judah	Coming judgement
C. 8:18-9:2	Jeremiah	himself	Judah in judgement
D. 9:3-16	God	Jeremiah	Judah
E. 9:17-24	God	Judah	How to prepare
F. 9:25-26	God	Nations	Coming judgement

A. God Speaks to Jeremiah about the People of Judah (8:4-13)

1. **God saw three strange, unnatural things about His people** when He looked down on the world from His throne, and inspected the ariel view of His creation.
 - a) When animals fall down, they naturally pick themselves up. But how come My people do not get up when they fall down? They get into the mode of perpetual backsliding! When we take our pets to a park they return to us, their owner, but God's people did not return to Him. They say, *'What did we do wrong?'* and rush to their destruction. (8:6)
 - b) Even the birds of the air follow their natural homing instinct to fly back home, but God's people did not know how to return to Him. The birds instinctively know the time for migration, and they return together as flock, but My people do not know the judgment of the LORD, and therefore they get destroyed. (8:7)
 - c) And what is worse? My people think they know Me, just because they found the lost book of the law of God. (8:8 c.f. 2 Chr. 34:14)

2. How could they be so 'out of touch with reality'?

- a) The main problem was the scribes and the prophets who twisted the word of God. *'Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood.'* (8:8) Although they have rediscovered the law of God, the biblical scholars have systematically corrupted God's word at an academic level. One modern example is 'liberal theology'.
- b) How did this happen? The love of money took hold of the biblical education institutions. Money became the driving force behind 'biblical scholarship', and the reason people entered ministry. When this happened, the one who controlled the money supply soon controlled the direction of the biblical scholarship (8:9-10). Jesus too speaks of the error of Balaam (Rev 2:14).
- c) As a result, 'superficial ministries' filled the land with the false message of 'peace' (shalom) that had no basis in the word of God. These ministers focused on 'individual well-being' such as healing, prosperity (8:11).
- d) These ministers had no shame on the issue of blatant moral failures. 'They don't even know how to blush.' (8:12) (C.f. Parallel passage to 6:12-15)
- e) For this reason, I am bringing economic bankruptcy on the nation I have blessed so much. *'No grapes shall be on the vine (luxury item), nor figs on the fig tree (everyday item), and the leaf shall fade (necessary item for production); And the things I have given them shall pass away from them.'* (8:13) All the spiritual and material capital God gave them will now be gone. They can't keep up the spending based on yesterday's blessing.

Is God's blessing on the USD as the international reserve currency and standard about to lift?

B. Jeremiah Speaks to Judah about the Coming Judgment (8:14-17)

1. Jeremiah tells the people their escape plan was foolish (8:14-15). Running and hiding in their fortified cities will be useless on the day of God's judgment, because God has given them water of gall (venom or poison) to drink by directly ordering foreign invasion. That day they will regret following the false teaching that promised them baseless 'peace'. The false promise of peace will be dashed by reality (v15) when the foreign invasion strikes their land like a viper (v17). So Jeremiah dismantles Judah's false hope in their fortresses. Their only hope was in God.
2. How many Christians today believe God speaks like this and judges like this? Do we believe in the God of the Bible? Or in the sentimental view of God? This is the major challenge for us who live in the 'Christian nations.' But this is *'Thus, says the LORD.'* Is foreign invasion in the US soil possible?

C. Jeremiah Speaks to Himself about Judah (8:18-9:2)

1. Jeremiah is now feeling sick, knowing all the suffering Judah will go through. His distress is mark of a true prophet.
 - a) *'I would comfort myself in sorrow; My heart is faint within me.'* (v18)
 - b) In a visionary experience, Jeremiah can 'hear' his people's confusion as they are taken into exile, and the false prophecies fail them. *'Is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her King in her?'* (v19) *'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!'* (v20) He can also hear God's pain. *'Why have they provoked Me to anger with their carved images – with foreign idols?'*
 - c) Jeremiah deeply identifies with Judah's suffering (v21), and he is astonished their failure to heal despite the 'famous balm of Gilead' (v22). Ultimately the Lord was Israel's healer (Ex 15:26).
 - d) Jeremiah wants to weep 'day and night' but he had no more tears left in him (9:1).
 - e) It was all too much, and Jeremiah just wants to get away from these people and hide in a little country cottage (9:2).

D. God Speaks to Jeremiah about the People of Judah (9:3-16)

1. God speaks to Jeremiah about what the people of Judah was like toward one another.
 - a) Their tongues were weapons aimed at each other, they bent their tongues to shoot arrows. There was no 'integrity in their words.' (v3)
 - b) *'Watch out! Every brother is a supplanter.'* There was no rule of law in the commerce and economy of the land. Every Jew was now a Jacob at his worst. (9:4)
 - c) Everyone was a PhD in deceit, and in so doing 'wearing themselves.' What goes around comes around. (v5)
 - d) *'Your dwelling place is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me,' says the LORD. (v9 c.f. v3)*
 - e) God was left with no choice, but to bring a swift judgment on such a nation. (c.f. 5:9,29)
2. Now God takes up a lamentation for the land and the animals (9:10-11).
 - a) The bushfires have rampaged the land.
 - b) There was loss of animal population and animal species, and destruction of the beautiful land, mountains and wilderness. (v10)
3. *'Who is the wise man who understand this?'* God invites the people to answer the question: 'Why does the land perish and burn up like this?' (v12)

What will be the people's answer today? Climate change? Global warming?

God's answer was, *'Because they have forsaken My law which I have set before them. And have not obeyed My voice, nor walked according to it, but they have walked according to the dictates of their own heart and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them...'* (9:13-14)

Therefore, God will feed them with:

- a) wormwood and the water of gall (instead of milk and honey).
- b) scatter them out of their land.
- c) send sword after them. (9:15-16 C.f. 3rd Trumpet Rev 8:10-11)

E. God Speaks to the People of Judah on How to Prepare (9:17-24)

1. 'Sober up' was God's counsel to Judah. *'Call for the professional mourners to mourn for us.'* (v17-18) Who is 'us'? Perhaps the triune God, or more likely God and Jeremiah. God hears the sound of mourning - *'How we are plundered! We are greatly ashamed, because we have forsaken the land, because we have been cast out of our dwellings,'* (v19)

But shockingly, still there is no thought of turning to God. He tells them, 'Teach your children and neighbours to sober up because on that day you won't need professional mourning, but real mourning for your personal tragedy.' *'Death has come through your windows to claim your children, young men, and grown men.'* (v20-22)

This is a picture of a pandemic, like the tenth plague over Egypt. Is there another pandemic coming?
2. Stop boasting in your 'wisdom', 'power', 'riches', but KNOW YOUR GOD. ('Degrees' or 'position' or 'money' are still men's measure of success.) God warns Judah, those things are not going to save you one bit on the day of judgment. The only thing that will save you, is the fact that you know God. Knowing God means being loyal to Him, delighting in what He loves - mercy, justice and righteousness.

F. God Speaks to the Nations about the Coming Judgment (9:25-26)

1. The judgment that is coming upon Judah was not the end. God's judgment will come upon the circumcised as well as uncircumcised, Jews and Gentiles alike. *C.f. 'but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness-indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek.'* (Rom 2:8-9)
2. The principle of God's judgment is not external, but internal. What God required was the internal circumcision of the heart beyond the external mark on the flesh. The Jews who were circumcised in the flesh but not circumcised in the heart, will be punished along with those who are not circumcised at all. We are living in those days now.
3. **How do we prepare for the future? There is so much parallel for today as it was in Jeremiah's day.**
 - a) It is time to SOBER UP, not for LIVING UP.
 - b) Don't boast in your wisdom, power, riches. Or degrees, position, money. But know your God, the God of the Scriptures. We should be busy, learning and knowing our God.
 - c) What was Judah's problem? Judah said, 'We are wise, and we have more Bibles than other nations.' But God said to Judah, 'You do have the Bible, and you have a lot of hot air – false teachings, false hope, false peace.' Judah said, 'We have done nothing wrong, and we know God.' But God said to Judah, 'You don't Know Me. In fact, in deceit you refuse to know Me.'
 - d) We need to go deeper in God. We need to spend time with God and listen carefully to what He says about Himself until we can hear His word, His heart, and His feelings. Every believer should be busy knowing God. There is no greater ambition in life for a man or a woman than to know God deeply and personally.

Thus says the LORD:

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,

Let not the mighty man glory in his might,

Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;

But let him who glories glory in this,

That he understands and knows Me,

That I am the LORD,

Exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these I delight," says the LORD.

(Jeremiah 9:23-24)