

Jeremiah 09 - The People Mourn in Judgment

II. Thirteen prophecies of judgment upon Judah (Jer 2:1—25:38)

(1) Nine general prophecies of judgment that include offers of repentance (Jer 2:1—19:15)

(C) Third message: Temple's sermon (Jer 7:1—10:25)

(b) Reality and causes of coming judgment (Jer 8:4—10:25)

(ii) First funeral dirge over Jerusalem (8:18—9:1)

(iii) Universal corruption (9:2-9)

(iv) National rebellion (9:10-16)

(v) Second funeral dirge over Jerusalem (9:17-22)

(vi) God as the only basis for boasting (9:23-26)

Jeremiah 9

(ii) First funeral dirge over Jerusalem (8:18—9:1)

1 Oh, that my head were waters And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For those slain of the daughter of my people!

1 Oh that my head were waters And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!

1 "Oh, that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears, for then I would cry day and night for those of my people who have been killed.

1 Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

- Probably the most pathetic verse in the book (Cf. Rom 9:1-5; 10:1)

— This is the type of statement that gives him the title The Weeping Prophet. Jeremiah was in deep agony most of his life because he cared for his people. He struggles with the certainty of their disaster as against the hope of their repentance.

— Daughter phrase, in a collective sense, refers to the "Daughter of Zion," i.e. Judah, or Jerusalem (Cf. Rom 9: 11).

(iii) Universal corruption (9:2-9)

2 Oh that I had in the desert A travelers' lodging place; So that I might leave my people And go away from them! For all of them are adulterers, An assembly of treacherous people.

2 Oh that I had in the desert A wayfarers' lodging place; That I might leave my people And go from them! For all of them are adulterers, An assembly of treacherous men.

2 Oh, that I had a lodging place for travelers in the desert, so that I could leave my people and go away from them. For all of them are adulterers, a band of traitors.

2 Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they *be* all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

3 "They bend their tongues *like* their bows; Lies and not truth prevail in the land; For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me," declares the LORD.

3 "They bend their tongue *like* their bow; Lies and not truth prevail in the land; For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me," declares the LORD.

3 They use their tongues like a bow. Lies rather than truth fly throughout the land. They progress from one evil to another, and they don't know me," declares the LORD.

3 And they bend their tongues *like* their bow *for* lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.

- The sins of the tongue: Ps 12 and James 3:1-12; there are lots of places in Scripture that talk about this unruly instrument of our body.

— What clearly surfaces as God's first candidate for the most offensive member of our body is our tongue. The tongue as the bow and the lies as the arrow—very graphic.

— There is a parallel between Jeremiah weeping over his people and Jesus Christ on a mountain, weeping over Jerusalem

- Jeremiah gets very concerned here (v1-3) over the adulterers and the assembly of treacherous men

4 "Let everyone be on guard against his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; Because every brother utterly betrays, And every neighbor goes about as a slanderer.

4 "Let everyone be on guard against his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; Because every brother deals craftily, And every neighbor goes about as a slanderer.

4 "Beware of your neighbors, and don't trust any of your relatives. For all of your relatives act deceitfully, and every friend goes around as a slanderer.

4 Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.

5 "Everyone deceives his neighbor And does not speak the truth. They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves committing wrongdoing.

5 "Everyone deceives his neighbor And does not speak the truth, They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves committing iniquity.

5 People deceive their friends, and they don't tell the truth. They have taught their tongues to tell lies. They exhaust themselves practicing evil.

5 And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and weary* themselves to commit iniquity.

- The observation is that as a nation lacks spiritual dedication, human relations become insecure. Society itself is threatened when mutual confidence is lost.

6 "Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me," declares the LORD.

6 "Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me," declares the LORD.

6 You yourself live in the midst of deception, and because they are deceived they do not know me," declares the LORD.

6 Thine habitation *is* in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.

- This description is not unique to just the times that Jeremiah was dealing with in the nation of Judah, but in our society also.

7 Therefore this is what the LORD of armies says: "Behold, I will refine them and put them to the test; For what else can I do, because of the daughter of My people?

7 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, I will refine them and assay them; For what else can I do, because of the daughter of My people?

7 Therefore, this is what the LORD of the Heavenly Armies says: "Look, I'm about to refine and test them. Because they're my people, what else can I do?

7 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?

8 "Their tongue is a deadly arrow; It speaks deceit; With his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor, But inwardly he sets an ambush for him.

8 "Their tongue is a deadly arrow; It speaks deceit; With his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor, But inwardly he sets an ambush for him.

8 Their tongue is a deadly arrow that speaks deceit. With his mouth a person says, 'Peace,' to his friend, but inwardly he sets a trap for him.

8 Their tongue *is as* an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.

9 "Shall I not punish them for these things?" declares the LORD. "Shall I not avenge Myself On a nation such as this?

9 "Shall I not punish them for these things?" declares the LORD. "On a nation such as this Shall I not avenge Myself?"

9 Should I not punish them for these things?" asks the LORD, "and should I not avenge myself on a nation like this?"

9 Shall I not visit them for these *things*? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

(iv) National rebellion (9:10-16)

10 "I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains, And for the pastures of the wilderness a song of mourning, Because they are laid waste so that no one passes through, And the sound of the livestock is not heard; Both the birds of the sky and the animals have fled; they are gone.

10 "For the mountains I will take up a weeping and wailing, And for the pastures of the wilderness a dirge, Because they are laid waste so that no one passes through, And the lowing of the cattle is not heard; Both the birds of the sky and the beasts have fled; they are gone.

10 I'll weep and mourn for the mountains, and lament for the desert pastures, because they are desolate and no one passes through them. They don't hear the lowing of the cattle. Both the birds of the sky and the animals have fled. They're gone!

10 For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through *them*; neither can *men* hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone.

11 "I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, A haunt of jackals; And I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant."

11 "I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, A haunt of jackals; And I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant."

11 "I'll make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a refuge for jackals. I'll make the towns of Judah desolate, without inhabitants."

11 And I will make Jerusalem heaps, *and* a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

- That sounds like flowery language, the visualizing of Jerusalem as a den of jackals; it wasn't many years later when the total captivity of Judah was extent and Jerusalem was, in fact, a heap of rubble.

— Jeremiah's prophecies came very vividly to pass. His message is not only not received, but there was a secret plot to assassinate him. The participants in that plot were from his

hometown: his family, and his friends, which we will discover later. He does not have a popular message.

The Reason for Judgment

12 Who is the wise person who may understand this? And *who is* he to whom the mouth of the LORD has spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land destroyed, laid waste like the desert, so that no one passes through?

12 Who is the wise man that may understand this? And *who is* he to whom the mouth of the LORD has spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined, laid waste like a desert, so that no one passes through?

12 Who is the wise person who understands this, and to whom has the LORD spoken so that he may declare it? Why is the land destroyed, ruined like the desert, without anyone passing through it?

12 Who *is* the wise man, that may understand this? and *who is* he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth *and* is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?

13 The LORD said, "Because they have abandoned My Law which I put before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it,

13 The LORD said, "Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it,

13 The LORD said, "It is because they have forsaken my Law that I gave them. They didn't obey me and didn't live according to it.

13 And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;

14 but have followed the stubbornness of their heart and the Baals, as their fathers taught them,"

14 but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them,"

14 Instead, they followed their rebellious hearts and the Baals, as their ancestors taught them."

14 But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

15 therefore this is what the LORD of armies, the God of Israel says: "Behold, I will feed this people wormwood; and I will give them poisoned water to drink.

15 therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink.

15 Therefore, this is what the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel, says: "Look, I'll make these people eat wormwood and drink poisoned water.

15 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

- The word *lanah*, in Hebrew means bitter food. It is here translated "wormwood" (Rev 9) The Russian word for wormwood is Chernobyl. The intent here is clear that their waters will be poisoned.

Scattered Among the Nations

16 I will also scatter them among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them until I have put an end to them."

16 I will scatter them among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them until I have annihilated them."

16 I'll scatter them among nations that neither they nor their ancestors have known, and I'll pursue them with the sword until I've finished them off."

16 I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them.

Diaspora

Scatter them among the nations—go to Lev 26:33 and Deut 28:64, as a couple of examples, the classic passages in the Torah where God has prophesied that they would be scattered among the nations. The interesting thing about v16 is that Jeremiah's focus is on the Babylonian captivity. That is a singular, although ruling, nation. Here the prophecy is "I will scatter them among the nations," plural. See notes on Is 11:11 about the "two regatherings" of Israel.

(v) Second funeral dirge over Jerusalem (9:17-22)

17 This is what the LORD of armies says: "Consider and call for the mourning women, that they may come; And send for the skillful women, that they may come!

17 Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider and call for the mourning women, that they may come; And send for the wailing women, that they may come!

17 This is what the LORD of the Heavenly Armies says: "Think about what I'm saying! Indeed, call out the professional mourners! Send for the best of them to come.

17 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come:

18 "Have them hurry and take up a wailing for us, So that our eyes may shed tears, And our eyelids flow with water.

18 "Let them make haste and take up a wailing for us, That our eyes may shed tears And our eyelids flow with water.

18 Let them hurry and lament for us. Let tears run down from our eyes, and let our eyelids flow with water.

18 And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.

- Some sarcasm here, but what it is referring to is the use of professional mourners. In that society, there was a practice, if you had an occasion to mourn, to get it organized (2 Chr 35:25; Eccl 12:5; Amos 5:16; and Jairus in Matt 9:23).

19 "For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion: 'How devastated we are! We are put to great shame, For we have abandoned the land Because they have torn down our homes.'"

19 "For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion, 'How are we ruined! We are put to great shame, For we have left the land, Because they have cast down our dwellings.'"

19 For a sound of mourning is heard from Zion: 'How we're ruined! Our shame is very great, because we have left the land, because our houses are torn down.'"

19 For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out.

- The word spoiled here is used as how they were pillaged. This is a rhetorical dialogue as if they are responding as they will respond subsequently.

20 Now hear the word of the LORD, you women, And let your ears receive the word of His mouth; Teach your daughters wailing, And *have* every woman *teach* her neighbor a song of mourning.

20 Now hear the word of the LORD, O you women, And let your ear receive the word of His mouth; Teach your daughters wailing, And everyone her neighbor a dirge.

20 "Now, you women, hear the message from the LORD; listen to what he has to say! Teach your daughters how to mourn, let every woman teach her friend how to lament.

20 Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation.

21 For death has come up through our windows; It has entered our palaces To eliminate the children from the streets, The young men from the public squares.

21 For death has come up through our windows; It has entered our palaces To cut off the children from the streets, The young men from the town squares.

21 For death comes up through our windows; it has come into our palaces to eliminate children from the streets and young men from the town squares.

21 For death is come up into our windows, *and* is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, *and* the young men from the streets.

22 Speak, "This is what the LORD says: 'The corpses of people will fall like dung on the open field, And like the sheaf after the reaper, But no one will gather *them*.'"

22 Speak, "Thus says the LORD, 'The corpses of men will fall like dung on the open field, And like the sheaf after the reaper, But no one will gather *them*.'"

22 Speak! 'This is what the LORD says: "The corpses of people will fall like dung on the surface of the field, and like a row of cut grain behind the harvester when there is no one to gather it.'"

22 Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcases of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather *them*.

- Sometimes called the "Poem on Death of the Reaper." The prophet makes his point. One of the overtones here is that not only will they die; no one is going to gather the bodies. To the ancients, the unthinkable was to die and not be buried; it was viewed as excessively offensive.

(vi) God as the only basis for boasting (9:23-26)

23 This is what the LORD says: "Let no wise man boast of his wisdom, nor let the mighty man boast of his might, nor a rich man boast of his riches;

23 Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;

23 This is what the LORD says: "The wise man is not to boast in his wisdom; the strong man is not to boast in his strength; and the rich man is not to boast in his riches.

23 Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches:

24 but let the one who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises mercy, justice, and righteousness on the earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

24 Rather, let the one who boasts, boast in this: that he understands and knows me, for I am the LORD who acts with gracious love, justice, and righteousness in the land. I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.

- "The foolishness of God..." Does God have foolishness? This foolishness of God is a major theme in 1 Corinthians; you also see it all through Scripture. (Cf. Noah and the ark, Samson defeating the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, Elisha telling Naaman to go bathe in the Jordan seven times, Joshua and the battle of Jericho.)

— God seems to go out of his way to use bizarre instruments to accomplish his purposes. The most ridiculous idea that God presents is the idea of the son of a carpenter crucified on a Roman cross on a hill outside of Jerusalem, that he would be the center of all time, the basis of which all things are judged, the basis by which God will pour out his mercy on sinners. That is what Paul says here in v18.

- Rom 1:25-31. These ideas are fundamental to our whole Biblical perception, and it is also fascinating that this passage's roots are in Jer 9:23-24.

Circumcised Punished with Uncircumcision

25 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised—

25 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised—

25 "Look, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I'll punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh:

25 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all *them which* are circumcised with the uncircumcised;

26 Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all those inhabiting the desert who trim the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart."

26 Egypt and Judah, and Edom and the sons of Ammon, and Moab and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart."

26 Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, all those who live in the desert and shave the corners of their beard; indeed all the other nations that are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel that is uncircumcised of heart."

26 Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all *that are* in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all *these* nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.

- In the Hebrew construction that He is going to punish the circumcised with uncircumcision, it is a self-contradictory, and the term is an oxymoronic phrase.
- Jeremiah means by this is that he is going to use the uncircumcised, ie. Egypt, Judah, Edom, the children of Ammon and Moab.
- What is ironic about that is that they are treated rhetorically as uncircumcised. There is some evidence that Egyptians, at some times, did practice circumcision, but that just confuses the fact. The idea is that they are the uncircumcised because the circumcision was a sign of Abraham; these are not of Abraham. So he is saying that he is going to use the uncircumcised nations to judge Israel who is supposed to be circumcised.

But he also says, "all the house of Israel is uncircumcised..." He means uncircumcised in the heart. The book of Deuteronomy and some of Paul's letters say that circumcision is of the heart. For those who are interested in Egypt and circumcision, Herodotus, the Greek historian, in 2 book 36-37 and also in 104, ascribes the Egyptians as practicing circumcision. This also comes up in Joshua 5:9 in terms of Israel not being circumcised because during the wilderness wanderings they were not circumcised. Edom was also circumcised according to Hyrconus and it is mentioned in Josephus (XIII 257-58, [ix.1]; 318-19 [xi3]). The key idea not having kept the covenant in their heart will be judged by those not of the covenant.