

WARNING OF JUDGEMENT

It seems that we tend to ignore the obvious around us – we see that things are deteriorating and sort of “look the other way” or with the best of intentions, we put off “fixing the problem” until “tomorrow” and then we become accustomed to the problem and it is accepted as normal. Then something else deteriorates and the cycle is repeated multiple times. This sequence goes on until we are in such a mess that it becomes next to impossible to fix what is wrong without starting over.

This is exactly what happened to the Jews that lead up to the judgment of God that sent them into captivity in Babylon. It is what is happening to our nation as a society (or culture), it is happening in governments at the national, state and local levels, it happens in our churches, it happens in families, and in the lives of individuals. When we abandon the standard of “what is right” and adopt a new standard of our own making, then when we start downhill we find that the resistance to sliding decreases once we start moving and we then pick up speed because of the pull of the “gravity of sin.” The truly sad thing is that the devastation of impact when we have fallen all the way (or hit the ground) is far worse than the enjoyment and thrill we had during the ride or the free fall. Another way to state this is “the benefits from doing something that is illegal or even questionable are seldom worth the cost of the consequences.”

Jer 6:1-2 "Flee for safety, people of Benjamin! Flee from Jerusalem! Sound the trumpet in Tekoa! Raise the signal over Beth Hakkerem! For disaster looms out of the north, even terrible destruction. I will destroy the Daughter of Zion, so beautiful and delicate.

God's warning to His people is repeated many times. If people will not repent, then the land will perish and the righteous must leave or be destroyed with it. We are to be a “called out” people and separated from the world system that is to be destroyed.

The call went out to Benjamin, which was to the northeast of Judah. Jerusalem was on the the boundary line between Judah and Benjamin. The natural tendency of people in rural areas might be to go to the fortified walled city for protection when problems arise. In this case, that was a wrong choice since “the Daughter of Zion” or Jerusalem was specifically designated for destruction.

Our protection does not lie in the apparently strong and powerful but only in the Lord as we abide in His presence. The warning also went south to Tekoa (literal meaning “stockade”) and to Beth Hakkerem (house of the vineyard). The warning was to those all around Jerusalem and to all the people regardless of the their status in life.

It is possible that the call to Benjamin (literal meaning “son of my right hand”) was a call to those who were not caught up in the overt and blatant sinfulness of the rest of the nation which was to be destroyed.

The description given to the “Daughter of Zion” - beautiful and delicate could be (and probably should be) rendered as a “tender meadow.” If we look ahead to the means by which Jerusalem would be destroyed, we see that this analogy is most fitting.

Jer 6:3-8 "Shepherds with their flocks will come against her; they will pitch their tents around her, each tending his own portion." "Prepare for battle against her! Arise, let us attack at noon! But, alas, the daylight is fading, and the shadows of evening grow long. So arise, let us attack at night and destroy her fortresses!" This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Cut down the trees and build siege ramps against Jerusalem. This city must be punished; it is filled with oppression. As a well pours out its water, so she pours out her wickedness. Violence and destruction resound in her; her sickness and wounds are ever before me. Take warning, O Jerusalem, or I will turn away from you and make your land desolate so no one can live in it."

WHO: The invading army that would destroy (cut down) the “tender meadow” is presented by Jeremiah as shepherds and their flock which would eat the pasture down to the ground.

HOW: The method by which the walls of the city (protection) would be overcome was the standard way of invading armies to build a siege ramp of trees and dirt and just walk right in.

WHY: The coming destruction was the predicted outcome of failure to walk in the ways of the Lord.

WARNING: God warned that He would turn away from them and leave them unprotected.

APPLICATION: For any nation that ignores Godly principles, if destruction does not start immediately, then it will come later, but it will surely come because God’s justice demands it.

When we know no end to wickedness and actually celebrate it as is done with the Gay and Lesbian groups, when injustice abounds in the courts and the systems becomes only one of winning or losing and not about justice, and when a few reward themselves at the expense of many, then the desolation will come.

Jer 6:9-12 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Let them glean the remnant of Israel as thoroughly as a vine; pass your hand over the branches again, like one gathering grapes." To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it. But I am full of the wrath of the LORD, and I cannot hold it in. "Pour it out on the children in the street and on the young men gathered together; both husband and wife will be caught in it, and the old, those weighed down with years. Their houses will be turned over to others, together with their fields and their wives, when I stretch out my hand against those who live in the land," declares the LORD.

When we reach the point of the cup of iniquity being full, then the judgment of God starts. When it starts it is thorough and it must run its course. When a people become so sinful that God must take action then the judgment affects all in that society. Those who are especially wicked and those who are just “moderately wicked” experience the same judgement.

The warning had gone out and nobody was listening to Jeremiah. The same thing is happening today. The warnings go out and sometimes they are punctuated with various problems we experience and (as in the days of Jeremiah) no one is listening.

Jer 6:13-15 "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the LORD.

All who do not come out and separate themselves will get caught up in the greed and wantonness of a culture. It will affect the leaders and the man-in-the-street. It affects the clergy and the lay persons. Everyone becomes so desensitized to evil that nothing causes us to blush anymore. And we are told “it’s OK.” We are just being freed of our inhibitions. The gaping wounds that are crippling us are treated with band-aids. Judges turn criminals loose to steal, rape and kill again. However, eventually, justice will be served. God will not be mocked.

Jer 6:16-17 This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.' I appointed watchmen over you and said, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' But you said, 'We will not listen.'

Every situation in life is a crossroads experience. We have a choice and we must choose which way we will go. Examine alternatives and pick the good way – God’s way. By choosing God’s way we find confidence with the realization that what we are doing is right and we don’t have to keep searching for a better way. In our human pride, we think we can find something

better than what God has appointed and we abandon His ways. When we go our own way, then we typically get into trouble. Because of God's love He sends messengers who sound the alarm to call us back to the right path. Usually, we do not listen because we are so enamored by and caught up in our own way of doing things.

Jer 6:18-19 Therefore hear, O nations; observe, O witnesses, what will happen to them. Hear, O earth: I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not listened to my words and have rejected my law.

When God judges His own, it is a witness to the rest of the world. If He will judge His own for rejecting His law, then how much more severe will be the judgement of those who go totally after other gods.

Jer 6:20-21 What do I care about incense from Sheba or sweet calamus from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please me." Therefore this is what the LORD says: "I will put obstacles before this people. Fathers and sons alike will stumble over them; neighbors and friends will perish."

We "invent" a lot of new "stuff" and think that we are making worship more meaningful. The Israelites would find a sweeter incense to burn in the temple or find a more perfect bullock or ram to sacrifice. We come up with "drama" or "contemporary worship services" or "back to traditional services" or whatever the latest fad is and think we are fulfilling God's will. God doesn't care about these things, He is looking for obedience. When we have taken care of the obedience, then we can be about these other niceties if we have any time left.

Because we ignore what God has said to do, we find that we have problems getting the other things done. Many times nothing seems to go as planned. Seldom do we realize that these are obstacles that God has placed in our path to get our attention. We just push ahead and doggedly carry out our own plans anyway.

Jer 6:22-23 This is what the LORD says: "Look, an army is coming from the land of the north; a great nation is being stirred up from the ends of the earth. They are armed with bow and spear; they are cruel and show no mercy. They sound like the roaring sea as they ride on their horses; they come like men in battle formation to attack you, O Daughter of Zion."

If the obstacles do not work and we continue in our own way, then God will send something that **will** get our attention. In Judah's case, He sent an invading and conquering army.

Jer 6:24-26 We have heard reports about them, and our hands hang limp. Anguish has gripped us, pain like that of a woman in labor. Do not go out to the fields or walk on the roads, for the enemy has a sword, and there is terror on every side. O my people, put on sackcloth and roll in ashes; mourn with bitter wailing as for an only son, for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us.

God always gives adequate warning. The people of Judah knew what was happening with the Babylonians and their conquests. They could see that they might be next. It was to the point that they warned each other of the possible danger of the enemy. However, they did not look to God for salvation nor did they repent of their evil.

Jer 6:27-30 "I have made you a tester of metals and my people the ore, that you may observe and test their ways. They are all hardened rebels, going about to slander. They are bronze and iron; they all act corruptly. The bellows blow fiercely to burn away the lead with fire, but the refining goes on in vain; the wicked are not purged out. They are called rejected silver, because the LORD has rejected them."

The message of the prophet was to be as a blazing fire. "Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them." [Jer 5:14] This time the fire would be an attempt to refine the people, rid them of the impure. But sometimes the impurity cannot be removed with simple refining and the metal has to be rejected.