

Jer. 12:1 ¶ Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?

Jer. 12:2 Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.

I really do identify with Jeremiah in the opening verses of this chapter. He knows that God is righteous in everything He does, but he is having a hard time understanding how the wicked prospering meshes with that truth. Jeremiah recognizes that God is the source of all that man possesses. Scripture is clear that because of His love He does not withhold resources from the wicked.

Matthew 5:44–46 “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?”

I couldn't help but think of the words of the psalmist regarding this same frustration.

Psalms 73:3 & 17 “For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.... Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.”

When the wicked face their time of judgment before God, they will not be able to blame Him for treating them unfairly. Their “end” will be determined based on their specific choice to reject the God who showed His love for them in so many ways—none more radical than to sacrifice His only Son to provide their redemption.

The last part of verse two caught my attention. I know that in context the reference is to those in Jeremiah's day who were maintaining an outward appearance of worshipping the LORD, but whose hearts declared that worship to be false. In today's culture I find that the LORD's name is still often in the mouths of wicked pretenders to the faith, but is even more often in the mouths of those who make no pretense of honoring God; they just use His name as an expletive or curse. The more sin abounds, the colder love becomes and is evidenced in the way people treat one another.

Matthew 24:12 “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

Jer. 12:3 But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.

Jeremiah knows that in contrast to the wicked, the LORD knows that his desire is to honor God with his life; he has been tested and proven faithful in his

commitment to the LORD. He is asking God to destroy his enemies. I believe he is asking this from his perspective based on God's righteousness in judgment.

Jer. 12:4 How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end.

Jeremiah is basically expressing his thoughts that the land has suffered far too long in consequence of the sin of the wicked men who dominate the culture. The last phrase seems to be conveying the thought that God doesn't know what is going on.

Jer. 12:5 If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?
Jer. 12:6 For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

The NLT introduced these verses as coming from the LORD, and that made sense to me. It seems that He is telling Jeremiah that the trials that are confronting him because of these wicked men are meant to strengthen his faith. The implication seems to be that the trouble they are causing him is but a little thing in comparison to troubles to come. Very distressing to note is that the greatest trials to one's faith are often a result of the actions of family—those whom you should be able to trust the most. It seems that one of their favorite ploys is deception.

I found an important quote in the IVP New Bible Commentary: "The one who would be faithful to God can often count on the faithfulness only of God himself."

Jer. 12:7 ¶ I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.

Jer. 12:8 Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it.

Jer. 12:9 Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour.

The LORD tells Jeremiah that He has basically abandoned His people at this point in time because of their sin. He has given them over to their enemies.

The roaring of a lion is a sign of evil intent. The LORD describes His people as roaring at Him with evil in their hearts; they have blasphemed His name in light of their idol worship and their rejection of His word from the mouths of His prophets. They have provoked His anger and become His enemy (from the Hebrew for "hated" in v8).

The Hebrew for “speckled bird” in v9 is a reference to birds of prey; this again identifies the people of Judah as God’s enemies. The “birds” around her would be a reference to the enemies of Judah. Just as the beasts of the field often finish off what is left of the prey of the carnivorous birds, the Lord is inviting the nations to take their spoil of anything left behind in the wake of destruction caused by Israel’s enemies.

Jer. 12:10 Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. Jer. 12:11 They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart.

The Hebrew for the word “pastors” makes reference to those in rule over others and in association with friends. This is probably referencing the leadership of many of the kings and spiritual leaders in Judah’s history that have resulted in the spiritual corruption of the people and their rebellion against God. These leaders were established to guard against such corruption and rebellion. They were intended to lead the people according to God’s word.

The most telling phrase is the last one in verse 11—no one really cares. The people were willing and complicit.

I think it is important to note that these observations are pertinent to the general population. There is obviously still a precious remnant of men of faith as represented by Jeremiah. I am afraid that America is becoming much like the nation of Israel in that regard. What was established as a nation founded on the principles of the word of God at least, has become a nation that has chosen to put aside most of those principles and reject the author of those principles for the most part. Even our own president in 2010 declares that we are not a Christian nation. Our leaders have led us astray and we have followed like dumb sheep. I am sorry to say that I am afraid we have allowed ourselves to get past the point of no return regarding spiritual healing of the nation as a whole.

Jer. 12:12 The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the *one* end of the land even to the *other* end of the land: no flesh shall have peace.

Jer. 12:13 They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit: and they shall be ashamed of your revenues because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

The LORD has declared judgment upon the whole land of Israel. He has determined that the people will reap no reward on their work investment. He is also boldly declaring that this judgment is a result of His “fierce anger.”

Jer. 12:14 ¶ Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.

Jer. 12:15 And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.

The opening phrase in these verses is quite interesting; the LORD is referencing the evil neighbors of Judah/Israel as His neighbors. These are words of hope for the people of Israel. Though they have rejected Him, God will keep His covenant with Abraham. Their enemies will not be allowed to permanently possess the land that God has given to His people. The time will come when the LORD will remove them from Israel and bring His people back home. It seems His intention is to return all people to the land of their own heritage.

Though scripture doesn't define the boundaries of most Gentile nations, it is clear that He has granted certain lands to certain nations; e.g. Edom, Moab and Ammon.

Deuteronomy 2:5 "Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession."

Deuteronomy 2:9 "And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession."

Deuteronomy 2:19 "And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession."

I tend to think the nations are defined in God's view according to genealogical descent from the sons of Noah as described in Genesis 10.

Genesis 10:32 "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood."

Scripture also indicates that the nations have been apportioned in accordance with the population of Israel.

Deuteronomy 32:8 "When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."

Jer. 12:16 And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people.

Jer. 12:17 But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD.

Because of the wording, I tend to think that these last four verses are in reference to the time that Messiah comes to set up His kingdom. They are speaking of a

time when Israel has been regathered and will be in a position to teach the nations their ways (implied is that these are the ways that were given to them by God). The hope for the Gentile nations is that they will also be allowed to prosper if they will learn to honor the LORD. If, however, a nation chooses to disobey God and rebel against His rule, the LORD will destroy that nation.

This truth is also recorded in Isaiah's prophecy.

*Isaiah 60:9–12 “Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. **For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.**”*