

Jer. 5:1 ¶ Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.

This chapter begins with a challenge to search the city of Jerusalem to see if even one man can be found who is just and honest in his dealings with others and seeks truth. If one can be found, the LORD declares He will pardon the city. This reminds me of Abraham's discussion with the LORD about sparing Sodom and Gomorrah. It would seem to imply other than Jeremiah. This is a bit confusing since the prophet Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, records a vision in which the LORD places a mark on those who are grieved over the moral condition of their city.

Ezekiel 9:4 "And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary."

This would seem to indicate that there were other just men in the city. Maybe the directive is not meant to include those whose lives were yielded in service to the LORD. Maybe the key is that the search is to be done in "the streets" and "the broad places," the public places in the city. The prophets often describe the city and/or the nation as a whole in light of what is predominant in the culture. I am sure that there are few who would identify America as a Christian nation today in light of a culture that can only be described generally as not fearing God, embracing immorality of all types, and is humanistic at its core.

Jer. 5:2 And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely.

That fact is that even when the people swear to the truth of their statements by the name of the LORD, they are telling lies. It was to the point that God's name was a useful tool in achieving their own purposes, but God Himself was no longer feared or revered.

This makes me think of people who use churches as networking opportunities or for other personal purposes. They aren't really there to learn about God and worship Him.

Jer. 5:3 O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

This verse seems to be saying that in light of His love for them and His desire for them to represent the truth, the LORD has been faithful to send various judgments upon His people to the intent of correcting them and bringing them to repentance. They had experienced oppression from their enemies, withholding of rain, and even seen the Northern Kingdom taken captive. The people did not

repent; instead, they hardened their faces and continued in their sin. They were determined to follow the desires of their flesh and reject God's authority over them.

(6/11) I just realized as I was reading this section again that valid parallels can be made with America today. We are being attacked by our enemies via terrorists and drug lords; we are experiencing deadly natural disasters. History has shown what happens to nations that turn away from God in rebellion and disobedience to His word; still, as a whole, our nation is continuing with an ever hardening heart to reject God and His word. I believe our judgment is just as certain.

Jer. 5:4 Therefore I said, Surely these *are* poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, *nor* the judgment of their God.

Jer. 5:5 I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, *and* the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, *and* burst the bonds.

Jer. 5:6 Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, *and* a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, *and* their backslidings are increased.

Jeremiah reasons that his search was fruitless because the people are spiritually impoverished (poor) and lacking understanding or judgment (foolish). As the NLT put it: "They don't understand what God expects of them."

So Jeremiah decides to go to the leaders of the people but finds that they are no better off than the people regarding spiritual truth and wisdom. Even those who should be teaching and leading the people have rebelled against God as their Lord. With the leaders in such condition, the people could not be expected to know better. Because they have broken covenant with God, they have become vulnerable to the attack of their enemies (pictured by the animals); they were no longer going to experience God's protective hand in their defense. Maybe they were even experiencing unusual attacks by these wild animals in consequence of their choice to become more and more sinful and rebellious.

Jer. 5:7 How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by *them that are* no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.

Jer. 5:8 They were *as* fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife.

Jer. 5:9 Shall I not visit for these *things*? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

The Lord declares that there is absolutely no reason for Him to have mercy upon His people and forgive them. He had blessed them abundantly and they had not raised their children to honor God. Their example, in fact, had led their children to forsake God as Lord. They had committed spiritual adultery by turning to false gods. They had become morally corrupt. Sexual sin was prevalent. It

seems that the worship of false gods and immorality go hand-in-hand. The worship of idols in the heathen cultures of those times actually included consorting with temple prostitutes.

God's conclusion—Should I not exercise judgment on such a people? Should not My honor be avenged?

Sounds pretty familiar doesn't it? America has almost completely turned away from her spiritual foundations and immorality is widespread and acceptable. God never changes. Should we expect any difference in His response toward our nation?

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I change not...."

I was reminded of an article that I saw recently in The Huffington Post written by Fernando Alfonso III dated May 17, 2010. The following is an excerpt from that article. At least a "move away from...God" was recognized by some as part of the problem.

"Three-quarters of Americans say the country's moral values are worsening, blaming a decline in ethical standards, poor parenting, and dishonesty by government and business leaders, Gallup reports. The number of Americans who say the nation's moral values are in decline grew by 5 percent since last year. Other reasons Americans mentioned were a rise in crime, a breakdown of the two-parent family and a moving away from religion or God."

Jer. 5:10 ¶ Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they *are* not the LORD'S.

Jer. 5:11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD.

Jer. 5:12 They have belied the LORD, and said, *It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine:*

Jer. 5:13 And the prophets shall become wind, and the word *is not* in them: thus shall it be done unto them.

The Lord is basically telling the enemies of His people that they have His permission to come and devastate the nation, but they cannot completely destroy it. Why is He going to allow this? Because His people have been unfaithful to Him; they have broken covenant. They have impugned God's character and called Him a liar. Though He had been very specific in His warnings to the people regarding breaking covenant and rejecting Him as Lord, they did not believe He would respond to such actions with "sword or famine." They did not believe the warnings of His true prophets; they did not believe them to be speaking the truth from God.

Moses declared what God's judgment would be for disobedience before the nation was even established in the land.

Deuteronomy 28:45–48 "Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall

pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee."

The NIV Commentary made an interesting observation: "They claimed that the Spirit in the prophets of the Lord was only wind. There is a play here on the Hebrew word *ruah*, which can mean "wind" or "spirit" (GK H8120). The prophets believed they had the Spirit of the Lord; the people claimed the prophets had only wind."

Jer. 5:14 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.

Because of the attitude of the people toward His prophets, YHWH declares that He will make His words as uttered by Jeremiah the means by which He will destroy the people, just as fire destroys wood. What they declared to be just wind would be proven to be a powerful destroying force.

Jer. 5:15 Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.

Jer. 5:16 Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men.

Jer. 5:17 And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.

The Lord declares that He will bring a powerful, ancient nation from far away against His people. They won't even be able to communicate with this nation. Their enemy's army will consist of mighty men who are skilled with their weaponry. These men will spoil the land of its crops, flocks and herds. They will prove to the people that the walls they trust for protection are useless against God's declared judgment against them.

This makes reference to the next verses in the passage from Deuteronomy quoted above.

Deuteronomy 28:49–52 "The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young: And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall

besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee."

Jer. 5:18 Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you.

At this point YHWH allows Jeremiah to proclaim a ray of hope as part of the message—God does not intend to completely destroy the people. He is a covenant-keeping God, and He will fulfill His covenants with Abraham and David.

Deuteronomy 7:7–9 "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations...."

Jer. 5:19 And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.

True to form, when God executes judgment, the people will seem to be oblivious as to why He had judged them. God is anticipating their question. My paraphrase—Why has God brought this judgment upon us? (Like they had never been warned.) Jeremiah is to declare His answer—Since you rejected Me and worshipped the gods of foreign peoples in the land I have given you, you will now be taken away to serve foreigners in their lands. In other words, if you want to serve foreign gods, you might as well live in the lands where they are worshipped.

Jer. 5:20 ¶ Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, Jer. 5:21 Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:

Jer. 5:22 Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?

The Lord instructs Jeremiah to declare this message throughout Judah (my paraphrase): Listen up you who lack understanding, judgment or discernment; who have eyes, but have no spiritual discernment; who have ears, but have no spiritual understanding. Don't you fear Me? Don't you understand that I am the One who established the boundaries of the water and waves from the sea with the sand of the seashore; they cannot pass those boundaries no matter how loud the commotion as they crash against the shore?

I couldn't help but think of the words of a song at this point: "Even the wind and the waves obey; why can't I?" This is a powerful truth. If we truly recognized God for Who He Is and feared Him with a healthy fear, our actions would be more in conformance with His will as revealed in His word. I speak this to my shame. "Father, please work whatever it takes in my life to bring honor and glory to You."

Jer. 5:23 But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

Jer. 5:24 Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

The Lord realizes that Jeremiah's message will fall on deaf ears. The people have rebellious, stubborn, disobedient hearts. They have made their choice to reject YHWH as their Lord. They no longer fear their Creator, the Giver of the rain that makes their land fruitful and has established the seasons that allow them to prepare for the harvest.

Jer. 5:25 ¶ Your iniquities have turned away these *things*, and your sins have withholden good *things* from you.

The Lord is clear in declaring that it is because of their sin that they will experience His judgment in withholding the rain and the blessing of harvest that it brings. (6/11) Note again—Sometimes God intervenes and uses the forces of nature in judgment against sin.

Jer. 5:26 For among my people are found wicked *men*: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

Jer. 5:27 As a cage is full of birds, so *are* their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

Jer. 5:28 They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

The Lord now holds the spiritual leaders of the nation accountable for the attitude of the people. They no longer serve God; they serve themselves. They are becoming wealthy at the expense of the people and misrepresenting God in the process. They do not execute righteous judgment on behalf of the fatherless and the needy. The implication is that they are using their position to their own benefit without regard to the people they should be serving.

Again—Does this sound at all familiar? I think the judicial system in America today has much in common with these wicked leaders of Israel. I'm not saying that the system is totally corrupt; but I think we are quickly moving in that direction. The almighty dollar is king. Personal agendas influence judgment that should be impartial. This is to be expected since we have determined to reject the One who provides the foundation for moral judgment.

Jer. 5:29 Shall I not visit for these *things*? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

YHWH's conclusion (my paraphrase): Why should I not take vengeance on those whom I have so richly blessed since they are so ungrateful for My blessings upon them.

Jer. 5:30 A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;

Jer. 5:31 The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to *have it so*: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

The Hebrew for *wonderful* makes reference to something stunning and astonishing. The prophet is basically saying that something astonishing and fearful has occurred among God's chosen people. The prophets are lying and the priests are ruling in their own authority—not God's. Even more amazing—The people like it that way. He wonders--What do they expect this to lead to?

I can't help but think about those who have positioned themselves as leaders in the "church" today. So many of them seem to be teaching in their own authority while claiming it to be God's authority. Many are "serving" with deceit and for personal gain. We who are clinging boldly to the truth of God's word have a responsibility to speak out like Jeremiah against the lies of these false teachers. We need to boldly declare the truth of God's word in identifying sin and proclaiming the gospel message—"how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures...." (1Corinthians 15:3-4)