

Jer. 9:1 ¶ 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!

Jer. 9:2 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.

This chapter begins with Jeremiah expressing deep grief and sorrow for the wickedness and evil that permeates the culture of his people. He's wishing he had somewhere far away to which he could go and separate himself from that culture. Jeremiah loved his people and was sick of seeing how they had given themselves over to evil in rejection of the God of Israel. I believe his reference to adultery was two-fold—both physical and spiritual.

Jer. 9:3 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 LORD adds to Jeremiah's accusation. He emphasizes that honesty is almost nonexistent; lying predominates the culture. No one stands up for the truth. The people in general participate in one evil deed after another. Why? Because they have no true relationship with YHWH.

It is only through a relationship with YHWH and knowledge of His word that one can hope to overcome evil. When one rejects God, he/she has rejected the only source of power available that can help one overcome the attack of the enemy and the lure of sin. Access to the knowledge of God that is foundational to a relationship with God that can transform one's life is dependent upon the attitude of one's heart. God makes reference to this truth through Jeremiah later in this book.

Jeremiah 24:7 "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."

Moses had warned the people that it was the condition of their heart that would determine their susceptibility to the deceit of the enemy and the lure of serving "other gods."

*Deuteronomy 11:16 "Take heed to yourselves, **that your heart be not deceived**, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them...."*

Scripture is clear in teaching that it is our heart that directs our actions and that the condition of our heart is our responsibility. The Chronicler cites King Rehoboam as an example of this truth.

2 Chronicles 12:13–14 "So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an

Ammonitess. And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD."

Jesus affirmed this truth in His teaching. A hard or calloused heart prevents one from having spiritual understanding. It is from within, out of the heart, that the actions of men are determined.

*Matthew 13:15 "For **this people's heart is waxed gross** [calloused], and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." [brackets mine]*

*Mark 7:21–23 "For from within, **out of the heart** of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: **All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.**"*

Jer. 9:4 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.

Jer. 9:5 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.

Jer. 9:6 Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.

God's commentary on the prevailing culture of His people continues. Through the prophet He warns them that their neighbors are not to be trusted. The motto of the day is "every man for himself." People are determined to get what they want by whatever means. No one can be trusted to tell the truth. The people are directing all their energy in sinful pursuits. The dominating characteristic of the people is **deceit**. It was interesting to look at the meaning of this word in the Hebrew—"...in the sense of deceiving; fraud...feigned, guile...treachery."

Deceive = **1**. To lead into error; to cause to believe what is false, or disbelieve what is true; to impose upon; to mislead; to cheat; to disappoint; to delude; to ensnare.

Fraud = **1**. Deception deliberately practiced with a view to gaining an unlawful or unfair advantage; artifice by which the right or interest of another is injured....

Feign = **1**. To give a mental existence to, as to something not real or actual; to imagine....

Guile = To disguise or conceal; to deceive or delude.

Treachery = Violation of allegiance or of faith and confidence....

It is interesting to note that each of these words is directly connected to a person's choice with intent to take advantage of someone else. Part of this choice includes rejecting the LORD; this choice is evident from their actions.

The application to the continued spiritual decline in America today as evidenced by its culture is obvious.

Jer. 9:7 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?

Jer. 9:8 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.

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

In these verses the LORD concludes that He has no other choice but to refine (melt) His people through judgment. The nation as a whole has become utterly corrupt and wicked. My paraphrase of verse 9: "Do they not deserve judgment for their sin? Does not My righteousness call for vengeance on such wickedness?"

Jer. 9:10 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.

Jer. 9:11 And I will make Jerusalem heaps, *and* a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

These two verses again make me think that Jeremiah is expressing his grief and the Lord is responding with the surety of the coming judgment. It could be that both verses are an expression of God's heart since He had singled out Jerusalem and the land of Israel as His as a gift to His people. It does not please Him to have to exercise judgment upon His people that will result in the destruction of the land as well.

*Jeremiah 2:7 "And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled **my land**, and made **mine heritage** an abomination."*

The prophets Ezekiel and Joel declared this same truth.

*Ezekiel 36:5 "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed **my land** into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey."*

*Joel 3:2 "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for **my people** and for **my heritage Israel**, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted **my land**."*

Jer. 9:12 ¶ 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?

The NIV gives a clearer translation of this verse: “*What man is wise enough to understand this? Who has been instructed by the LORD and can explain it? Why has the land been ruined and laid waste like a desert that no one can cross?*”

Jer. 9:13 And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;

Jer. 9:14 But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

The LORD now answers the why:

- The people had forsaken His law. In other words, they had refused to accept God’s law as their own.
- The people had chosen to disobey Him. Since they chose to reject God’s law, they naturally proceeded to act in disobedience to His declared will for them.
- The people had chosen to follow their own hearts and false gods. Those to whom Jeremiah was ministering were just following in the steps of their fathers before them.

There is a natural progression in view. Man responds to the revelation of God in his life. If that choice is to reject God, his actions will evidence that decision. Those who choose to reject God inevitably end up following false gods that appeal to the lusts of their heart.

Another key truth in view—How parents choose to respond to God is usually pivotal in determining how their children respond to God.

Jer. 9:15 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.

Jer. 9:16 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.

Based on their rejection of Him and His laws, YHWH has determined that His people require judgment. Note that He identifies Himself as “the God of Israel”; they may have rejected Him, but He has not rejected them. He made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that is unconditional. Though He may have to subject His people to great judgment as part of the process of refinement, He will one day restore them in relationship and establish them in blessing before the nations.

Zechariah 8:13 “And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not,

but let your hands be strong.”

It was interesting to look up the meaning of *wormwood* in Webster. It made reference to a tonic that was used to get rid of worms and secondarily as anything bitter or grievous. “Water of gall” seemed to be referencing poisonous urine. Seems to be very descriptive of judgment intended to eliminate disease and destroy those who have rejected Him and brought this judgment upon His people and His land. This seems to imply that those who are spiritually healthy and in right relationship to the LORD will be spared.

Part of this judgment will be to scatter His people among the heathen, the Gentile nations. This part of the judgment will also serve to weed out those who have rejected their covenant with the God of Israel. He specifically states that He will send a sword after them to consume them. No one can deny that history gives ample evidence that the “heathen” nations have relished their role as His instruments of judgment.

Jer. 9:17 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:

Jer. 9:18 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.

Jer. 9:19 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.

Jer. 9:20 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.

Jer. 9:21 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.

This group of verses is meant to affirm the surety of coming judgment. YHWH tells them to go ahead and hire professional mourners. Implied is that so many will die that more women will be needed than are available, so it will be necessary to teach the young women how to effectively express the sorrow of the people. Verses 19 and 21 seem to be the message of the mourners.

Jer. 9:22 Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather *them*.

This verse declares that the judgment of the LORD will result in so many deaths so quickly that proper burial will not be an option.

Jer. 9:23 ¶ 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:

Jer. 9:24 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.

These are verses of very important truth that was totally disregarded by the people of Israel at that time as well as by the majority of people today. The most treasured possession available to man today is a relationship with and knowledge of the LORD that is evidenced in his life!

What are the things that occupy the desires of most men and women in the world? Wisdom, power and wealth. It is thought that if you possess enough wisdom, it will enable you to attain power and/or wealth. Or if you have enough power, you can make use of the wisdom of others in achieving more power and wealth. Or if you have wealth, it provides the power needed to influence the wise towards your own purposes. It's all about self. What they don't focus on is the fact that worldly wisdom, power and wealth are just temporary possessions associated with this life.

True wisdom, power and wealth are the possession of every person that places faith in the LORD and strives to get to know Him through His word and honor them with their lives. The wisdom, power and wealth associated with that choice are eternal.

The LORD is very clear in declaring that He exercises and delights in lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness. Implied is that He expects the same from His people. *Lovingkindness* speaks to showing mercy to others and doing good deeds in honor of God. *Judgment* speaks to governing according to God's law. *Righteousness* makes reference to possessing morals and virtues as defined by God's revelation to man in scripture.

This truth is summarized well by the prophet Micah.

Micah 6:8 "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

The Hebrew for *understanding* makes reference to one who is intelligent, prudent, and skillful and lives accordingly. The Hebrew for *knoweth* makes reference to one who has made careful observation and been diligent in his search for understanding.

Jer. 9:25 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all *them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised*;

Jer. 9:26 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*.

I really liked the wording of the NLT for these verses: "A time is coming," says the LORD, "when I will punish all those who are circumcised in body but not in spirit—the Egyptians, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, the people who live in distant places, and

yes, even the people of Judah. Like all these pagan nations, the people of Israel also have uncircumcised hearts."

We normally think of circumcision as a physical action. The LORD is more concerned with spiritual circumcision—a personal decision to cut away the fleshly desires associated with this world because we have chosen to embrace the spiritual desires associated with a relationship with Him.