

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing

Part X: God's Warning To Repent Before His Unstoppable, Destructive Discipline Falls (Jeremiah 4:1-9)

I. Introduction

- A. Hebrews 12:29 informs us that our New Testament Lord is a Consuming Fire just like He was in the Old Testament, and Hebrews 12:28 ESV thus suggests that we serve this awesome Lord with "reverence and awe."
- B. Our Sovereign Lord expresses Himself in Jeremiah 4:1-9 to warn of His coming unstoppable, destructive judgment in an effort to get His people to repent, what also serves to instruct us in our day (as follows):

II. God's Warning To Repent Before His Unstoppable, Destructive Discipline Falls, Jeremiah 4:1-9.

- A. God said that if Israel would return, she should return to Him, not another god (Jer. 4:1a), for the Hebrew text puts the phrase "to Me" before the verb "return" to emphasize this phrase, Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 709.
- B. Good king Josiah had instituted religious reforms (Jeremiah 3:6; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Jer. 4:1-2), but these reforms apparently "had only superficial effects on many" (Ibid.), so the Lord clarified the need for **real** national repentance in Jeremiah 4:1b-2:
 - 1. God required that the people completely put away their detestable idols, getting rid of them in destroying them in obedience to the Mosaic Law, Jeremiah 4:1b with Deuteronomy 12:1-3.
 - 2. He also required that the people no longer go astray from Him in returning to such idols, Jeremiah 4:1c.
 - 3. The Lord added that they needed to use His name in taking oaths only if they did so in a truthful, just and righteous way, not using God's name to manipulate or mislead others for personal gain, Jeremiah 4:1d.
 - 4. If these things were to occur, signaling true repentance, the nations of both Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Judah (Southern Kingdom) would enjoy God's blessing, Jeremiah 4:1e; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1135.
- C. Since Judah was required to repent to avoid God's discipline, the Lord in Jeremiah 4:3-4 warned her to repent lest His unquenchable wrath break out in judgment with no one to stop it (as follows):
 - 1. Speaking metaphorically of a farmer who does not sow his seed in unplowed, weedy ground, God called the men of Judah to break up the unplowed ground of their hard hearts in repentance, Jer. 4:3; Ibid.
 - 2. The reference to circumcising their hearts referred to making the inward condition of the heart match the outward acts of repentance, Jeremiah 4:4a; Ibid.
 - 3. If this real repentance did not occur, God's discipline would break out and burn like a fire due to all the evil the people had done, and that judgment fire would burn with no one to quench it, Jeremiah 4:4b; Ibid.
- D. Aware that Judah's hardened people lacked a fear for God, Jeremiah 4:5-9 described the form of that judgment (Ibid.) in a horrifying story format designed to create fear of accountability to God so as to elicit repentance:
 - 1. With news of an invading Gentile force arriving from the north, a trumpet call warning would sound throughout the countryside, calling Judah's people to flee from the surrounding villages and farm and pasture lands into the nation's fortified cities to escape the invaders, Jeremiah 4:5 NIV.
 - 2. Indeed, God warned that they should cry aloud and say, "Gather together! Let us flee to the fortified cities!", going to Zion without delay as God was bringing disaster from the north, Jeremiah 4:6 NIV.
 - 3. The Gentile nation from the north, like a lion coming out of its lair to hunt and to kill game, a destroyer of nations, was arriving to lay waste the land, leaving towns in ruins without inhabitants, Jeremiah 4:7 NIV.
 - 4. Consequently, the people of Judah would put on sackcloth, lament and wail for the misery and death that was about to come upon them since God's fierce anger had not turned away, Jeremiah 4:8 NIV.
 - 5. Even Judah's leaders upon whom the common people usually relied for security would be deeply upset: the king and his officials would lose heart, the priests would be appalled and the prophets astounded at the devastation that this invading Gentile force would exact upon Judah's land and her people, Jer. 4:9 ESV.

Lesson: *God sought to impress Judah's people of their need truly to repent or face His severe, unstoppable discipline that He knew they really did not believe was coming and so did not dread. Thus, He charged the people to repent in truth, describing what this involved, and then He painted an unsettling picture of what they would experience in terror, insecurity and appalling devastation when His judgment finally and irretrievably fell.*

Application: *(1) If we need to repent of some sin, may we do so immediately to avoid facing the dreadfully fearful, painful, unstoppable discipline of the Lord. (2) We need to keep the infinite love God has for us in balance with His infinite righteousness in our minds, for BOTH exist, so we must TRULY face and confess our sin immediately!*