

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing
Part XXVI: God's Instruction To His Persecuted Servant
(Jeremiah 11:18-12:6)

I. Introduction

- A. When God's servant disciplines others, his ministry will necessarily expose sin in his hearers (2 Tim. 3:16-17), but John 15:18-22 reveals that that will lead to unreceptive hearers persecuting God's servant.
- B. God's servant then needs insight in dealing with this persecution, and Jeremiah 11:18-12:6 gives it as follows:

II. God's Instruction To His Persecuted Servant, Jeremiah 11:18-12:6.

- A. When God informed Jeremiah of a plot by his hearers to kill him, he asked God for vengeance, Jer. 11:18-20:
 - 1. Jeremiah related how the Lord informed him of a plot by his hearers against him, Jeremiah 11:18 NIV.
 - 2. They planned to kill Jeremiah, likened to a tree, so that his words, likened to the fruit of the tree, would be stopped, and that even the memory of Jeremiah would perish with his demise, Jeremiah 11:19.
 - 3. Upon learning of this plot, Jeremiah prayed to the Lord, addressing Him as the Almighty Lord Who had the power to punish his foes, Who judged righteously and Who tested the heart and mind, Jer. 11:20a.
 - 4. He asked that his great, fair God take vengeance for him on his foes, for he was innocent, Jer. 11:20b.
- B. God answered Jeremiah by promising to slay his enemies in the Babylonian invasion, Jeremiah 11:21-23:
 - 1. The men of Jeremiah's hometown of fellow priests at Anathoth (cf. Jer. 1:1) were those who had conspired to kill him (Jer. 11:21a), and when they knew that Jeremiah had learned of their plot, they told him not to prophesy in the name of the Lord or they would kill him, Jeremiah 11:21b.
 - 2. Accordingly, the Lord answered Jeremiah's prayer for vengeance, promising to punish the men of Anathoth: their young men would die by the sword and their sons and daughters would perish by famine so even a remnant would not survive, Jer. 11:22a. At the time of punishment, the coming Babylonian invasion, God would arrange for all of the people of Anathoth to die, Jeremiah 11:22b-23.
- C. However, Jeremiah was bothered because his ungodly persecutors temporarily prospered, so he asked God why He allowed his ungodly persecutors to prosper before the Lord punished them, Jeremiah 12:1-4.
 - 1. Jeremiah respectfully acknowledged God was always upright whenever he brought His case to Him, v. 1a.
 - 2. Yet, he asked why God let wicked hypocrites prosper, why He did not quickly drag them off like sheep to be slaughtered and butchered, Jer. 12:1b-3a,b. He asked how long the land and animals had to suffer God's temporal discipline where the righteous lived while the wicked even claimed that God would not see what happened to them because He was indifferent to their sin, Jer. 12:4; Bib. Know. Com., O. T., p. 1145.
- D. God replied by addressing what was behind Jeremiah's complaint about the temporal blessing of the wicked -- his hurt and frustration caused by his naively entrusting himself to those who persecuted him, Jer. 12:5-6:
 - 1. God responded to Jeremiah's question by asking him two figurative questions: (a) if he had raced with men on foot and they had tired him, how would he compete with horses? (b) If he had stumbled in a safe land, how would he traverse the thick thickets of the Jordan River lowland? (Jeremiah 12:5) In other words, if Jeremiah found it hard to handle his foes from what he already knew about their plots against him, how would he handle learning about even more wicked efforts by them against him?
 - 2. Specifically, God revealed that Jeremiah's own family had betrayed him, calling for his death, Jer. 12:6a! His question to Jeremiah then would be, "How are you going handle this enhanced news of your foes?"
 - 3. The Lord then gave Jeremiah the solution to his frustration and pain: he was to stop entrusting himself even to his own family; though they spoke well of him to his face, he was not to trust them, Jer. 12:6b. Jeremiah was to protect his mind and heart by no longer trusting those the Lord revealed were his enemies!

Lesson: *God graciously told Jeremiah about the plot against his life by his neighbors and even his own family in the priestly city of Anathoth, so he asked for vengeance and the Lord promised to administer it. Meanwhile, to help Jeremiah deal with his hurt and frustration over being so hated, God told him to stop trusting his enemies, even if they were his own family, that he act independently of them. (cf. John 2:23-25; 2 Timothy 3:1-5)*

Application: *If we are persecuted for an upright ministry that God has assigned to us, (1) may we trust Him to reveal what we need to know about persecutors, (2) trust Him to deal with them in righteousness (3) and in His time. (4) Meanwhile, to avoid pain and frustration in the relationships with enemies, may we cease to trust them. We will weather hatred well by staying close to God and detached from enemies. (John 2:23-25; 2 Timothy 3:1-5)*