

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing Part XXXIII: God's Illustrative Restrictions On His Messenger (Jeremiah 16:1-13)

I. Introduction

- A. In order to illustrate the depth of the sin of Judah's people and their resulting future great judgment from God, the Lord directed His prophet Jeremiah to live under very difficult, painful, unnatural restrictions.
- B. God may similarly cause His messengers today to face difficult, painful, unnatural restrictions so that their hearers may learn from it, and we view Jeremiah's experience in this regard for our insight and edification:

II. God's Illustrative Restrictions On His Messenger, Jeremiah 16:1-13.

- A. The Lord placed Jeremiah under several severely difficult, emotionally painful, unnatural restrictions that acted as illustrations to Judah that were intended to awaken them to their great need to repent, Jer. 16:1-9:
 - 1. God had Jeremiah not marry and have children to illustrate God's coming judgment, Jeremiah 16:1-4:
 - a. Normally, marrying and having children was an experience "cherished by all Israelites," but God had Jeremiah unnaturally not marry and have children, Jer. 16:1-2; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1149-1150.
 - b. This harsh restriction would illustrate how many spouses and their children would die of disease, the sword and famine, their bodies not being buried, but being food for birds and other animals, Jer. 16:3-4.
 - 2. God had Jeremiah not to enter a house where a funeral meal was being eaten nor mourn nor show sympathy to the grieving survivors of the deceased to illustrate God's coming judgment, Jeremiah 16:5-7:
 - a. Jeremiah was not to express the normal emotion of grief or to offer comfort when someone he knew had died, a very hard, unnatural restriction in view of Jeremiah's ties with such people he knew, Jer. 16:5a.
 - b. God explained that the Lord had removed His peace from the people along with His loyal love and mercy, that both great and small would die in the land not to be buried or lamented, Jeremiah 16:5b-6a.
 - c. Cutting one's self was a sign of grief (Ibid., p. 1150) though cutting was forbidden as a pagan practice under the Law (Deut. 14:1; 1 Kings 18:28) and shaving one's head signified the loss of one's glory (Ibid., p. 720), so avoiding these practices would keep Jeremiah from expressing grief at a funeral, Jer. 16:6b-7.
 - 3. God had Jeremiah not enter a house of feasting to illustrate God's coming judgment, Jeremiah 16:8-9:
 - a. Jeremiah was not allowed to enter a house of feasting to fellowship with its participants, Jeremiah 16:8.
 - b. God's reason for this unnatural restriction for his messenger was to illustrate how Judah under divine judgment would no longer hear the voice of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride in a wedding feast or celebration, Jeremiah 16:9. [Note how Revelation 18:23 describes the sorrow of the fall of Babylon the Great in terms of the absence of the voice of the bridegroom and the bride!]
- B. When Judah's people wanted to know what such restrictions placed upon him meant, Jeremiah was to tell them of their need to repent lest they face God's severe judgments illustrated by these restrictions, Jer. 16:10-13:
 - 1. When the people of Judah would be told all these words coupled with Jeremiah's very harsh, unnatural restrictions, and would ask what they had done to deserve such profound judgment, Jeremiah was to reply that their fathers had forsaken the Lord to follow false gods, and that they had done like their fathers in departing from God even to a greater degree of apostasy in serving foreign gods, Jeremiah 16:10-12.
 - 2. Accordingly, God declared that He would "hurl" them out of the land into a foreign land that neither they nor their fathers had known where they would serve false gods day and night with the Lord no longer showing them favor, Jeremiah 16:13 ESV; Ibid. In other words, God would give them a full dose of idol worship minus His blessing to teach Judah the lesson of the futility of worshiping false gods.

Lesson: *The Lord harshly restricted Jeremiah from the normal practices of marrying and having a family, from entering a house of mourning to express sympathy or to mourn and from entering a house of feasting to express joy to illustrate how God's judgment would bring great tragedies in the lives of Judah's people due to their idolatries.*

Application: *(1) If we see God's servant suffering severe restrictions in his or her way in some manner, may we realize that God may be trying to communicate a severe warning to US that we might adjust in line with His will! (2) In particular, we need to examine our lives to see if we have constructed something as a false god, an idol, that substitutes for the Lord Himself, what God may be trying to reveal to us by the dreadful restrictions we see Him level on His servant. (3) If we are involved in disciplining others and God lets us face harsh, unnatural restrictions, may we yield to those restrictions as a possible illustration from the Lord to get our hearers' attention.*