

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing

Part XXXVIII: Call To Repentance Surrounding Jerusalem's City Gates

(Jeremiah 17:19-27)

I. Introduction

- A. God chose to present descriptive illustrations to sharpen His message to Judah that she needed to repent.
- B. One such descriptive illustration involved Jerusalem's city gates, and we view it for our instruction as follows:

II. Call To Repentance Surrounding Jerusalem's City Gates, Jeremiah 17:19-27.

- A. The city gates were not only the entrances and exits to a walled city that helped make it secure, but they "were the civic centers" used "for many public purposes in the economy of the state," Z. P. E. B., v. Two, p. 655.
- B. God then chose to illustrate Judah's need to repent regarding her activities involving Jerusalem's city gates, showing how repentance was needed to affect all the civic and public realms of import related to the gates:
 - 1. Jeremiah was to give a message on the use of the city gates related to keeping the Sabbath, Jer. 17:19-23:
 - a. The Lord directed His prophet Jeremiah to go and stand in the gate by which Judah's kings and people went in and out of the city, and to do so in all of Jerusalem's city gates, Jeremiah 17:19. The message he was about to give there obviously would affect all the people of Judah who used the gates, be they upper or lower class, king or servant, rich or poor, essentially affecting all of Judah's society.
 - b. In each gate, Jeremiah was to tell all the kings and people who used the gate to avoid violating the Sabbath Law restriction against carrying a burden through the gate on the Sabbath Day, Jer. 17:20-21.
 - c. Jeremiah was to direct the people to avoid even carrying burdens out of their houses or to do any work, but to keep the Sabbath Day holy as God had directed their forefathers, Jeremiah 17:22.
 - d. The fathers had not obeyed the Lord, but rebelled that they might not receive His instruction, Jer. 17:23.
 - 2. If Judah's kings and people heeded the Sabbath Day relative to their use of the city gates, the Lord would use those gates as a focal point of His extensive blessing to all of Judah's society, Jeremiah 17:24-26:
 - a. Were the people and kings of Judah to heed the Lord in contrast to their forefather's rebelliousness, keeping the Sabbath Day holy by bringing no burden through the city gates, God would cause kings and princes to enter those gates and sit on the Davidic throne, men riding in chariots and on horses with their officials and the men of Judah in pomp, wealth and national strength, Jeremiah 17:24-25a.
 - b. In addition, the city of Jerusalem would be inhabited forever, meaning there would be no Gentile invading force that would destroy and take Jerusalem's inhabitants captive, Jeremiah 17:25b.
 - c. Also, people of Judah would come through Jerusalem's gates from the outlying regions, people from the tribe of Benjamin to the north, from the foothills to the west and from the hill country and Negeb wilderness region to the south "bringing burnt offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings, incense and thank offerings to the temple of the Lord," Jer. 17:26 NIV. The existence of such bountiful offerings coming from every direction around Jerusalem and entering the city gates would indicate peace and prosperity for the whole nation due to God's blessing in accord with the Mosaic Covenant of Deuteronomy 28:1-14.
 - 3. However, if the people and kings of Judah chose not to listen to the Lord as had their stubborn, rebellious forefathers in choosing not to observe the Sabbath Day restriction, God would kindle a fire in those gates, a fire that would destroy the palaces of Jerusalem, indicating the fall of the king and thus of the kingdom with all of its people due to an invasion by a Gentile nation, a fire that would not be quenched in a prolonged national discipline, Jeremiah 17:27.

Lesson: *Using the city gates, the focal point of Jerusalem's and thus the nation's civic and economic life, Jeremiah proclaimed Judah's need to observe the Sabbath Day, not carrying burdens through the gates on that day, that God might bless the nation by having bounty pass through those gates. However, were the people and kings to rebel against the Lord in violating the Sabbath, God would punish them by starting a fire in the city gates that would spread to consume even the royal places, a symbol of national invasion and captivity in divine punishment.*

Application: *(1) May we obey God not only in our Church-related functions, but also in our civic and economic realms of life that we might enjoy the Lord's blessing and not face His discipline. (2) Since the Sabbath Day rest was designed to testify to the pagan world God's grace Who gave His people rest versus paganism's harsh false deities who enslaved people on the seventh day (Bruce K. Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 1974, p. 65), may we avoid living by unbiblical, false, harsh, man-made rules and live by God's grace, heeding His Word in the Spirit's power.*