

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 296 – Righteous Lord Through If They Will Not Obey (Jeremiah 12:1-17)

1. Jeremiah says the Lord is righteous and then questions why the wicked prosper. In the context of the book of Jeremiah, why were the wicked prospering?

Jeremiah asked: *“Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously”* (**Jeremiah 12:1**)?

- First, as Jeremiah stated, God is righteous (**II Chronicles 12:6**, **Psalms 7:9**, **Psalms 116:5**, and **II Timothy 4:8**) and should not be called into question concerning His Judgment (**Job 40:1-9** and **Romans 9:20**; cf. **Titus 2:9**).
- Having said that, God is also understanding of His servants (**Psalms 86:15** and **Psalms 145:8-9**) and realized the plight Jeremiah found Himself in (**Jeremiah 20:7-8**).
- At the time Jeremiah was a prophet Judah was being punished for their transgressions (**II Chronicles 36:8-21**).
- In punishing Judah, the Chaldean Empire was certainly prospering at the hand of the Lord (**Jeremiah 27:5-11**).
- Thus, God’s Judgment was in no way unfair. In fact, His Judgment was just what God told them would happen if they turned from Him (**II Kings 21:14-15**). This judgment is just like He had done in the past (**Isaiah 10:5-11**). Remember though, they didn’t learn from these past events or warnings (**Jeremiah 3:8-11**).
- In other contexts, there are different answers to this question (i.e. **Psalms 73:1-28**).
- Today, there is certainly a different answer to this question (**Matthew 5:45** and **II Peter 3:9-14**).

2. The wicked whom God planted said the right things, but where were their hearts? Far from God: *“Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins”* (**Jeremiah 12:2**).

- Like to the vineyard, they were planted and brought forth fruit, but not the fruit God wanted (cf. **Isaiah 5:1-7**).
- In their mouths but far from their hearts (**Isaiah 29:13**, **Isaiah 48:1-4**, **Isaiah 58:1-7**, **Jeremiah 5:2**, **Ezekiel 33:30-33**, and **Mark 7:1-9**).

3. Did Jeremiah want God to stand back or actively judge the wicked before the end of Judah?

He desired God to act: *“But thou, O Lord, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter. How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end”* (**Jeremiah 12:3-4**).

- Thou knowest me (**I Chronicles 28:9**, **Psalms 139:1-6**, and **I John 3:20**).
- Jeremiah wanted God to prepare them to the slaughter [consider that strong term] (**Isaiah 34:1-3** and **Jeremiah 20:11-12**).
- The people thought God would not see their final end wherein they err for He already told them their end (**Isaiah 47:7-11**; cf. **Isaiah 46:9-10** and **Acts 15:18**).
- God has long pleaded with men to consider their final end (**Deuteronomy 32:29**).

4. In God's answer, did He see Jeremiah as strong and supported by his brethren? No, He saw Jeremiah as wearied and betrayed by his own: *"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee"* (**Jeremiah 12:5-6**).

- God's point to Jeremiah is simple (**Proverbs 24:10**).
- Everyone has turned against Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 9:4-5**, **Micah 7:5-7**, and **Matthew 10:21-22**).

5. What did God say about forsaking His house and why He did so?

He said He did forsake them because many pastors destroyed His vineyard, He made them desolate, and no man laid it to heart: *"I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it. Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart"* (**Jeremiah 12:7-11**).

- God forsook them and delivered them to their enemies (**Psalms 78:56-61** and **Ezekiel 7:1-27**).
- However, they were not completely forsaken (**Jeremiah 51:1-6**).
- Israel was God's beloved inheritance (**Psalms 94:14**).
- Now, at this time in their history, God hated them (**Psalms 5:4-6**, **Psalms 11:5-7**, **Psalms 106:40**, and **Hosea 9:15**).
- The speckled bird or hyena [Strong's # 6441] bird of prey surrounded by other predators is a fascinating illustration (i.e. **II Kings 21:14-15**).
- The overseers have failed (**Jeremiah 10:21** and **Jeremiah 23:1-2**).
- Pastors made the land desolate (**Ezekiel 34:1-20**).
- No one laid it to heart (**Isaiah 42:24-25**).

6. Were the spoilers of God's people going to suffer anything for their evil deeds?

Yes: *"The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the Lord shall devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land: no flesh shall have peace. They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit: and they shall be ashamed of your revenues because of the fierce anger of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them"* (**Jeremiah 12:12-14**).

- The spoilers were there, sent from God as He did in the past (**Judges 2:10-14**).
- Consider why God did not allow them to have peace (**Isaiah 57:21**).
- Their labor was to be unprofitable to them (**Micah 6:14-15** and **Haggai 1:5-11**). This would not be the everlasting punishment of Judah though (**Isaiah 65:19-24**). Their fruitfulness or lack thereof was directly tied to their obedience (**Deuteronomy 28:1-6**).
- Then, God says He will pluck His people out of the land of the spoilers (**Jeremiah 51:45**, **Ezekiel 28:25**, **Amos 9:14-15**, and **Zephaniah 3:19-20**).

7. What was God's plan to restore His people contingent upon?

Their obedience: *"And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The Lord liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord"* (**Jeremiah 12:15-17**).

- IF, again, the word is "IF" they DILIGENTLY learn and swear by His name (**Deuteronomy 6:12-15**, **Deuteronomy 11:13-23**, and **II Chronicles 7:14**).
- If they will not obey... (**Deuteronomy 11:27-28**, **I Samuel 12:14-15**, and **Jeremiah 18:8-11**).