

WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

Jer. 2:1-13

Intro: As a nation we are undoubtedly in one of most difficult periods in our history -- a period which has all of the indications that it will get worse, not better.

We are clearly a nation under the judgment of God.

Such was true also in Jeremiah's day. Judah was going through a time of national humiliation, and the strange thing about the whole situation is that, even though Jeremiah (and others) were raised up by God to call the people back, no one, comparatively speaking, wanted to hear what he had to say.

You can look through the Scriptures and through the pages of Church History and you will always find that the most important factor in the midst of the crisis is to see the condition of the people of God -- whether Israel, or the Church.

Too often the people of God have been swept along by the times in which they live so that there is practically no voice raised in times of need to point men to the Lord.

Quite obviously you cannot have a holy church unless you have people who are walking with the Lord. Therefore, we need to break this down so that it will apply to our individual lives where the remedy, if there is to be one, is going to take place.

First of all, thinking about Judah, but also about ourselves, when we think of the Lord and our relationship to Him,

I. WHAT SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED?

Turn to Prov. 4:14-19, esp. v. 18:

"But the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The life of a Christian begins in a blaze of glory. This may differ with us according to the circumstances, but there certainly is nothing which can compare up to that moment with the joy that a person first experiences when he comes to know the Lord.

The second thing that we see from Prov. 4:18 is that it ought to get better and better all of the time.

I am not talking about an absence of trials. Nor am I talking about the kind of excitement which satisfies just our emotional joys. But I am talking about true peace, true joy, true blessings which cannot even be anticipated when a person

first comes to the Lord.

Two verses, one in the OT and the other in the NT, indicate this:

- 1) Jer. 33:3.
- 2) Eph. 3:20.

But instead of seeing the blessing on the rise, we too often see what Jeremiah saw when he looked at Judah, and what John saw when he looked at Ephesus at the close of the first century. The Ephesians were zealous,

busy,
suffering,
orthodox,

(which you could not say for Judah in Jeremiah's day), but still to God there was something missing that had been there before. It can be seen in Rev. 2:4.

These pictures are alarming to say the least.

II. WHAT HAD PRODUCED THESE CONDITIONS?

Let me summarize for you tonight from what we know about the history of Israel in the OT.

- A. It was a common thing for Israel to become discouraged about difficult circumstances.

This became apparent even before they left Egypt, but it was very obvious afterwards. This became apparent when some of the following things happened:

- 1. When they could not see any hope for a change.
- 2. When they could not see any reason for the circumstances.
- 3. When they could look around and blame someone else for the problems they faced.

- B. It was always very difficult for the Israelites to obey the Word of God.

Have you found this to be the case?

It comes up again and again in Israel's history -- as it does in ours!

- C. They had too close a relationship with nations that were ungodly and idolatrous -- in spite of what God had told them.

Read your Bible, and read Church History. Always when the lines have broken down between the people of God and the world, it is always the people of God who suffer.

The other morning I read to our CHBC teachers something which Lucille and I read in Spurgeon's Daily Readings on Nov. 30. It was this:

"Peace between good and evil is an impossibility; the very pretence of it would, in fact, be the triumph of the powers of darkness."

But there was another reason -- and this brings us to our text tonight:

- D. They had forgotten the Lord. Note Jer. 2:6, 8. No one was saying, "Where is the Lord?"

How many of us are really asking this today?

Instead you have the miserable condition described in Jer. 2:13.

Is this not a picture of what we have today -- a lot going on, some fruit, but where are the blessings that make these days better than anything in the past.

A person who knows the Lord and who is walking with Him has to be an optimist -- not because he is oblivious to the problems, but because he has his eyes set in another direction. Solomon would remind us that there is a "perfect day" coming, and for us it ought to get better and better and better!

III. HOW DO WE BEGIN TO MAKE OUR WAY BACK?

Because our time is limited we will limit ourselves tonight to Jer. 2:5-7.

- A. First of all, it is clear that Jeremiah is turning the minds of the people back to the Word of God -- and especially to the Lord and His dealings with Israel in the earliest years of their history as a nation.

Had the Lord ever failed them? See v. 5. The answer has to be, NO.

- B. Secondly, they needed to remember that it was the Lord who was leading them through all of the difficult times that they had.

- C. Jeremiah emphasizes three prepositions in his message to them: ". . . out of . . . through . . . into . . ."

The Lord took them "out of" circumstances in Egypt from which they could never have delivered themselves; He led them (not just into, but) "through" circumstances where no one had survived before; He gave them a land, bringing them "into" blessings which were far greater than anything that they could have imagined.

Is it any wonder that Jeremiah says what he does in vv. 11-13?

This is one of the biggest reasons that the Lord has given us His Word -- so that we would be able to see that the Lord has a perfect record with His people. He has not failed yet -- and He never will. He never can because He is God!

Concl: Last Thursday Mr. Barney McClain made a comment that probably got many of the men present to thinking. He said, "I assume that you men spend more time reading your Bibles than you do the daily newspaper."

Do we?

Do we have something of the kind of a goal that George Muller used to have when he said that Christians ought to read 10 pages in the Bible for every page that they read outside of the Bible.

What kind of a ratio do we have?

Draw whatever comparison you want to -- somehow the influence of the world about us and the influence of our own hearts upon us must be nullified by the might impact of the Word of God upon us.

We, too:

- 1) Find it hard to take difficult circumstances.
- 2) Find it hard to obey God.
- 3) Find it practically impossible for us to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27b).

The Lord is sufficient for us even in days like these. Let us give Him our hearts and our time and our trust so that people right here in Portland may be able to see that He is God and that no life can compare with the life lived in His will and for His glory!

TWO MEN WHO PROVED GOD IN DIFFICULT TIMES:

JOSEPH AND DANIEL.