

Jer. 10:17-25: A Final Plea
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A. Overview

1. 9:23-10:25 is an amplifying alternation, abAB:

9:23-24 -> 10:1-16, glory in the Lord, not in man-made idols.

9:25-26 -> 10:17-25, judgment will fall on Jew and Gentile alike who forsake the Lord.

2. 10:17-25 is an interaction paragraph. God warns of coming judgment, and Jeremiah laments its effect, then prays to God for mercy.

B. 9:25-26, Introductory Summary

25-26, "Judah is uncircumcised in heart, and will be treated like an uncircumcised nation" (recalls judgment of ch.9) Ever since ch. 7, in fact, we have been faced with the solemn truth that being God's people historically does not give immunity from judgment if we disobey him. God will judge both the circumcised AND the uncircumcised; if the circumcised disobey the Lord, they are simply showing that in heart they are uncircumcised.

Compare Rom. 2:25-29 for Paul's use of this principle in the NT. Christianity is NOT a new religion, but calling the people of Israel back in the same way that Jeremiah was, from a superficial formalism to true faith and trust in God.

Still, this raises a question: what is the nature of God's relation with his people? Can it be severed? Is Israel really no better than a pagan nation? Answer to come at the end.

C. 10:17-18, God warns of coming exile after the siege.

1. The "fortress" is where one hides during a siege, and in fact is built on the root for "siege." "Inhabitant of the siege" is the person who has been in the siege, hiding in the fortified city.

2. "Wares:" literally a merchant's pack. Gather up whatever you can carry on your back.

3. The reason: you're leaving town. "Sling," as though they were the stone in a slingshot. He will violently and suddenly send them into captivity, with nothing more than what they can carry on their backs.

4. "that they may find"--no object expressed. Probably refers to the enemy. The Lord will force Judah out of her siege fortress so that the enemy can find them and take them away.

D. 10:19-22, Jeremiah's Lament

He describes the condition of the country in three metaphors, and then literally.

1. 19, The Illness Image. He is in pain from a fracture, a wound, a sickness. Personal pain and discomfort, which he must bear.
2. 20, The Tent Image. He imagines his family living in tents, as the Patriarchs did. The enemy has spoiled the tent (stolen anything of value), and then collapsed it by cutting the tent ropes. (**Illustration:** Gene's tent collapsing on the camp-out.) His children have been taken away captive: the family that lived in the tent has been dispersed. So there is no way even to rebuild the tent and resume life.
3. 21, The Flock Image. Now the nation is a flock, which has been scattered through carelessness of the shepherds. Their carelessness in this case is described literally: they have become dull-witted, and not listened to the Lord. Note the pun in "brutish." In Heb. as well as English, this word means "animal-like, thus without intelligence." The shepherd should be protecting the flock from wild animals. Instead, he has become like a wild animal himself; his animality manifests itself in rejection of the word of the Lord.
4. 22, The Literal Truth: The enemy is coming from the north, to reduce Jerusalem's stone houses to a pile of rubble where only lizards can live.

E. 10:23-25, Jeremiah's Prayer

Involves confession, request for mercy, then request for vengeance. A good pattern for us when we feel oppressed.

1. 23, Confession

Jer. realizes, as must we all, that we do not know enough to direct our own lives. Our "way" does not belong to us; we cannot in ourselves be sure that our steps are solid. Once we forsake the Lord's guidance, we will wander aimlessly.
2. 24, Prayer for Mercy
 - a) He recognizes his need for instruction, for correction. Grows out of the confession of sin.
 - b) The end of the verse is straightforward: "Not in your anger, lest you obliterate me."
 - c) Thus the first part of the verse is a bit confusing: "with judgment." Given his confession, how can he ask for judgment without being destroyed?
 - d) This is the same sort of puzzle that Luther faced in Ps. 71:2, "Deliver me in thy righteousness." How can a just God deal gently with sinners? Only because the Lord Jesus takes our sin in our place: Rom. 3:24-26, God has set forth Christ Jesus to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness, that he might be both just and the justifier of the believer.
3. 25, Request for Vengeance

Finally we come to the response to 9:25-26. God cannot treat Judah just like the other nations. Judah is the nation who knows him; who calls on his name. He must defend her against the pagans who abuse and destroy her.

Indeed, today, 2600 years after Jeremiah, the Babylonians and Assyrians, the nations who took Israel captive, are long gone, but the Jews continue as a distinctive racial group. He brought the nation back from captivity, and destroyed those who had abused them. Ezek. 36:21-32, God does this, not for their sake, but for the sake of his name which is upon them.

Psalm: 67, "Oh God, to us show mercy."