

Jer. 4:14-29 The War Against Judah
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See previous study for outline and setting.

A. 4:30 Jeremiah hears Judah wailing over suffering from sin

Though Jeremiah is the speaker, the report is of the people's mourning, thus corresponding to 4:13b. Jeremiah makes a claim about Judah's predicament, and follows it up with evidence.

1. 30a, Judah attempts to seek help from her pagan lovers, rather than from the Lord, by putting on all her pretty clothing.
2. 30b, But her lovers were never committed to her, and at the last they will cast her away like a used-up, worn-out toy.
3. 31, finally, she can only wail in sorrow, as in v. 13b. Note:
 - a) Comparison with the cries of a woman giving birth. Perhaps, in connection with the preceding picture of the abandoned prostitute, we are to see more than a reference to pain here. She is with child by her lovers, and now they jilt her and she is left to bear and raise the child alone.
 - b) As in v.13b, she still does not see the Lord's hand in this, but merely bewails her own unhappiness.
4. **Application:** Two, one spiritual and one practical.
 - a) Spiritual: Whatever you substitute for the Lord will ultimately let you down. Satan fishes for us the way men use a worm. The fish thinks the worm is there for his pleasure, and gobbles it up--only to find that he has been fooled. The pleasures that Satan offers are bait. We think we are in control, but at the last moment the hook will be set, and we will be destroyed.
 - b) Practical: Beware of the physical situation depicted in this little drama--the breakdown of a love relationship outside of marriage. Without the total commitment that marriage implies, such an engagement is bound to bring great sorrow. The one you thought loved you, will leave you when his or her whim changes. The world says, "Why wait for marriage?" Here's one answer: that's the only way the relation will last.

B. 5:1-2 God challenges Judah to find a righteous man in her midst, if she can.

Note the plural "ye," indicating that this challenge is to the nation (though Jeremiah personally takes it up in the next paragraph).

1. The challenge: conduct a thorough search (note the piling up of verbs) for a man.
2. Two outcomes are envisioned: you may find people who are righteous, or people who merely *seem* righteous. (You'll rarely ever find anyone who *admits* being unrighteous!)
 - a) If there is any who executes judgment and seeks truth, then God will pardon it (the city). The criterion here is what the person actually *does*.
 - b) If all you find is people who say, "The Lord Lives," then you'll know that they are swearing falsely. The criterion here is what they *say*, and that can always be faked.

3. Applications:

- a) Beware appearances and fair speech. "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven," Matt. 7:21.
- b) Notice God's faithfulness to protect his own. God would spare Jerusalem for a single righteous man! Reminds us of Abraham's negotiation with God over Sodom in Gen. 14. 2 Pet. 2:9 draws the point nicely. God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. He knows how to deliver the godly, and punish the unjust. We need never fear that he will sweep us under the rug!

In particular: whatever eschatological position you hold, this evidence makes it unreasonable to expect that God's people will be destroyed in the general judgment of God on the unbelievers. Thus no post-trib rapture.

C. 5:3-6 Jeremiah tries, and fails, to meet the challenge.

1. v.3, he agrees that the people are sinful. The obvious criterion for him is that they do not respond to correction. NB: The difference between believers and nonbelievers is not sin vs. no sin. Both sin; but when believers sin, and God chastises them, they respond.
2. v.4-5a, he proposes an explanation: sampling error.
 - a) Perhaps the people he's been dealing with are the lower class ("poor"), without instruction, who do not know "the way of the Lord [God's law] and the judgment of our God [consequences for leaving it]." That is, maybe they are too ignorant theologically to understand what's happening to them.
 - b) So he'll go to the great people, those who have been

instructed, and surely there he'll find the person whom God is seeking in v.1.

3. v.5b, but the great ones are even worse. Having God's law, they have broken it, rebelled against it.
4. v.6, he must agree that judgment will fall, depicted here as being ravaged by the wild beasts, who are perhaps figures for the invading nations.
5. **Application:** Jeremiah hoped that the difference between the Ignorant and the Instructed would mean that the Instructed would be more righteous. He was surprised to find that this difference could also mean that the Instructed are more wicked! The more knowledge we have of God, the more responsible we are, and the greater will be our judgment if we do not live in obedience.

D. Review the Chiasm

Each element is an interchange between God and Jeremiah (Outside and Center), or God and the People (Medial).

1. Outside (4:3-10; 5:1-6). It seems incredible that judgment will come. This isn't what the prophets are saying; surely there are righteous people in Jerusalem! But the prophets are false, and the people are wicked.
2. Medial (4:11-13, 27-30). It is God himself who is bringing judgment, and the people will wail under it (though without recognizing his sovereign hand in it).
3. Center (4:14-21, 22-26). Focus on the sin of the people that makes the coming judgment necessary.

- E. Hymn: "Oh Sacred Head, Now Wounded." The one righteous man for whom our city, the Church, is spared the wrath of God.