

Jeremiah 7:21-8:3, The Temple Sermon (Last Two Points)
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A. Overview

1. Book to this point
 - a) 1: Jeremiah's Call
 - b) 2: God's formal complaint against Judah.
 - c) 3-6: Israel and Judah
 - d) 7-10: The Temple Sermon

2. Overview of Temple Sermon
Broadly chiastic, with emphasis on right and wrong cult on the outside and other stuff in the middle.
 - a) 7:1-8:3, Contrasts their hypocritical piety with their idolatry.
 - b) 8:4-9:21, Sin -> Judgment -> Mourning. Like ch. 4-6, but much more emphasis on the mourning.
 - c) 9:22-10:25, Contrasts false gods with the True God.

3. Zoom in on chapter 7. God alternates between talking to the people and talking with Jeremiah about the people; between commenting on their faulty piety toward him and their following after other gods. The result is identifying four forms of improper worship, and warning of the punishment for each.
 - a) 3-15, Part-time piety
 - b) 16-20, Outright idolatry
 - c) 21-28, Shallow spirituality
 - d) 29-8:3, Child sacrifice

B. 1-2, The Setting God -> Jeremiah

C. 3-15, Part-Time Piety God -> People

D. 16-20, Outright Idolatry God -> Jeremiah

E. 21-28, Shallow Spirituality Two parts: God -> People (through 26); God -> Jeremiah (27-28). In both, the theme is that God requires first obedience, not sacrifice.

1. 21-26, God -> People: Don't offer sacrifice, because I want obedience instead. Expressed as a command, followed by a reason.
 - a) 21, The Command:
 - 1) Distinguishes "burnt offering" from "sacrifices." The latter term is not a generic word for anything offered to God, but refers specifically to the peace offerings.
 - 2) According to the law, the burnt offering was to be consumed completely by fire on the altar, enjoyed by God alone,

while the peace offerings were to be eaten by the worshipper.

3) But in light of the people's hypocrisy, the Lord takes so little pleasure in their offerings that he tells them here to add the burnt offerings to the peace offerings and eat them both. "You eat it--I've lost my appetite."

b) 22-26, reason: God traces his interaction with the people, since the time of the Exodus. They have persistently refused to give him true obedience.

1) 22-23, Beginning of the conversation.

a> Time: "In the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt.

b> Content: When God initiated the covenant with Israel at Sinai, he made no commands with respect to sacrifice. The 10 Commandments say nothing of sacrifices. What God required was far broader: complete obedience. v. 23 is from Exod. 19:5, expanded from Lev. 26:12; Deut. 26:18.

2) 24, the people's response: They ignored God's commands, and followed "the counsels and imaginations of their evil heart."

There is a piece of very important theology here. Man's heart is not to be trusted. As Jeremiah says elsewhere, it "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (17:9). This is why we must hold close to the very Word of God, and not rely on our own intuitions of what we think is appropriate.

3) 25, God's subsequent instruction.

a> Time: "since the day" of the Exodus; subsequent to v.22; after Israel was in the land.

b> What: God sent them prophets to call them to obedience. Note his diligence in this, "rising up early and sending them." Of course, God doesn't get up in the morning. But he uses our conduct when we have something particularly important to do, to illustrate how seriously he takes this matter. When we get up early to do something, it must be very important.

4) 26, the response of later generations.

Starts off the same as v.24, "hearkened not, nor inclined their ear." But whereas the Exodus generation is depicted as following another authority, the later generations actually harden their neck against God's word. This is a metaphor from a horse who doesn't want to turn, but stiffens his neck to go straight on his own way. Jeremiah sees their sin as worse than that of the Exodus folk.

2. 27-28, God -> Jeremiah: The consequence of their disobedience.

- a) 27, Jeremiah's own experience with them will be a miniature summary of what has happened throughout their history. He is one more in the line of prophets that they have rejected. (In fact, this line ultimately reaches to the Prophet like Moses, our Lord, Matt. 21:33-46; 23:34-39.
- b) 28, Jeremiah's verdict to them after they demonstrate this continued rejection.
 - 1) The verdict: they do not hear God.
 - 2) The sentence: truth perishes. God will not continue to squander his truth with those who reject it. Cf. Isa. 29:9-14 for a fuller statement of this idea.

3. Applications:

- a) "Obedience rather than Sacrifice." Recall again King Saul in 1 Sam. 15:22. Beware the temptation to think that because you obey one specific command, you are therefore OK. What God wants is not any single specific command, but a general attitude of obedience and submission to him.
- b) "Truth perishes." Recognize the consequence of a stubborn heart: successively less insight into God's word. Conversely, the more yielded we are to him, the more clearly he speaks with us. If we would know him better, we need to cultivate a receptive spirit.

F. 29-8:3, Child Sacrifice God -> ? (People, then Jeremiah)

We have the results at the beginning (7:29) and end (7:32-8:3), with the cause, the people's sin, in the middle (7:30-31).

- 1. 7:29, First result: the Lord rejects and forsakes them, leading to their desolation.
 - a) Think what it is to be forsaken by the Lord. The Lord Jesus has promised us, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 12); "I am with you always" (Matt. 28). To be without his presence is to lack his protection from harm and his provision for daily need.
 - b) As a result, the city is to "cut off thine hair." Not the usual word but rather the term used in Num. 6:7, the consecrating crown of the Nazirite that consists of the hair. Jerusalem is pictured as a Nazirite, once consecrated to the service of the Lord, who has been defiled, and must now shave off her hair to show that she no longer has this privileged position.
 - c) Now she must lament, not upon the high places, but on the caravan paths--picturing her coming exile?

2. 7:30-31, the people's sin. After discussing part-time piety, idolatry, and superficial sacrifices in the previous three sections, we come across what will probably strike us as the most heinous of all. Two details of their idolatrous worship are brought before us:
 - a) They have placed their idols in the very courts of the temple, turning it into a pagan sanctuary, even though God's name as its rightful owner and Lord is upon it. **Illustration:** Men, imagine that you came home some evening to find that your wife had moved all of your things out to the driveway and had someone else living in the house in your place! The imagery here fits perfectly with the theme of spiritual adultery that we have seen before.
 - b) They have constructed "the high place of Tophet" in the valley of Ben-Hinnom. "Tophet" may mean "fireplace" or "fire-pit"; the verse goes on to show its use, as a place for sacrificing children.

3. 7:32-8:3, Second result: they will be slain and shamefully exposed, to the dismay of the nation. These ideas are repeated to emphasize them. In each repetition, we begin with exposure of dead bodies, then move on to the impact this has on the mind of the people.
 - a) 7:32-34, First cycle
 - 1) 32a, temporal formula + "saith the Lord."
 - 2) 32. In the place where they killed their children, they will die. This slaughter will become the event for which the valley is called. NB: This same valley is used by the Lord Jesus as an image for hell-fire; most occurrences of "hell" in the gospels are *geenna*, a contraction of *ge ben-hinnom* (cf. Matt. 5:22,29,30; 10:28).
 - 3) 33, the bodies will be shamefully exposed and the birds will feast on them.
 - 4) 34, as a result, there will be no joy left anywhere in the land.
 - b) 8:1-3, Second cycle
 - 1) 1a, temporal formula + "saith the Lord."
 - 2) 1, exposure of bodies. Just as the sin involved all levels of the society, 1:18; 2:8, 26, so does the punishment. They do not just lie unburied, but are actually exhumed to put them to shame.
 - 3) 2 shows the point of this exposure. They wanted to worship the host of heaven, the astral bodies. So let them remain

open to the heavens in their death.

- 4) 3, the impact on those who survive: they will prefer death to life.

G. Summary

We have traced four steps in their spiritual decline:

1. 3-15, Part-time piety, entering the temple to worship and leaving it to sin.
2. 16-20, Outright idolatry, offering cakes to Venus, the fertility goddess (with all the accompanying ritual).
3. 21-28, Shallow spirituality, giving God sacrifices while withholding the broader obedience that he desires.
4. 29-8:3, Child sacrifice.

In each case, Jeremiah anticipates the judgment that will fall on them, and in so doing, warns us against similar superficiality in our faith and worship.