

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

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Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah

Truths We Dare Not Miss

October 25, 2020

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 4-5

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 5

I want to show you several vital themes that we are seeing in Jeremiah and which occur throughout the Bible repeatedly. They are literally the difference between heaven and hell.

1. You must be born again. The New Birth. Regeneration. A new creation in Christ.

Jeremiah 4:3-4 ESV For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: “Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. (4) Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants

of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.”

2. The denial of the necessity of the new birth as taught by false teachers:

Jeremiah 5:12-13 ESV They have spoken falsely of the LORD and have said, ‘He will do nothing; no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine. (13) The prophets will become wind; the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them!’”

3. And third, the treatment of widows, orphans, and what the Bible calls “strangers in the land.” We come across it toward the end of chapter 5 –

Jeremiah 5:28 ESV they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.

Finally, we will just summarize several other crucially important points in chapter 5, and plan to pick up with them next week.

You Must be Born Again

We looked at these verses last time –

Jeremiah 4:3-4 ESV For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: “Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. (4) Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.”

Now, why am I emphasizing this subject again? *Because you must be born again* or you will never see the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, *this fundamental necessity of being made a new creation in Christ is being habitually denied in the churches today. This denial is often subtle and disguised in pious sounding terms.*

You have it taught plainly all through the Bible:

Jeremiah 9:26 ESV Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.”

Deuteronomy 10:16 ESV Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

Ezekiel 18:31 ESV Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?

Ezekiel 36:25-27 ESV I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. (26) And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

[This is the background text Nicodemus should have known when Jesus told him he must be born again, John 3]

Psalms 51:10 ESV Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 3:3 ESV And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

I hope that you all understand that I am not exaggerating the state of affairs in our day when I maintain that the large majority of the visible church has created a false gospel and a false Christianity in which “everyone” is saved. For all the talk about hell and about being saved, about sin and heaven, about believing in Jesus, about the gospel, *when it gets right down to the actual practice of following Christ, of obeying Him, of loving Him, of hearing His voice and not listening to false shepherds, of loving His people, there is a total void. The thing is a vacuum, an empty black hole because they are not new creations.*

Such people will run after all kinds of spiritual “gimmicks,” like diet or medical fads. Sure cures to what ails them. I saw one of these last week. A pastor was all discouraged because he couldn’t figure out why half of the people in his church weren’t growing. The quote was: “*He was puzzled why some in his congregation seemed to grow like weeds, while others remained stuck, stalled, and dissatisfied in their walk with God.*” But then he met some guy with a doctorate and learned about “whole-brained living” and now he wants to share that secret.

I call it half-brained, baked-brain living. I can tell you what the problem was and is in his church. Half aren’t saved, and the unsaved half may well be HIS half because the other group’s dissatisfaction may be due to the fact that they aren’t hearing God’s Word and truth from the pulpit!

And this leads us to the second related point which we also find repeated in Jeremiah:

The denial of the necessity of the new birth as taught by false teachers:

Jeremiah 5:12-13 ESV They have

spoken falsely of the LORD and have said, 'He will do nothing; no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine. (13) The prophets will become wind; the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them!'"

We have already seen the depths of the wickedness Jeremiah's countrymen were guilty of. They rejected the Lord, the fountain of living water, and embraced idols. They sacrificed their children to Baal (something that is happening at a much accelerated rate in our country today). They cheated one another. They energetically broke every single one of the commandments. They hated God's Word. *And all the while they marched to church on the sabbath!* [We will see Jeremiah sent to preach to them at the door of the temple].

And all the while that this evil hypocrisy was going on, the prophets and priests, the "clergy" of the day, were telling them that they were in a right standing with the Lord. It was that old repeated lie – "He will do nothing. He knows we are all sinners. But we are Christians. We have this temple. Don't worry. Heaven is yours."

You know that recently I taught on Wednesdays through the book of First

John. Those videos are still available online and I maintain that First John is the textbook of the ABC's of the gospel. It is black and white truth. By it we can discern if we are born again or not – and if someone else is born again or not. I am just amazed over and over again how oblivious most professing Christians are to these basic truths of the gospel. They have been fed lies.

Does this sound like an overstatement of the case? Why should we expect that the very same things Jeremiah confronted would not be prevalent in our day too?

Jeremiah 5:27-31 ESV Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich; (28) they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.

(29) Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?"

(30) An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: (31) the

prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?

Think carefully about those last two verses especially. Here is the “secret” to growing a fake church. Preach a false gospel that tells people God loves them and will bring them to heaven even though they walk in sin, and you will find plenty of people to join up with you and throw money in the offering plate. But what do you think happens when such people are told, as Jeremiah told them, that they are living a lie? That God’s wrath, not His blessing, is upon them? That they are not saved? That you just don’t see Christ in them and that they need to seriously examine themselves, or – “*what will you do when the end comes?*” The same reaction Jeremiah got: they tried to kill him.

Now, the third subject we find in Jeremiah that is also seen over and over in the Bible is related to these first two subjects. It is:

The treatment of widows, orphans, and what the Bible calls “strangers in the land.”

Jeremiah 5:28 ESV they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.

Follow along now as I read chapter 5, and then we will just make a few introductory observations which we will plan to continue with next time:

Jeremiah 5:1-31 ESV Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her. (2) Though they say, “As the LORD lives,” yet they swear falsely.

(3) O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent.

(4) Then I said, “These are only the poor; they have no sense; for they do not know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God. (5) I will go to the

great and will speak to them, for they know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God.” But they all alike had broken the yoke; they had burst the bonds.

(6) Therefore a lion from the forest shall strike them down; a wolf from the desert shall devastate them. A leopard is watching their cities; everyone who goes out of them shall be torn in pieces, because their transgressions are many, their apostasies are great. (7) “How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me and have sworn by those who are no gods. When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the houses of whores. (8) They were well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife. (9) Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD; and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?

(10) “Go up through her vine rows and destroy, but make not a full end; strip away her branches, for they are not the LORD's. (11) For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly treacherous to me, declares the LORD.

(12) They have spoken falsely of the

LORD and have said, ‘He will do nothing; no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine. (13) The prophets will become wind; the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them!’” (14) Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts: “Because you have spoken this word, behold, I am making my words in your mouth a fire, and this people wood, and the fire shall consume them.

(15) Behold, I am bringing against you a nation from afar, O house of Israel, declares the LORD. It is an enduring nation; it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say. (16) Their quiver is like an open tomb; they are all mighty warriors. (17) They shall eat up your harvest and your food; they shall eat up your sons and your daughters; they shall eat up your flocks and your herds; they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; your fortified cities in which you trust they shall beat down with the sword.” (18) “But even in those days, declares the LORD, I will not make a full end of you.

(19) And when your people say, ‘Why has the LORD our God done all these

things to us?’ you shall say to them, ‘As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.’”

(20) Declare this in the house of Jacob; proclaim it in Judah: (21) “Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not. (22) Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it. (23) But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away. (24) They do not say in their hearts, ‘Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.’ (25) Your iniquities have turned these away, and your sins have kept good from you.

(26) For wicked men are found among my people; they lurk like fowlers lying in wait. They set a trap; they catch men. (27) Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and

rich; (28) they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy. (29) Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?”

(30) An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: (31) the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?

This chapter is filled with crucial points that we need to get a firm hold on. Let’s just summarize them now and plan to unpack them next time:

Is it Really that Bad? 5:1-5

Is it possible that an entire local church not have one single Christian in it? Or even a city? Or a nation? Is the problem merely a lack of education, or of social standing, or is it an issue of poverty? Can we “christianize” a people group through education, economic programs. Should these things be fundamental planks in missionary work?

Judah's Judgments as a Picture and Warning of Hell 5:6-9

The Doctrine and Promise of the Remnant 5:10-11

The Power of the Real Word of God Contrasted with the Straw of False Teachers 5:14

Also see here:

Jeremiah 23:28-29 ESV Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. (29) Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

The Accountability of General Revelation 5:21-24

Jeremiah 5:21-24 ESV "Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not. (22) **Do you not fear me?** declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they

roar, they cannot pass over it. (23) But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away. (24) They do not say in their hearts, 'Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.'

We are surrounded in our day by just such people. Every day, every sunrise and sunset, every week, every month, every season, every harvest – is a sermon from the Lord. It is a declaration to everyone that He IS. Go to the beach and look at the ocean. Go there in a raging storm even, and what do you see? The water advancing only so far. Try as it might, it cannot go further. Why? Why isn't the entire earth flooded as it was in Noah's day? Because by His power, the Lord holds the waters there. EVERYTHING you see in this creation *screams* at man that God is there, that He is Creator, that we are His creations, that every blessing we have is from His hand. And all men everywhere are accountable to acknowledge this and give Him thanks.