

## They Did Not Listen

### Commentary for February 1, 2012 — Why Didn't They Listen?

The article this month is "Jeremiah, Part 2," along with the "[February 2012 Newsletter](#)." The article discusses the times and writings of Jeremiah the prophet. So why did the people and rulers of Judah not listen to Jeremiah and his warnings? They were not ignorant of God's threatened punishment for the people's sins. Not only did the people and rulers of Judah receive the public prophecies of Jeremiah, they also received prophecies from the prophets Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk.

As part of their heritage they had the prophecies (and their fulfillment in their history) from the prophets Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, and Micah spoken in earlier generations. The people of Jerusalem in the time of Isaiah and King Hezekiah saw God's salvation with the complete destruction of the Assyrian army in one night outside their city walls (2 Kings 19:33-37; Isaiah 36:18-22; 2 Chronicles 32:13-19). They were about to experience God's judgments upon themselves this time, and they took God's goodness and mercy for granted.

The people of Judah were certainly aware of God's prophecies to the northern kingdom of Israel, and that God eventually fulfilled His judgments and punishments. Yet Judah still did not heed the threats of judgment and punishment God directed at Judah through Jeremiah.<sup>1</sup>

Another reason Judah's people and rulers did not listen to God's pleadings, warnings, and dire threats, was because there were many false prophets in Jerusalem and Judah that lied to confuse the people (Jeremiah 14:13-18, 23:25-26, 27:10, 14). Men claiming to speak for God caused the people to doubt and sin more. The people even justified themselves in their sins. The false prophets lied outright and the people and rulers of Judah would suffer.

It was easy for them to follow prophetic lies and take God's mercy for granted in spite of prior history and warnings. This played into the predisposition of the people of Judah. They were predisposed to evil (Jeremiah 9:1-9).<sup>2</sup> Evil is learned and resides in the heart of each human being, even in the hearts of the kindest old soul, man or woman, young or old. For example, note what conditions were like before the flood of Noah:

**"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."**

• ***Genesis 6:5***

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<sup>1</sup> They also knew from the prophecy of Jonah that YHWH was merciful.

<sup>2</sup> They were no different from any one else, yet God intensifies the experiences of Israel and Judah for our teaching (Romans 15:4: "**For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction**"). Things that happened to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were similar to judgments in the Wilderness during the time of Moses — all were for our teaching, 1 Corinthians 10:11:

**"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [to us]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."**

After the flood, when Noah sacrificed to God in thanksgiving, God reminded Noah what the pre-flood situation was like:

**“And YHWH smelled a sweet savor; and YHWH said in his heart, ‘I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; ....”**

• *Genesis 8:21*

God says that this condition in man is within the heart of man. Man's inclination for evil did not change during the united Kingdom of Israel under David and Solomon. King Solomon wrote about the nature and extent of evil in the world:

**“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he fears not before God.”**

• *Ecclesiastes 8:11–13*

Beyond the fact that mankind is wicked, evil, and sinful, this passage tells us that after the flood, up to the time of Solomon, evil flourished because judgment and punishment for evil was not meted out swiftly to evildoers. Evil grows worse and worse because Judah was,

- the example to the nations of God's chosen and peculiar people,
- the people that God most closely interacted with and cared for more than others,
- the people He intended to have as a kingdom of priests to the nations,
- the people to teach the Gentiles about God and His Law.

These were the people Jeremiah tried to reach, but their consciences were defiled (Titus 1:15), so that the relatively innocent suffered with the guilty:

**“Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘Thus says YHWH, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’**

**But they say, ‘That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’”**

• *Jeremiah 18:11–12, ESV*

For us in our day, and in our near future after the times of refreshing and the restitution of all things (Acts 3:19–21), man will rebel against God and conditions will be even worse than in the time of Jeremiah:

**“Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; ...”**

• *1 Timothy 4:1–2*

Enjoy Dr. Martin's article about Jeremiah's interesting but evil times.

David Sielaff  
[david@askelm.com](mailto:david@askelm.com)