

NOTES ON THE PROPHECY AND LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

“The Weeping Prophet”

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DANGER AND DELIVERANCE

(Chap. 26)

Some time before making the proclamation in the name of the Lord which we have just been considering, Jeremiah's life had been placed in jeopardy for his faithfulness in showing the people their sins and setting before them the sure judgment about to fall. No exact date is given beyond the statement that it was **“in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim”** (ver. 1).

He had been commanded by the Lord to stand in the temple courts, evidently on the occasion of some one of the yearly feasts; for he was to **“speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house.”**

He had no choice as to the matter of the discourse, for he was told to speak **“all the words”** (not merely the thoughts or ideas clothed in language of his own choosing, as the opponents of verbal inspiration would fain have us believe) that the Lord commanded him - diminishing nothing (ver. 2). See I Corinthians 2:13. Notice that the very words spoken by the apostle were, as in Jeremiah's case, those which the Holy Ghost taught.

If the people of the cities of Judah would hearken, and turn from their evil way, the Lord might repent Him of the evil which He purposed to do unto them because of their iniquities. If they refused to heed the message, and persisted in their willful course, He would make His house desolate like Shiloh, where He had dwelt of old, and Jerusalem should become **“a curse to all the nations of the earth”** (vers. 3-6).

Obedient to **“the heavenly vision,”** the prophet did as he had been commissioned to do, and all the people heard his words.

He had barely finished his address when the priests and the false prophets who were serving in the courts of the Lord's house, joining with the rabble, placed him under arrest as a disturber of the peace of the holy place, and a traitor to his king and country. The scene must have been a remarkable one. In large measure he was privileged to be a partaker of the sufferings and reproach of Christ, as yet unrevealed. **“Despised and rejected of men,”** he heard the multitude clamoring for his blood.

They cried, **“Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant?”** The pessimist from Anathoth was weakening the hands of the warriors and disheartening the people. They would put him out of the way, and thus silence his **“tongue of fire.”** In all that crowd he was left without so much as one human friend. A true earlier-day Antipas, he stood **“against all.”** For we are told that **“all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord”** (vers. 7-9).

It is on such an occasion that one would naturally have expected so weak and fearful a man to be overwhelmed with gloom and even terror. On the contrary, he is neither crushed nor affrighted. Bold in his confidence in the word of the Lord which he had proclaimed, he confronts the raging populace undismayed. The princes of Judah, learning of the disturbance, came up at once from the palace to the new gate of the temple, where inquiry is immediately instituted. The priests and the false prophets vehemently accuse Jeremiah, saying, **“This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears”** (vers. 10, 11).

Jeremiah is permitted to speak for himself. Without the slightest hesitation, and with no apparent concern for the outcome as to himself, he boldly declares, **“The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.”**

The message was not of the servant, but of the Lord, and the case is one of Judah versus the Lord, whom they hypocritically professed to serve. If they disliked to hear threatenings of judgment and desolation there was a sure way to avoid their fulfilment. **“Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent Him of the evil that He hath pronounced against you”** (vers. 12, 13). Not by murdering the messenger, but by heeding the proclamation, could the wrath of the Lord be turned aside.

“As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.”

Without a quaver in his voice or a sign of pallor on his cheek, he gives himself up to die if they are determined upon it. Nevertheless he warns them of the result. **“But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears”** (vers. 14, 15).

It is the courage of one conscious of his own integrity, relying upon the justice of the Holy One.

In a similar spirit did Robert Moffat of Kuruman bare his breast for the savages' spears, and in like manner Paton of the New Hebrides fearlessly faced the enraged men of Tanna. So have thousands of devoted saints jeopardized their lives for the truth's sake, concerned far more for the ungrateful people to whom they ministered than for their own safety.

The effect of Jeremiah's words is most marked. The princes, and the fickle populace, who a few moments before clamored for his execution, now give their verdict in his favor.

“This man,” they say, **“is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken unto us in the name of the Lord our God”** (ver. 16). Alas, that acknowledging this they did not give heed to the exhortation! Then certain elders, Nicodemuses in their time, rose up to speak in his behalf. The case of Micah the Morasthite is first cited: how in the days of Hezekiah he had prophesied, saying, **“Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest”** (vers. 17, 18; see also Micah 3:12).

Did Hezekiah put him to death for this solemn announcement? On the contrary, had it not been the means of leading him the more to fear the Lord, with the happy result that **“the Lord repented Him of the evil which He had pronounced against them?”** If they acted contrary to this precedent, might they not procure great evil against their souls? (ver. 19).

Urijah, another man of God, is next adduced. In his case the king had acted in the contrary manner. Whether evil would result remained to be seen; for it was in the reign of this same Jehoiakim who was now on the throne that Urijah had prophesied in the name of the Lord against the city and the land in terms similar to those employed by Jeremiah. The prophet, filled with fear, had fled to Egypt. Yet king Jehoiakim, bent on his destruction, had brought him out of the land of his refuge and **“slain him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people”** (vers. 20-23). Thus far the Lord indeed had not avenged this ignominious treatment of His servant; but it might be yet too early to judge of the consequences, and it is left without further comment.

Another man now rises, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, in behalf of Jeremiah, preventing his being given into the hand of the people to be put to death (ver. 24). Thus, once more God vindicated and protected His servant. Had Urijah been a man of similar faith and trust in God, who can say that he too might not have been safeguarded? **“The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe”** (Proverbs 18:10).

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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