

Sermon Guide
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Date : 3/17/2013
Sermon Series: The Drama of Redemption

Israel Slides Into Exile

Jeremiah 2:1-35

Israel's Scandal

It has been two hundred eighty (280) years since God, through Elijah, has judged Israel and its many false prophets on Mt. Carmel. Israel has heeded none of the subsequent prophets who have come to warn of God's judgment and they are reaping the results of their wickedness; starvation, famine, pestilence, invasion and perpetual wars plague the Israelites. The temple has been destroyed and Jerusalem is burned; there is nothing that remains, of any worth, of God's city. God had promised Israel an eternal inheritance and that the Davidic line would endure forever, but it would seem that Israel is in exile.

Jeremiah 2:2 "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown."

Jeremiah 2:20 "For long ago I broke your yoke and burst your bonds, but you said, 'I will not serve.' Yes, on every high hill and under every green tree you bowed down like a whore."

Adultery & Idolatry

God uses the marital relationship, with a spouse turning to prostitution, as a metaphor for Israel's inveterate rejection of God. Israel had become an adulterous whoring wife; a strumpet for every Baal that crossed her path instead of being faithful to the God that had set her free from slavery and chosen her as His own. The people were engaged in the worship of many gods (fertility, storm, etc.) in the sinful and misguided belief that they would provide the safety and security that could only be provided (and had been shown in years past) by God.

Application

Jeremiah 2:26-27 "As a thief is shamed when caught, so the house of Israel shall be shamed: they, their kings, their officials, their priests, and their prophets, who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave me birth. 'For they have turned their back to me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they say, 'Arise and save us!'"

The Israelites are no different than people today. They were desirous of safety and security and turned to spiritual adultery to obtain it. Money, power and pleasure were worshipped as the means to the end: identity, safety and comfort. But these means are worthless and won't achieve the end we seek. Identity, safety, comfort, hope, peace, happiness, joy, are all things that can only be found in the living God.

Jeremiah 2:12-13 "Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

The imagery presented in these verses is meant to juxtapose the life that Israel could have had with God to the desolation it had instead chosen for itself. How could a broken cistern filled with the filth and disease of stagnant water be viewed as better than the cold fresh rush of a flowing river or stream? The latter gave literal life and the former veritable death.

Application Questions

What attributes or experiences do you view as core to your identity? Which of these do you feel a strong need to communicate to others about yourself in order to feel valued?

Are there any broken cisterns you have turned to for life giving water? Family, kids, jobs, house, or church, things that in themselves are not worthless or evil, but you've turned into gods?

Have you or are you committing spiritual adultery in other ways in your life?

Have you, like Israel, forgotten what God has done for you?

The Discipline of God

Jeremiah 2:19 "Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord GOD of hosts."

Jeremiah 2:35 "you say, 'I am innocent; surely his anger has turned from me. 'Behold, I will bring you to judgment for saying, 'I have not sinned.'"

God uses the Babylonians to judge and discipline Israel for their rejection of God's law and their apostasy. His discipline is strong and painful for the people, many die, and yet, they reject Him still. But God's purpose in His discipline is not simply to cause pain because He is angry at their wickedness. Throughout His discipline, he gives them opportunities to turn back by sending His prophets (Zephaniah, Hosea, Joel, etc.) to call them to repentance. Ezekiel 18:32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live." He would have them turn back to Him for life and have it abundantly instead of trusting in their temples, city, national sovereignty and Baals. He wanted their eyes opened to the truth that, though they believed they were okay, they were far from Him. His discipline, through the Babylonians, was a mercy used to call these people back to Himself. Jeremiah 30:11 "For I am with you to save you, declares the Lord; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished."

Application

Many of us have experienced great loss: children, money, house, job, spouse, and we naturally wonder if it is because we have done something wrong. Suffering in this life **is** *sometimes* discipline for our direct sin **and** *oftentimes* simply because we live in a fallen world (sin of other men, Satan – consider Job, etc.). Irrespective of the reason for the suffering, if we belong to Him, God is involved for our good. The suffering has purpose even when we are unable to see or understand what that purpose is.

Hebrews 12:5-11 "And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the

one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Suffering that is the result of this fallen world (e.g. Satan, sinful actions of others toward us, things outside our control) is formative in that it trains us to cease trusting in this life. Suffering that is from discipline is corrective; similar to the exile that the Israelites experienced, God will give consequences to our sin to course-correct us when we move away from Him in order to bring us back to Him.

It is a much more fearful thing to continue in your own way, believing that all is well between you and God, to always have ease of life on this earth, only to see Him in the end and be turned away.

Application Questions

Do you recognize God's loving discipline in your life? How can you humbly respond to it?

The Justice of God

Israel, for their unreserved apostasy, deserved obliteration. They had become no different than all the nations surrounding them. They were not a people set apart as God had said they should be. They were no less reprobate than the Babylonians who sought to war against them. Their total destruction would have been justice; however, what they receive, and what God explicitly says they are experiencing, is not justice but discipline and mercy. Sin against a holy and eternal God deserves a holy and eternal consequence; what Israel receives is temporary heartache with the opportunity to repent and turn to God for life. He does this because of the covenant promise He had made that pointed to Christ.

Jeremiah 33:14-6 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’”

Application

God will have His justice, obtain His righteousness, and mete out the punishment that our sins deserve but it does not have to come from us. Through the cross of Christ, God is both just and forgiving; we can be humbled by this truth, humbled by His discipline or humbled by His judgment. One way or another we will be humbled for God is a jealous God and in His love for us, He will not allow our hearts to be taken by idols. Jesus came to be our righteousness by living the perfect life that we could not live. We can be free from our guilt and punishment because Jesus is our faithfulness to God.

Sermon Link : [Israel Slides Into Exile](#)

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