

James T. Jeremiah
Jeremiah 6
May 3, 1972

Transcript

Speaker 1:

It is a pleasure today to introduce our president, Dr. James T. Jeremiah.

James T. Jeremiah:

Thank you. I was waiting for Lee Turner to put a sign up there in the hallway as a special welcome but he didn't do it, I don't think. I haven't seen it today. I had my son's name there yesterday and he didn't come so that didn't help him I guess very much. He's out in California. I did have a great time at Word of Life, 118 young people in this Bible Institute, this one year course. Many of them preparing to go on to university and college. Some of them who were there this time or coming to Cedarville. We already have their applications and some of you are going to Word of Life this summer and there will be hundreds of people you'll be able to serve.

James T. Jeremiah:

And, may I say, that one of the delights of my heart is to go to that place and hear Doc Jensen and others who have responsible spots in the program direction of the work say how much they appreciate the students from Cedarville College. You've done a good job there and we appreciate this. And I know that it means something to you to know that others appreciate what you're doing.

James T. Jeremiah:

We met a young man there this time who'd just came to visit his brother and the brother had been saved sometime before. It was in the Institute. The fellow who came to visit him had been on drugs and came there as an unsaved fellow and was saved. And the day after he was saved, he came in and he said to my wife and to me, "I've never been so happy in all my life." And the next day he came in, he said, "I was happy yesterday, but I'm more happy today." He'd had a real experience, I think, with the Lord.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now in this Bible Institute, when I go up there for two weeks, and I don't think I'm going to go again for two weeks because when I get back, it looks like everybody in the institution here, this good college has piled all the things on my desk they didn't want to take care of themselves. And two weeks of that is a lot to take care of. But they didn't do that really. I'm just kidding. But while I was there for two weeks this year and two weeks last year, I attempted to go through 1/20th of the Bible, the book of Jeremiah. I thought perhaps we ought to have an authentic interpretation of that book. So I tried to do that.

James T. Jeremiah:

I've discovered however, in studying the old Testament book, that it has a very significant meaning and relationship to our times. Every once in a while, you young people who do evangelism on the campuses will face the old story that the Bible is no longer relevant to the society in which we live and that we don't find very much in it that fits today. Well, the fact of the matter is this book would disprove that argument if you'd study it because it is relative, has a relationship to our times, by at least its application.

James T. Jeremiah:

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Well, the prophet of God lived in a day similar to ours. And I want to use it as a text today a verse found in the sixth chapter. But most of the message will be introductory. And then I'll give you the text or the outline. Let me read it for you though. Jeremiah 6:16. "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths. Where is the good way? And walk therein. And you shall find rest for your souls. But, they said we will not walk therein." Now that last phrase summarizes the apostate condition of those people.

James T. Jeremiah:

Most of you in your courses in Bible have been aware of this, I'm sure, but the prophet Jeremiah, who's called the prophet of judgment as well as the weeping prophet, predicts that there will come an apostasy upon the land, there will come with judgment upon the land, because of their apostasy. And he pictures this apostasy in a very unusual way in some verses. For example, in the second chapter and the 13th verse. Jeremiah 2:13, he has a very interesting statement that summarizes that whole second chapter. "My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters and they have hewed them out broken cisterns that can hold no water." I don't know of a more descriptive phrase than that we find today.

James T. Jeremiah:

How many there are who turned their backs upon the fountain of living waters, that which satisfies the thirsty soul and the thirsty life, and they've turned to broken cisterns. The land of Israel is filled with cisterns where the water is stored because of the water problem in the land. And the prophet takes this maybe from his own hometown of Anathoth, where he saw many of these and he knew what a broken cistern was. It looked real, but it wasn't. It had no way of holding water.

James T. Jeremiah:

And you'll find people doing that today. They turned from the Lord, they will not listen to God. They turn to such things as drugs and they turned to such things as conformity with the world and they try to find their satisfaction in the pleasures of sin. And these are cisterns that are broken, that hold no water, and they turn their back upon the God who does satisfy.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now there are many other scriptures in the book that illustrate the apostate condition of the day. Another one in this second chapter is interesting. He said, verse 27, chapter two, saying to a stock or to a piece of wood, literally, saying to a piece of wood, "Thou art my father." And to a stone, "Thou has brought me forth for they have turned their back unto me and not their face. But in the time of their trouble, they will say arise and save us." How like human nature. Worship a stone and worship a piece of wood or some empty thing without any meaning until they get into trouble. This is human nature you know. How many times, all of us I suspect if we'd be honest, have taken our responsibilities before the Lord very lightly? And then after time of difficulty, we've called on the God to help us out of our problems.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, they were like that somewhat. Chapter three he speaks of them perverting their way. Verse 20 and 21. And in verse 22 of chapter four, he says, "They were wise to do evil. No wisdom to do good but wise to do evil." And this theme runs all the way through the book. You see? The purpose of the first 22

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chapters is a series of sermons given by the prophet is to point Judah to God and to turn away from her idols. She became apostate. But you say that's a long time ago, that doesn't apply to us today.

James T. Jeremiah:

Judah was a peculiar treasure of the Lord, the Southern kingdom, the Northern kingdom, and taken captive already in 722 BC. And now the Southern kingdom is following the same footsteps, following the same way that Israel had followed before the Assyrians took them captive. And they're apostate. In the New Testament, we have a counterpart to this in the day in which we live for Paul said to Timothy in the last days, "Perilous, difficult, troublesome times will come. Men shall be lovers of themselves." And it goes on to say that, "They follow even a false religion, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." So we're living in a time like that.

James T. Jeremiah:

Religion, for example, is apostate. There are some churches, individual churches, and individual separate denominations that are so apostate that they never hear the gospel. Some of you know this. You've been in them. You know what I'm talking about. The gospel of the Lord Jesus, the word of God, the authority of scripture is no longer a part of their thinking. They've turned to human wisdom. They've turned to their broken cisterns and they find there no satisfaction.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now what's the cure of all of this? Well, someone says if we could just have a revival, apostasy would be cured. It never has in the past. There's been no apostasy really ever cured by revival. It has been stunted a little bit. Perhaps it has been turned back a little bit and we ought to be praying for revival. But if we read the Bible correctly, the only answer to apostasy is the judgment of God. Wherever you'll read it, read about it in the New Testament, it ends in judgment. Well, this is the theme that made the prophet so unpopular.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now if you talk for example on the theme of love and you discuss things that are nice to hear, people will generally listen. But when you talk about sin being judged and about waywardness being cured by discipline of the Lord, then you get into trouble. Finally, the place where they accused him of treason. He was a treacherous man and it turned from his own country because he said Babylon was coming and they ought to understand this and get the thing settled. But they wouldn't listen to him.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now through the scriptures, you'll find references to judgment. Chapter one, in verse 13, when God gave him a call to preach, he gave him a prophetic vision of what was going to happen. He told him about a floating almond tree, which is the first tree to bud in the spring. We were in Israel, the last time, we were there in January and this tree was just beginning to flower. And it was a very interesting thing in the light of the scripture in verse 1:13. Then he speaks about a seeding pot or a boiling cauldron that is pointed from the north down toward Judah. And God is giving him this vision. The vision is that judgment is coming from the north. It's coming from Babylon. Babylon is not named until about the 21st chapter when Nebuchadnezzar's name is given. But the prophet of God has a vision from the Lord as to what's going to happen. Judgment is coming.

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And if you would like to read what he says will happen to it, then I think the fourth chapter and the 23rd and the 27th verses give a pretty good idea of what this is going to be like. For he tells us as he portrays what the judgment is going to, how it's going to end and what it's going to do, he pictures it in a very remarkable sense. Let me read it for you. Verse 23, he said, "I beheld the earth. And lo it was without form and void and the heavens and they had no light. I beheld the mountains and lo they trembled and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld and lo there was no man. And all the birds of the heavens were fled. Beheld and lo the fruitful place was a wilderness and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord and by his fierce anger." And then he identifies this picture in verse 27. "For thus hath the Lord said, the whole land shall be desolate. Yet will I not make a full end?"

James T. Jeremiah:

That's an indication of something better to come. In the 30th through the 33rd chapters, he's talking about the future restoration. And this is we think the beginning of it in our time when the land is being re-peopled by the Jews. At any rate, this is an awful picture of judgment. Now what happened? Well, the thing that really eventually happened was that Nebuchadnezzar and all these forces came down from the north as they followed the lines of what has been called the Fertile Crescent, came down into Judah and conquered the cities outside like [inaudible 00:12:26] and [inaudible 00:12:27] and other cities. And finally came to the city of Jerusalem and took it over and destroyed it and took the implements out of the temple and left it desolate.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now someone said, what does that have to do with us? That has no application today. Let me read a scripture in the New Testament. In Second Thessalonians 2:8. "Then shall the lawless one or the wicked one be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with a spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." The lawless one is the antichrist in whom all the lawlessness of our day and the end time have summarized and brought into the meaning of one individual. In Revelation 19, we have a picture of the judgment of God and the coming of Jesus Christ in great power and glory and all the holy angels with him and the saints of God coming with him too when he pronounces judgment upon the end of this age. So Jeremiah's picture in the Old Testament can carry over as an illustration of what will happen in the prophetic picture of the future.

James T. Jeremiah:

And people, I believe we ought to be interested in the study of prophecy. I think we ought to be thinking about the coming of the Lord. I think that when we live so closely to this world, that we get so occupied in it that our hearts are not thrilled by the knowledge of the Lord's return. We are so occupied with things that we ought not to be like this. And it's easy, I'm sure, to do it. But we ought to be thinking of our Savior's return for us. And then to be grateful for what the word of God says about us coming with him.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now when the prophet of God outlined Judah, their terrible apostasy, and then told them the judgment was coming, he had some competition. There were some false prophets who came. These false prophets denied what the prophet of God had said. They had a message of their own. And though we don't have a lot of time to do this, to go into a detail, I want to summarize what I believe the false

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prophets were saying. Essentially, I suppose they were saying, this will never happen because human nature is not really that bad. And God certainly recognizes the fact that every man should have a right to his own opinion and he should be able to worship as he pleases according to the dictates of his own heart. And human nature isn't that bad.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, the prophet of God answered that in one place when he said that the heart of man is desperately, incurably wicked. Incurably wicked. And who can know it? Then the false prophets, as we find in this sixth chapter in verse 14, they'd been saying peace, peace. When there was no peace. This is the theme. "Peace, peace." "No peace." Thus preaching it, but having none. And I suspect that they also emphasized to the people, as a false prophet would, that God is too good a God, he's a God of divine love and he will not judge sin. He'll not judge wickedness and iniquity. Sometimes we get that concept in America. Why good old Christian America, "God won't deal with us." Let's not count on that. Who are we to escape? And God certainly deals with iniquity.

James T. Jeremiah:

Anyway, this was probably a flashback to the days of Hezekiah. When Hezekiah was faced with Sennacherib and the Assyrians attacking Jerusalem prior to this, God delivered Judah at this time. And so they thought if God did it once, he'll do it again. And they, more or less, rested back easily on their thinking that God was a God of love and wouldn't judge them. There are some of them that looked to religious rituals for their answer, as you find them in chapter seven, verse four. Someone has pointed out that this is probably the first religious chant in the Bible. And probably it is. I hope there aren't too many like it. Verse four it says, "Trust ye not in lying words saying the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord." They were going through a religious chant.

James T. Jeremiah:

I've known people who thought the more they could chant and the more they could go through some ritual, the more they could repeat certain phrases, they're not all out in the churches beyond our kind either, I guess, because every once in a while you hear this. The temple of the Lord. They thought that if they would just repeat this phrase and God would not touch the temple. It was holy, sacrosanct. Nobody could touch it.

James T. Jeremiah:

There are a lot of people that think that they're going to escape the dealing, the discipline of God by going through a rote kind of thing. "Lord, bless. Lord, bless. Lord, bless." I used to hear Doctor Walter Wilson talk about prayer. Never forgot what he said about it one occasion. He talked about the praying and repeating. So often in praying when we're talking to the Lord, he said, "Dear Lord, do this. Dear Lord, do this. Dear Lord, do this. Dear Lord, do this." Repeating the name of the Lord, he said, you wouldn't go to the grocery store and say, "Mr. Grocerman, I want a bag of salt. Mr. Grocerman, I want a bag of sugar. Mr. Grocerman, I want a pound of butter. Mr. Grocerman" That sort of thing. Sometimes we think the repetition of divine titles make our prayers a little more acceptable. Well, maybe this is what they had in mind. We do it unconsciously perhaps. They didn't. Trusting in religious ritual.

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Then they were trusting in false gods. In chapter seven, verse four, it tells us about trusting in lying words. And then we read in verses nine and 10 of this chapter that they trusted in lying words again. When you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely and burn incense on the Baal? A common stand before me in this house. False Gods, that's a sad thing. Here they had turned their back upon the God of truth and turned their eyes upon the God Baal. Who's Baal?

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, I guess the nearest we could bring him today would be the God of materialism. He was the fertility god. He was the rain god, the storm God. He was the God who brought rain so that the crops could produce and the people could be well off. He was the fertility God for both man and beast. And he was also very accommodating. He accommodated himself to every local deity. He was an ecumenical God, if you please. Beelzebub, Baal Zephon, and all these other titles of him. And the prophet refers to him as Baalim, which means there were many Baals. Plural. They turned the Baal. You can't conceive of how far these people had gone in their apostasy. They were trusting in their false gods.

James T. Jeremiah:

I wonder what false gods we trust in. The other day, I was driving somewhere up in Michigan, after the service one night. It was in the late part of the winter. I guess that's been maybe a week ago. Anyway, it was the late part of the winter. And I got on 75. And I tell you, it was a race to find out where I could get in between the automobiles with snowmobiles. It isn't so bad to have one and I could stand two. But when you find trailers with four, they have a lot of Baals. I say, "Oh, I don't like that. I like snowmobiles." I think I would too. But on Sunday night, all the gang coming from the north country, I'm sure they weren't in the evening service.

James T. Jeremiah:

Materialism. We're filled with it in our day. The things. Some of you young people are here. Maybe. Hope you're not, but there's reason. You're in college because you want to find the best opportunity to make the most money to live highest on the hog. Excuse me. That is you get the best piece of ham. If that's your objective in a college education, it's a pretty weak one. It ought to be, it seems to me as Christians, to do this for the glory of God that we in turn might serve him for that end.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, they turned to the false gods with their answers. Now, what is the answer for the child of God in a day like this? Well, the prophet gives this in this little verse. Many years ago in my early Christian life, a dear friend of mine who is now with the Lord, had a very good sermon on this. I can't remember what he said about it. It's been a long time ago. But I'll tell you one thing, I'll never forget these words. Stand, see, ask, walk, rest. That's the secret to [inaudible 00:22:10] an apostate day. Then and now. God wants us to just stand and see him work. In the midst of it all. I think the Psalms put it this way. "Be still and know that I am God." And that's a wonderful thing for all of us as Christians. In a day of apostasy and unbelief and antagonism, to be able to see God work, as he has in your life, and I trust in mine, to see him do things. We don't have a God who was way off there. He's here. He's ready to work. And he is. Stand and see him do it.

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I don't buy the deal that this is apostasy and God can't do anything. I used to hear this occasionally that God was thrilled with evangelism. God was thrilled with winning souls because we're apostate. My concept of that is that when it's dark, the light shines the better. And if there is apostasy, then the children of God have a better opportunity to be witnesses than they would do if there were no such thing. Stand.

James T. Jeremiah:

I like the attitude of our first president of this country. According to the story, when he was a general out serving his country in that capacity and he came to Brandywine Creek and they were going across the river. One of his men said, "General, shall we burn the bridge?" The idea, I guess, was that he wasn't sure whether they ought to burn the bridge or wait to see whether they had a victory. And the general looked at him and very sternly said, "Burn the bridge. It's death or victory." "Stand and see. God will not forsake you. And some of you may be building bridges.

James T. Jeremiah:

I trust God has called many of you to serve him. And I'm not just thinking about preaching and missionary service. He's given you a responsibility to teach, maybe in one of these Christian Day schools. And maybe you're building a bridge to see if it doesn't go so good, you could get back in a better paying job. I have news for you, friend, there aren't many paying jobs in education now. Burning a bridge. Young man said to me one day, he was a theological student, he said, "I'm not going to finish the secular degree I've been working on that would enable me to teach in the field." I said, "Why not? I think it'd be a good thing." I was trying to encourage him. He said, "I dare not do it. I dare not build any bridges. I dare not do it because if I build a bridge, it'll give me an opportunity, maybe, to do something else beside what God's called me to do." Stand, see. See God work in an hour like that.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, this verse also indicates. I think, that in a day such as this, we really would want the Lord's will. Ask for the old path. Where is the good way? I want to make it very clear, young people, that my judgment, there's nothing particularly virtuous about antiquity. Some people say, "Oh, well it's old. It must be good." It could be old and could be a wreck. I used to have a 1934. Not a Model T now. A 1930. It would be an old car. Had Brother MacDonald had it, he'd make a fortune out of it. But if I had it, Brother McDonald could have it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Nothing particular virtuous about a 1934. And just because a thing is old, doesn't make it true. Nor is it the other side. Because it's new, doesn't make it better. Why are these old paths so meaningful? Because they are referring to the word of God, which is a divine, unalterable, complete, final, total revelation and nothing more is needed for our spiritual welfare. Some of you may be among those who are seeking additional light. I hope not. Because the light you need is here. God says, ask for the old path. A right path. An old path is the right path when it starts right. And a right path is an old path and a good path when it ends right. And your path and mine should start with the grace of God and end with the glory of God. And that should be enough. It indicates, it seems to me, a dedication, a yieldedness to God's will.

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What is this all about anyway? What is dedication, consecration and all this business? Someone said, "Well, I'm not so sure I want to yield my life to the Lord. I don't know what he's going to do with me." Well, that's for sure you won't if that's the way you feel. Somebody pointed out the best way to define it is for God to give you a sheet of paper, take an eight and a half by 11 sheet. Blank paper. Not any lines in it even so God can write in fine print when he gets ready to write it for you. A sheet of white paper and down in the corner of that white paper, write your name, sign your name. James T Jeremiah. Done it. And then say, "Lord, fill in the blanks." I wonder how many of us will do that? But that's what we ought to do.

James T. Jeremiah:

I'm sure God isn't coming out of heaven with a ballpoint to fill it all in. I'm sure that isn't going to happen. And don't put it under your pillow and think you're going to have a late night vision. But let's realize that essentially that's what he wants us to do. Ask for the old ways and then walk therein. I did not take time with this, but Luke nine gives us a pretty good illustration of the disciples of the now generation. They always had some reason why they couldn't follow Christ because of the here and now. We need people, it seems to me in the Lord's work today, something like the young people wanted some years ago, this appeared in the newspaper, "Wanted: young, skinny, wiry fellows. Not over 18. Must be expert writers, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred. Wages \$25 a week. Apply to Central Overland Express." They were advertising for pony express riders.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, they don't use those anymore unless they put them in the postal service. But they're not asking recruits anymore. The Lord, however, is asking, still looking, for those who are willing to risk anything. Anything for him. God says in his word, and with this final note, I'll stop. When you stand and see and ask and walk, what'll happen? You'll have rest. Have rest. That's New Testament. Notice now, the last part of that verse. "Ye shall find rest. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me and ye shall" what? "Find rest." Same thing.

James T. Jeremiah:

What does it mean? It means that in the day of darkness and spiritual defeat and spiritual problems and all the rest, God's children are to take his word, obey it, and when they do, they find rest. Now you may have the rest God gives in salvation, but you will not have the rest you find apart from obedience. You say, well, that sounds like the second blessing to me. Well, why don't you put it there? I don't care where you put it. Obedience brings rest. And maybe that's what we need today.

James T. Jeremiah:

Father, speak to our hearts from thy word and may these words in this Old Testament text stand out in our thinking as a challenge, instruction, and encouragement. In Jesus' name. Amen.