

Jeremiah Chapter 16

Jeremiah 16:1 "The word of the LORD came also unto me, saying,"

Here begins a new discourse, wherein God forbids Jeremiah to marry, principally with a view to show the miseries of parents, and the confused and ruinous state of things in Judea. "Fruitfulness was promised as a blessing under the law (Deut. 28:4), but ceased to be so in such difficult times as were coming upon the Jewish nation. For parents could not promise to themselves any comfort in their children, who must be exposed to the many miseries that attend a hostile invasion and a conquering army."

This is another separate time that God has spoken to Jeremiah. This is a totally different message as we will soon see.

Verses 2-4: To vividly portray Judah's coming distress, the Lord commanded Jeremiah not to marry or have children. The Lord often used the marriages and families of the prophets to teach important lessons to the people (Isa. chapters 7-8; Ezek. chapter 24 and Hosea chapters 1-3).

Jeremiah 16:2 "Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place."

"Thou shalt not take thee a wife": Since destruction and exile are soon to fall on Judah, the prophet must not have a wife and family. God's kindness will keep him for anxiety over them in the awful situation of suffering and death (verse 4; compare 15:9 and 1 Cor. 7:26).

(Chapters 16 and 17), continue the theme of Jeremiahs' life in the light of the coming judgment. In the face of the horrible specter of death, destruction, and deportation. Jeremiah is neither to marry nor to grieve for the objects of God's just judgment.

God does not want Jeremiah to be yoked with these idol worshippers. It was a natural thing for all to seek a wife, and many of the prophets like Isaiah, were married. This was not forbidding Jeremiah to marry, just requesting him not to marry these women who were involved in worshipping false gods. God did not want Jeremiah to have unbelieving children.

Jeremiah 16:3 "For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land;"

This is a reason given why the prophet should not have, and why he should not be desirous to have, sons and daughters in such a place and country that was devoted to destruction.

"And concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land": The land of Judea; which shows what is meant by the place before mentioned. Both

the one and the other, parents and children, should die there. This is what was determined by the Lord concerning them. And therefore, it could not be a desirable thing for a man to have wife and children, whom he must part with in such an uncomfortable manner, as is. This is a reason given why the prophet should not have, and why he should not be desirous to have, sons and daughters in such a place and country, devoted to destruction.

"And concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land": The land of Judea; which shows what is meant by the place before mentioned. Both the one and the other, parents and children, should die there. This is what was determined by the Lord concerning them. And therefore, it could not be a desirable thing for a man to have wife and children, whom he must part with in such an uncomfortable manner, as is described. And to show the certainty of which the prophet is forbidden to do as above. And to show the certainty of which the prophet is forbidden to do.

God's judgement had been spoken on these evil people. Not only would the men die, but the women and children as well.

Jeremiah 16:4 "They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; [but] they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth."

Such as the sword, famine, and pestilence. The Targum particularly adds famine. It may be rendered, "deaths of diseases, or sicknesses"; such as are brought on by long sickness and lingering distempers. By which a man consumes gradually, as by famine, and is not snatched away at once. And which are very grievous to bear.

"They shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried": Which two things are usually done to the dead by their surviving relations. Who mourn for them, and express their grief by various gestures, and which especially were used by the eastern nations. And take care that they have a decent burial. But neither of these would now be, which is mentioned as an aggravation of the calamity. That not only the deaths they should die of would be grievous ones, but after death no regard would be shown them. And that either because there would be none to do these things for them. Or they would be so much taken up in providing for their own safety, and so much in concern for their own preservation, that they would not be at leisure to attend to the above things.

"But they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth": Lie and rot there, and be dung to the earth. Which would be a just retaliation, for their filthy and abominable actions committed in the land.

"And they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine": The grievous deaths before mentioned. The sword without, and the famine within; the one more sudden, and at once, the other more lingering. And therefore may be more especially designed by the death of lingering sicknesses referred to.

"And their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth": Lying unburied (see Jer. 7:33).

God is reminding Jeremiah of the punishment He has already spoken upon this nation. He is saying, Jeremiah you would not want your wife or children to be part of this severe punishment. It is better if you do not marry. God will not only cause them to die, but He will not allow anyone to bury them or mourn for them. They have been so evil, God will allow their bodies to be eaten by vultures and wild beasts.

Verses 5-6: Jeremiah was not to attend funerals or mourn for the dead. These were important social customs, but the dead were not to be mourned because their deaths were the judgment of God. The Lord had withdrawn His love and mercy from the people.

Jeremiah 16:5 "For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, [even] lovingkindness and mercies."

“House of mourning”: This was a home where friends prepared a meal for a bereaved family. Don’t mourn with them or rejoice, he is told (compare verse 8).

This is a warning from God to Jeremiah. He must not even mourn over those whom God destroys.

Jeremiah 16:6 "Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall [men] lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them:"

“Cut themselves ... bald”: These acts indicated extreme grief.

It was the custom of the land to bury their dead. They also set aside a time of mourning for them. Sometimes to show the severity of their grief, they would cut themselves in sorrow. God says here it does not even matter how important they seemed to be, no one is to mourn them. In this the ruler will be no better than the common people.

Jeremiah 16:7 "Neither shall [men] tear [themselves] for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall [men] give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother."

Either their flesh, or their clothes. Or, "stretch out"; that is, their hands, and clap them together, and wring them, as persons in great distress do. Or "divide", or "break", or "deal unto them"; that is, bread, as at their funeral feasts. Thus, the Septuagint version, neither shall bread be broken in their mourning. And to the same sense the Targum; so the word is used in (Isa. 63:7). A practice that obtained among the Heathens (see Deut. 26:14), and now with the Jews, as it seems. Which they did for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead. They used to carry or send food to the surviving relations, and went and ate with them, in order to comfort them for the loss of their friends. But this now would not be done, not because a Heathenish custom, but because they would have no heart nor leisure for it (see Ezek. 24:17).

"Neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother": Not give them a cup of good liquor to comfort and cheer their spirits, overwhelmed with sorrow, on account of the death of a father or mother": Which was accustomed to be done, but now should be omitted. The calamity would be so great, and so universal, that there would be none to do such offices as these (see Prov. 31:6).

The Jews had a practice of a funeral feast when someone died. This was very similar to the wake some practice today. The cup of consolation was a cup of wine probably, which helped them bear the pain of the loss of a child.

Verses 8-9: It would also be inappropriate for Jeremiah to attend feasts and celebrations during a time of national calamity.

Jeremiah 16:8 "Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink."

God not only forbade his prophet to go into houses of mourning, to eat and to drink according to their custom, or to comfort those who had lost their friends. But he forbade him also to go into houses where they were accustomed to eat and to drink upon a more cheerful account.

This is another way of expressing the same thing as above. This is a judgement of God and should not be handled as if these people were saved.

Jeremiah 16:9 "For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride."

Who is able to do what he here threatens he will, and which he will do, notwithstanding his being the God of Israel. Their hearts not being right with him, nor they steadfast in his covenant.

"Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place, in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness": Upon any account whatsoever, civil or religious. And that out of Jerusalem, where their religious feasts were kept, as well as there were often expressions of joy made on civil accounts. And this should be in their sight, it should be notorious and remarkable, that they could not but observe it. And it should be in a short time, in their days, though they were very desirous of putting these evil days far from them. And were not willing to believe they should be at all, or however, not in their days.

"The voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride": The poems and marriage songs, sung at the celebration of nuptials. These should cease, marrying and giving in marriage being over. The consequence of which must be ruin to the nation, a lawful succession of mankind being not otherwise to be kept up.

This is speaking of a time when all the normal joys of living will cease. God leaves no doubt that Jeremiah will see this time. It was for the immediate future. There will be no one left to marry.

Verses 10-13: "Wherefore hath the Lord...?" Jeremiah was to explain the reason for the judgment, i.e., their forsaking God and worshiping false gods (verse 11; 2:13). They would get their fill of idols in Babylon (verse 13).

Jeremiah 16:10 "And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt show this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what [is] our iniquity? or what [is] our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?"

Or, "all these things"; which he was forbidden to do. As marrying and having children, going into the house of mourning or feasting, with the reasons of all, because of the calamities coming upon them.

"And they shall say unto thee, wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us?" As if they were quite innocent, and were not conscious of anything they had done deserving such punishment. Especially so great as this was threatened to be inflicted on them. As their dying grievous deaths, parents and children, great and small, and be unlamented and unburied.

"Or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?" Supposing we have been guilty of some weaknesses and frailties. Or of some few faults; which though they cannot be justified, yet surely are not to be reckoned of such a nature as to deserve and require so great a punishment. Thus, would they either deny or lessen the sins they had been guilty of. And suggest that the Lord was very hard and severe upon them.

Not only is Jeremiah to know all of this, but he is to tell the others of the great judgement that is to befall them. The people will not believe Jeremiah. They will not even realize they have displeased God to this extent. They will ask Jeremiah why is this happening to them. They have gotten so calloused by the sins they are committing, they do no longer recognize sin.

Jeremiah 16:11 "Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law;"

In answer to their questions. Not in a general way, but by observing to them particular sins, and those gross ones, they had been guilty of.

"Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord": That is, his worship, as the Targum; they had quitted his service, and left attending on his word and ordinances. And therefore, it was but just with him to forsake them, and give them up into the hands of their enemies.

"And have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them": Were guilty of gross idolatry, serving and worshipping the creature more than and besides the Creator. Even idols of gold, silver, brass, wood, and stone, which were no gods. For there is no other true God besides the Lord. And which they were well informed of, and therefore their sin was the greater to leave him and worship them. And which sin, because of the heinousness of it, is repeated.

"And have forsaken me, and have not kept my law": They forsook his worship, as the Targum, and did not observe the law of the Decalogue or Ten Commandments. Especially the two first of them, which required the worship of the one true God, and forbid the worshipping of others. And which threatened the visiting such iniquities of fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation, of such that hated the Lord. And such were these persons as follows.

The worship of false gods had been going on since the time of their fathers. God had given them time to repent and they have not. God answers their question. He is not angry with them without a cause. The judgement God has spoken on them is just.

Jeremiah 16:12 "And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me:"

Not only committed the same sins but greater sins, or however, attended with more aggravating circumstances. They were willfully and impudently done, and obstinately persisted in. And therefore deserving of the great evil of punishment pronounced against them.

"For, behold, ye walk everyone after the imagination of his evil heart": They walked not as the word of God directs, but as their own evil heart dictated. The imagination of which was evil, and that continually (Gen. 6:5).

"That they may not hearken unto me": To the word of the Lord, and obey that. Their minds being blinded and their hearts hardened, and they obstinately bent on their own evil ways.

It appears the worship of false gods had become worse with this new generation. They were not following the laws of God anymore. Whatever they wanted to do, is what they did. They were pleasing their own flesh instead of keeping God's commandments. Their deeds are evil, because they come from an evil heart.

Jeremiah 16:13 "Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, [neither] ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not show you favor."

By force, and against their wills, whether they would or not, and with abhorrence and contempt. It is to be understood of their captivity, which was but a just punishment for the above sins. For since they had cast off the Lord and his worship, it was but just that they should be cast off by him. And cast out of their land, which they held by their obedience to him.

"Into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers": A foreign country at a great distance from them; with which they had no alliance, correspondence, or commerce. And where they had no friends to converse with, or show them any respect. And whose language they understood not; all which was an aggravation of their captivity in it.

"And there shall ye serve other gods day and night": Should have their fill of idolatry, even to loathsomeness. And what they had done willingly in their own land, following the imagination of their own evil hearts. Now they should be forced to; and what they did for their own pleasure, and at certain times, when they thought fit, now they should be obliged to attend night and day. The Targum is, "and there shall ye serve people that worship idols day and night"; that as they had served idols, now they should serve the people, the worshippers of those idols. The former was their sin, the latter their punishment.

"Where I will not show you favor": Or, "not give you grace". The favor and mercy of God serves to support persons in distress. But to be denied these is an aggravation of it, and makes the captivity of those people the more afflicting. Some understand this of the Lord's not suffering their enemies to show them any favor or mercy.

Since they desired to worship false gods, God will put them captive in a land where they do not have an option. They will be subject to their captors, day and night. They will be able to do full time, what they chose to do here.

Verses 14-15: God includes a reassuring hope to Jeremiah. After Judah has paid for its sins and the divine purposes have been realized, God will regather His people to the land in a deliverance from the nations that surpasses that of Israel's redemption from Egypt". Nevertheless, Judah must first be judged (verses 16-17).

The Lord's deliverance of His people would be like a second Exodus. This Exodus would be even greater than the first because the Lord would rescue His people out of captivity from many nations.

"Shall no more be said": In view of the Lord's promise of restoration from Babylon, the proof of God's redemptive power and faithfulness in the deliverance from Egypt would give way to a greater demonstration in the deliverance of His people from Babylon. That bondage was to be so severe that deliverance from Babylon was a greater relief than from Egypt.

Jeremiah 16:14 "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;"

Or nevertheless, "notwithstanding" their sins and iniquities, and the punishment brought upon them for those sins. Or "surely", verily; for Jarchi says it is an oath, with which the Lord swore he would redeem them, though they had behaved so badly unto him.

"That it shall no more be said, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt": This was the form of an oath with the Jews. When a man, as Kimchi observes, used to swear by the living God that brought Israel out of Egypt. Or this was a fact which they used frequently to make mention of, and relate to their children. And observe to them the power and goodness of God in it. And so the Targum "there shall be no more any declaring the power of the Lord who brought up, etc."

They will not speak of the living God who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. It appears they will cease to look to God for their very present help as He had been for them in the past. They left God and turned to these false gods.

Jeremiah 16:15 "But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."

"All the lands": This reference is extensive enough to be fully realized only in the final gathering into Messiah's earthly kingdom.

Even though they walked away from God, He continues to live. It is the same God that brought their forefathers out of Egypt. God will restore them again to their land. He will not dwell in Babylon with them. They must come to Him.

Jeremiah 16:16 "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks."

The enemy soldiers attacking Judah would be like "fishermen" and "hunters" tracking down and capturing all survivors and refugees. Jesus takes the image of fishing for men and turns it into a positive picture of his disciples capturing people for God's kingdom (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17).

This is a reference to Babylonian soldiers, who were doing God's judgment work (verse 17).

After God's wrath has cooled, God will send fishers for them and hunters to hunt them. Daniel was a prophet of the captivity. He never stopped proclaiming God to the captives. Surely there will be some who will believe. God tries to draw them back with men of God who proclaim Him to the people.

Jeremiah 16:17 "For mine eyes [are] upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes."

Not only did they try to hide themselves from their enemies, and where they should be directed to find them; but their evil ways in which they walked, and which were the cause of their calamities. These, how secret where ever they were, were under the eye of God, whose eyes are in every place, and upon all the ways of men, good and bad. Though they might flatter themselves, as wicked men sometimes do, that the Lord sees them not, and does not take notice of their iniquities. But, that they might be assured of the contrary, it is added:

"They are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes": Neither their ways nor their works, their persons nor their actions, could be concealed from the Lord. None can hide himself in secret places that they should not be seen by him. The darkness and the light are both alike to an omniscient God. The Targum is, "their iniquities are not hid from before (or from, or the sight of), my Word;" the essential Word of God (see Heb. 4:12).

Wherever they are and whatever they are doing, they are not out of God's sight. God sees when even a sparrow falls. These are His family even though they have sinned, God will not totally forget them. He sees every sin they have committed, but He also sees every good thing they have done.

Jeremiah 16:18 "And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things."

"Recompence ... double": The word for "double" signified "full or complete." A fitting punishment for such severe sins.

God judges according to their actions. He will bring punishment to match the sin. The detestable and abominable things are the false gods they had brought into God's land.

Verses 19-21 "God's "name" will be vindicated and the "Gentiles" may even come to "know" him as "Lord" (see the note on 12:14-17).

The result of God's judgment on the Jews will be the end of idolatry. Even some Gentiles, witnessing the severity, will renounce idols. After the return from Babylon, this was partly fulfilled as the Jews entirely and permanently renounced idols, and many Gentiles turned from their idols to Jehovah. However, the complete fulfillment will come in the final restoration of Israel (compare Isa. 2:1-4; 49:6; 60:3).

Jeremiah 16:19 "O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and [things] wherein [there is] no profit."

To support and comfort me.

"My fortress": To protect and shelter me.

"My refuge in the day of affliction": To whom I may flee for deliverance and consolation.

"The Gentiles": the nations.

"Shall come to thee from the ends of the earth": The prophet, shocked at the apostasy of Israel, and concerned for God's honor, here comforts himself by looking forward to the time when even

the Gentiles themselves should become sensible of the absurdity of their hereditary idolatry, and be converted to the acknowledgment of the one living and true God. And this remarkable and desirable event he predicts, the more emphatically to demonstrate the unreasonableness and folly of forsaking him for idols.

"And shall say": That is, the Gentiles shall say.

"Surely our fathers, our ancestors, have inherited lies, vanity": etc., And did not receive the satisfaction they promised themselves and their children. We are now sensible of the folly and deception of their idolatrous worship, by which they were cheated to their ruin. And therefore, we will entirely and forever renounce it, and in all our wants address ourselves to the true God as our only refuge and protection.

God is revealed to the Gentiles here. The harsh judgement that God has brought upon His own people shows the world that God is just in all of His judgements. This also shows them the power of God. Suddenly the Gentiles see the error of worshipping inanimate objects that have no power at all. This is showing that God wants the Gentiles as well as the Jews to be His people.

Jeremiah 16:20 "Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they [are] no gods?"

Can a man make his own gods? A poor, weak, mortal man? Can he make gods of gold, silver, brass, wood, or stone? Can he put deity into them? And when he has made images of these, can he be so stupid as to account them gods, and worship them? Can he be so stupid and void of understanding, as to imagine that anything that is made by himself or any other, can be God?

"And they are no gods": That are made by men. He only is the true God that is the Maker and Creator of all things. Or they are no gods themselves that pretend to make them, and therefore how should they make gods? Can they give that which they have not? Or impart deity to others which they have not themselves? These words are a continuation of the speech of the Gentiles, and contain their reasoning and exposing the folly of their idolatrous ancestors. Though some take them to be the words of God, or of the prophet, speaking against the Jews for their stupidity in worshipping idols. When the Gentiles were convinced of the folly and vanity of such practices, and acknowledged it.

We have discussed this before. Anything or anyone that is part of creation should not be worshipped. The only One to worship is the Creator of it all. Something you could make with your hands is not God.

Jeremiah 16:21 "Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name [is] The LORD."

Or, "at this time", as the Targum. When the Gentiles shall be convinced of the idolatry they have been brought up in, and of the vanity and falsehood of their idols. They shall be made to know the true God. God in Christ, Christ himself, whom to know is life eternal, and to know the way of life and salvation by him. And all this through the ministry of the Gospel that should be

brought among them. The Spirit of God accompanying it; by means of which they should come to Christ from the ends of the earth, before predicted.

"I will cause them to know my hand and my might": To experience the power and efficacy of his grace in conversion. Quickening their dead souls, softening their hard hearts, taking away the stony heart, and giving a heart of flesh. And making them willing in the day of his power to be saved by Christ, and to serve him. To relinquish their idols, and turn to and worship the living God in spirit and in truth. Though most understand this not as a promise of grace to the Gentiles, but as a threatening of punishment to the idolatrous Jews. That because of their idolatry they should once for all. Or by this one and grievous calamity, captivity in Babylon, to be made to know what they could not be brought to know by all the instructions and warnings of the prophets. They should now feel the weight of the Lord's hand, the lighting down of his arm with the indignation of his wrath. And so the Targum, "I will show them my vengeance and the stroke of my power."

"And they shall know that my name is the Lord": The Jehovah, the self-existent Being. The Being of beings, the everlasting and unchangeable I AM. Who is able to make good his promises, or perform his threatenings. A name incommunicable to creatures, which do not belong to the idols of the Gentiles, is peculiar to the true God, who is the most High in all the earth (see Psalm 83:18).

God will reveal Himself once more to all the world, both Jew and Gentile. The LORD, He is God. This knowledge comes from God. He opens their understanding to who He Is.

Jeremiah Chapter 16 Questions

1. What did God tell Jeremiah not to do?
2. Why did God not want him to do this?
3. Did any of the prophets marry?
4. Was God's judgement just against the men? Explain.
5. What were some of the conditions of their death?
6. What will God allow to happen to their dead bodies?
7. What did God forbid Jeremiah to do in verse 5?
8. Both the _____ and the _____ shall die in this land.
9. What was generally the custom to do when someone died?
10. The Jews had a practice of a funeral _____, when someone died.

11. What in our society, is that similar to?
12. When will the judgement come?
13. Why do they ask, why this happens to them?
14. What answer does God give them?
15. How long had the worship of false gods been going on?
16. The judgement God had spoken on them was _____.
17. They were pleasing their own _____ instead of keeping God's commandments.
18. Why had God sent them to this foreign land where false gods were worshipped day and night?
19. Who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt?
20. God sent _____ and _____ to seek them out.
21. Who was a prophet of the captivity?
22. When are they out of God's sight?
23. God judges according to their _____.
24. Who is the only One that it is permissible to worship?
25. Verse 21 says, they will know His name is the _____.