

Jeremiah Chapter 5

Verses 1-2: These verses bring to mind Abraham bargaining with God over the fate of Sodom (Gen. 18:16-33).

Jeremiah 5:1 "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be [any] that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it."

In this chapter, Jeremiah records the reasons for Jerusalem's judgment. Her conduct merited divine punishment (verses 9, 29). The Lord agreed to spare Sodom and Gomorrah for 10 righteous men (Gen. 18:32). Here in clear hyperbole, God asks for one man (besides Jeremiah). How great was Jerusalem's sin! "Judgment" and "truth" are often put forward as standards of Old Testament righteousness. These were found not only in perfection in God (Deut. 32:4; Hos. 2:19-20), but were also supposed to characterize the believer's life (Micah 6:8).

"Find a man": The city was too sinful to have even one man who, by truth and justice, could qualify to be an advocate to secure a pardon for Judah. Refusal to repent was the norm (verse 3), for the common people (verse 4), and for the leaders (verse 5).

This is showing the total degradation in Jerusalem at the time of Jeremiah. There is not even one man in all the city, who is just in judgement. We know that God would have spared Sodom and Gomorrah, if there had been 10 righteous people. Here He has reduced the number to one, and there is not even one.

Jeremiah 5:2 "And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely."

It might be said, that there were multitudes that made mention of the name of the Lord, that professed it, and swore by it. Which sometimes is put for the worship and service of God (Deut. 10:20), and therefore it could not be so difficult a matter to find a man of integrity and uprightness among them. This is answered by knowing there were persons that did do so; but then it must be observed:

"That surely they swear falsely": They abused the name of God, and were guilty of perjury. Or the sense is, they were only nominal professors, hypocritical worshippers, in words professed to know God, but in works denied him; had a form of religion and godliness, but without the power of it.

The difference in these people and the ones in Sodom is that here they proclaimed to believe, but did not truly believe in their hearts.

Verses 3-4: The "eyes" of the Lord is a common figure of God's sovereign surveillance over all that happens (compare Psalm 94:9). He sees the sinner (2 Chron. 21:6), and saint (Psalm 33:18),

and deals with all in His presence (Deut. 13:18). However, “foolish” Judah and Jerusalem continued in impurity. A catalog of the people’s sins follows in the chapter.

Jeremiah 5:3 "O LORD, [are] not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, [but] they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return."

Dost Thou not approve of truth and faithfulness? And dost Thou not search men’s hearts, and clearly discern their real dispositions from their hypocritical pretenses?

"Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved": That is, the Lord had courted and chastised them with afflictive providences; He had brought His judgments upon them, and had smitten them with the sword, famine, pestilence, or some such sore calamity. And yet it had not brought them to a sense of their sin, or to a godly sorrow for it.

"Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction": God had, by His judgments, consumed or swept away many of them, yet the rest did not take warning thereby, but went on in their sins. Or they were brought near to consumption, as Kimchi interprets it. Nevertheless, they remained obstinate and incorrigible and refused to receive any correction or instruction by such providences.

"They have made their faces harder than a rock": Becoming more impudent in sinning, not blushing at, or being ashamed for it. And unmoved by judgments and chastising providence.

"They have refused to return": To the Lord, and to His worship, from which they revolted. Or by repentance, and unto faith and truth, from which they had swerved.

These people are so self-righteous, they are not even aware of how far away from God they really are. Because they go through the formality of worship, they believe God will spare them. They are so hardened to sin, they do not even realize anymore they are sinning. They do not repent, because they do not feel guilty of sin.

Jeremiah 5:4 "Therefore I said, Surely these [are] poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, [nor] the judgment of their God."

The prophet, observing that reproofs and corrections in providence had no effect upon the people, he thought within himself that surely the reason must be, because these people are poor, and in low circumstances in the world. And are so busy in their worldly employments to get bread for their families that they were not at leisure to attend unto divine things, nor of capacity to receive instruction and correction by providences. They were so foolish, stupid, and ignorant.

"For they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God": Either the way which God takes in the salvation of the sons of men, and in justifying of them, which is revealed in His word. Or that which He prescribes them to walk in, in His law, even the way of truth and righteousness, and for failure of which He judges and condemns them. But of these things they were ignorant (see John 7:48), not that this is observed in excuse for them. But in order to

introduce what follows; and to show that this depravity, stupidity, and ignorance was obtained among all sort of people, high and low, rich and poor.

The foolish do not seek instruction in the ways of God. This reminds me so much of the situation in our land today. Many people attend church occasionally, some even every Sunday, and yet do not truly have a relationship with the Lord Jesus. They are like these people. They go because it is expected of them, and do not understand why they are there. You could say the people in the verse above and the people of our day, are religious. The problem is their relationship with God. The truth we all need to know is in God's Word (the Bible).

Verses 5-6: The “great men” who should have known better are compared to wandering livestock, isolated from their keeper, left as victims for the “lion”, “wolf” and “leopard.” The apparent “freedom” of abandoning God was eventually proven false by captivity and despair.

Jeremiah 5:5 "I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, [and] the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, [and] burst the bonds."

The princes, nobles, and judges, the elders of the people, the scribes and doctors of the law.

"For they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God": It might be reasonably expected that they had, having a good education, and being at leisure from worldly business to attend to the law, had the knowledge of it, and whatsoever God had revealed in His word, both, in the way of doctrine and duty.

"But these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds": The yoke of the law, and the bonds of His precepts, with which they were bound. These they broke off from them, and would not be obliged and restrained by them, but transgressed and rejected them.

The great men in the verse above, must have been (at one time) leaders in their worship services. They were acquainted with God's teachings. This is even worse than those who never knew.

They have walked away from the teachings of God. They (of their own free will) have decided they will not be controlled by the LORD and His teachings anymore. They are free from following God.

Jeremiah 5:6 "Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, [and] a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, [and] their backslidings are increased."

“Lion” ... “Wolf” ... “Leopard”: Three animals which tear and eat their victims represented the invaders: the lion (see note on 4:6-7), the wolf, and the leopard, picturing vicious judgment on both, the poor (verse 4), and the great (verse 5).

The figures of a preying “lion” (1 Pet. 5:8), “wolf” (Gen. 49:27; Acts 20:29), or “leopard” (Hosea 13:7), to represent danger or judgment occur often in the Scriptures.

We see the reason for their troubles is the fact they have sinned against God. Their destruction is violent. The lion, as we studied in a previous lesson, is symbolic of a people who Satan himself is controlling. In this case, it could very well be Babylon. The description to these people was because of their familiarity with the destruction brought about by a lion. Wolves seek their prey at night. This then could be speaking of the sneaky way they come into Judah. The leopard is a swift animal, and this could be speaking of the swiftness of the destruction. Not only was Babylon ferocious as a lion, but they were sneaky as the wolf and swift as the leopard too.

Verses 7-8: Rejection of God and a descent into immorality have always gone hand in hand throughout history.

Jeremiah 5:7 "How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by [them that are] no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses."

“Adultery”: Often the idea of adultery is figurative for idolatry or political alliances (see note on 3:1), but the language here refers to physical adultery by men seeking out prostitutes or going to neighbors’ wives (verse 8), thus violating the seventh commandment (Exodus 20:14).

A very common saying for this today would be, they were living in the lap of luxury. In other words, they had time on their hands. Sin, many times, comes from idleness and having too much of the world's pleasures. It is harder to be a Christian when you are rich, than when you are poor. Since they did not need day to day help from God, they forgot Him and went on to other false gods. They did things pleasing to their flesh. It seemed at this time, that adultery was rampant. This adultery was spiritual as well as physical.

Jeremiah 5:8 They were [as] fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife.

Adulterers are compared to horses, because they are very salacious and lustful creatures. Wherefore the Septuagint renders the word: "horses are become mad after the females"; or, "as horses mad after the females are they become". The Targum calls them field or wood horses; horses that run in fields and woods, are very vicious and wanton.

"Everyone neighed after his neighbor's wife": Coveted and lusted after her, signified his lustful desires, and sought an opportunity to defile her. Neighing is a sign of lust, and keeps up the metaphor of the horse.

Horses hang around their own barn until they are fed. This is speaking of the man as if he were a wild stallion that would jump the fence and go to another's place. Until a person has taken care of his need to eat, he has very little energy to go to his neighbor's wife and commit sin with her.

Jeremiah 5:9 "Shall I not visit for these [things]? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

The verb translated “visit” often means divine chastisement in the Old Testament. It can also mean “avenging himself” against sin (compare Hosea 1:4).

Just the sin mentioned above, is a sin severe enough to bring down the wrath of God, without any other sin being added. Notice that this was not a sin of an individual, but was a way of life in their nation. Again, this is not only speaking of physical adultery, but of idol worship which was spiritual adultery, as well.

Jeremiah 5:10 "Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they [are] not the LORD'S."

“Not the LORD’S”: The people, depicted as vine branches to be destroyed (compare 11:16-17), did not genuinely know the LORD in a saving relationship, but had forsaken Him and given allegiance to other gods. The description of having eyes but not seeing, and ears but not hearing (verse 21), is used by Isaiah (6:9), and Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:13), for such false professors as these branches. Jesus also referred to false branches in John 15:2, 6, which were burned.

We see that God will not allow total destruction of Jerusalem or Judah. This whole attack is coming on them to cause them to repent and return to God. Notice the destroyer can go just as far as God allows him to. "Battlements": in this particular instance means off-shoot. It can also mean branch, or plant. This is as if the LORD is pruning them back to the root they started from. It is the recent growth that does not belong to the LORD. The root is His. The pruning will bring new healthy growth from the root. Their captivity in Babylon is similar to pruning.

Jeremiah 5:11 "For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD."

This is a reason why such orders are given to the army of the Chaldeans to ascend the walls of Jerusalem and destroy them, namely, the untrustworthiness, both, of the ten tribes, signified by the house of Israel; explains Abarbinel; and of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, signified by the house of Judah; which was very great, and attended with treacherous circumstances. The Targum paraphrases, "they have dealt very falsely with my word:"

"Saith the LORD": For this was not the charge of the prophet against them, but of the LORD Himself. This can only be understood of such of the ten tribes as remained in Judea, for the body of that people had been carried captive many years ago, whose sins Judah imitated, and being also the posterity of Israel, may be so called.

Jeremiah 5:12 "They have belied the LORD, and said, [It is] not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine:"

Or, "denied the LORD", as some render the words, saying that there was no God. Which, though they might not deliver in express words, yet inasmuch as they denied His providence and

disbelieved His word by His prophets, they were tacitly denying that there was a God, or that the LORD was God. The meaning of the phrase "not he" may be, He takes no notice of what is done by us. He does not concern Himself with our affairs; nor has He given any such orders to our enemies, as above. Nor said these things by the prophets which are pretended: neither shall evil come upon us; they speak of.

"Neither shall we see sword nor famine": War and sieges, and famine, the consequence of them.

They both thought because they were seeds of Abraham, they would not be punished by God. "Belied" means untrue. It also means deceive or lie. They have not been true with God or themselves. They have believed a lie. Their deception has been of themselves. They are Abraham's seed, but they have not remained with Abraham's teachings. Their safety remained as long as they lived godly lives. They forgot the second part of the promise which said, curses would come if they turned from God.

Jeremiah 5:13 "And the prophets shall become wind, and the word [is] not in them: thus shall it be done unto them."

Judah's false "prophets" were not sent by the Spirit of God. Because the Hebrew word translated "wind" can also be rendered "Spirit," there may be a play on meanings here. Judah's prophets were not sent by the Spirit (compare Isa. 61:1), but were mere windbags!

Speaking or utterances of the prophets is like wind, because they do not receive God's message. These people, from the bottom to the top, do not receive the Truth. There is nothing left for God to do but let the punishment begin. They will not listen, so He must get their attention with action instead of words.

Jeremiah 5:14 "Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them."

For the term "LORD God of hosts," see the note on 1 Sam. 1:3. Even the invading enemy is under God's control.

"My words ... fire": The judgment of Judah prophesied in God's Word by Jeremiah will bring destruction, but not elimination (verse 18), to the nation (compare 23:29).

The LORD God of hosts is speaking here. The words in Jeremiah's mouth will be like a fire that sets the wood on fire. We remember from chapter 1, that the words that came from Jeremiah's mouth were the Words of God. This fire is the Fire of the Spirit of God.

Jeremiah 5:15 "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it [is] a mighty nation, it [is] an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say."

Apparently, as there is no contrast with Judah, Israel in its wider sense, as including the whole body of the twelve tribes.

"A mighty nation": The strict force of the adjective is that of "lasting, enduring," as of mountains (Micah 6:2), and rivers (Amos 5:24; Psalm 74:15).

"Whose language thou knowest not": To the Jew, as to the Greek, the thought of being subject to a people of alien speech, a "barbarian," added a new element of bitterness (compare Isa. 28:11; Deut. 28:49).

The nation God will bring against them is not a Hebrew nation. They do not speak the same language as Israel. We recall from our studies in Genesis, that God had confused the languages at Babel, so they would not be able to understand each other.

Genesis 11:9 "Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

The nation about to attack them was an ancient and powerful nation.

Jeremiah 5:16 Their quiver [is] as an open sepulcher, they [are] all mighty men.

The Chaldeans used bows and arrows in fighting; the quiver is a case for arrows. And the phrase denotes that their arrows would do great execution, and be very mortal. So that a quiver of them would be as devouring as an open grave, into which many dead are cast. The Septuagint and Arabic versions have not this clause; but the Syriac version renders it, "whose throats are as open sepulchers" (see Rom. 3:13).

"They are all mighty men": Strong in body, of bold and courageous spirits, experts in war, and ever victorious. So there was no hope of being delivered out of their hands.

A "sepulcher" is a burying place or a grave. This is saying then, their arrows have death in them. They are mighty warriors, who bring death and destruction.

Jeremiah 5:17 "And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, [which] thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword."

They shall make clean riddance, leave thee no supports of life, but bring an utter famine upon thee. It is thus threatened (Deut. 28:30; 48:51).

"Which thy sons and thy daughters should eat": Or, they shall eat up thy sons and thy daughters. But this is only a metonymy of the effect: but properly, this aggravates the dreadfulness of the judgment. Parents, out of the tenderness of their affection, choosing rather to die themselves,

than to live to see their children starve before their eyes; with no means to relieve them (Lam. 2:10-11).

"They shall eat up thy flocks": A particular enumeration of the desolation that would be made, all tending to the greatness of the former.

"They shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trusted, with the sword": Besides the waste that the famine would make among persons, their cities also shall be depopulated by the sword of the enemy. Rather, possibly the siege would be so devastating, leaving the people poverty stricken, as may be implied by the word "impoverish", that they would be forced to eat one another, till they were quite wasted. They would be reduced to such poverty and need; or the sword may relate to the mentioned mischiefs, as the cause of them all. The sword shall do all this: in all which He doth not so much tell them that the Chaldeans shall conquer them. For that is taken as it were for granted, as what cruelties they shall use when they have conquered.

People plant crops so that they might harvest their fields to feed their family. This will not be what happens here. The invaders will get the food they have prepared for their family and the family will do without. The invaders will take their crops and their animals and everything else they can lay hands upon. They will even take the people captive. What they do not take, they will destroy with the sword.

Jeremiah 5:18 "Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you."

When these things should be done by the king of Babylon and his army.

"Saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you": This was to be done at another time, not now (Jer. 4:27; 5:10), though some think that this is a threat of more and greater calamities. That this would not be all He would do to them; He had not yet done; He had other evils and calamities to bring upon them, particularly a long captivity.

Just as in the past, there will be a remnant saved to begin again with. God will not totally destroy. He will leave that remnant.

Jeremiah 5:19 "And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these [things] unto us? Then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land [that is] not yours."

God's judgment of His apostate people is part of the terms of the Sinaitic covenant as updated in the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 29:24-26).

The ridiculous thing here, is they still do not realize why all of this is happening to them. They still claim the LORD as their God, even though they have been unfaithful to Him. As we said, they had gotten so deep into their idolatry they had lost their guilty conscience. They will have

plenty of time to think it over while they are in captivity. God will allow them to serve strangers, as they have served strange gods. Judgement has come.

Jeremiah 5:20 "Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying,"

That a mighty nation shall come and destroy them, and they would be servants in a strange land. Or rather, the words seem to be an order to declare war against the Jews, in their own land; and do not seem to be addressed to the prophet, but to others, seeing the words are in the plural number (see Jer. 4:5).

"And publish it in Judah": The "house of Jacob" and "Judah" refer to the same thing, namely, the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah. As for the ten tribes, the house of Israel, Jeremiah 5:15, they had been carried captive before this time.

This is God telling Jeremiah to go and tell Israel and Judah. At this time, it is really hard to separate the two. Judah is now spoken of as Israel also.

Jeremiah 5:21 "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:"

"Which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not": Like the idols they served (Psalm 115:4). This is an upbraiding for their folly and stupidity, their want of common sense, their blindness and ignorance. Notwithstanding they had the means of light and knowledge, the law, and the prophets.

These people do have physical eyes and ears, but they have no spiritual sight or hearing. They believe only in things they can see with their physical eyes. They are a foolish people. God is Spirit and must be understood through the spirit. My prayer to God is, open my spiritual eyes Lord, and let me see; open my spiritual ears, that I might understand You more fully.

Jeremiah 5:22 "Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand [for] the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?"

"Sand ... of the sea": God's providential acts in the natural world such as:

- (1) Creating the seashore to prevent flooding;
- (2) Giving rain at appropriate times (verse 24); and
- (3) Providing time for harvest (verse 24), are witness enough to the Lord's reality and grace.

As the nation turns away from God, He will take these unappreciated gifts away (verse 25).

In verse 22, God is explaining His power and greatness. He even tells the sea to stop at the shore, and it does. How could they choose a god they had made with their own hands? The fear of the

Lord is the beginning of wisdom. God is correct in calling them foolish. God's laws are for all of eternity. He tells the sea to roar, and it roars. He tells the sun to shine, and it shines. How can anyone choose some material thing to worship instead of God who made it all?

Verses 23-27: (see the note on 3:3). Judah's "iniquities" (the word is from a root meaning "to twist," hence "pervert"), and "sins" (the word is part of a word-group meaning "miss the mark"), stem from utter folly (verse 21). Accordingly, their lives are marked by "deceit." Therefore, they have deprived themselves of God's natural blessings (compare Deut. 28:15-68).

Jeremiah 5:23 "But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone."

They are not so obedient as the sea and its waves; nor so firm and stable as the sand that is set for the bound of it. This is a reproof against the revolts and rebellions of this people.

"They are revolted and gone": They had departed from the ways of the Lord, and were gone back from His worship. As the Targum explains, and were gone into evil ways, and to a false worship. They had not only revolted, but they went on, they continued therein, and went further and further, off from God and His worship.

The heart determines what a person is. We are either desperately wicked in our hearts, or we are in love with God in our hearts. We are what our hearts are. Rebellion is akin to witchcraft. To revolt or rebel against God would be the worst thing we could do. This rebellion deserves death.

Jeremiah 5:24 "Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

It came not into their minds, they never once thought of it, namely, of what follows:

"Let us now fear the LORD our God": They were not influenced or committed to the fear of God, neither by His power in the preceding instance, nor by His goodness in the following one.

"That giveth rain": In common, all the year round, at proper times, for the use of men and beasts. This is a pure gift of God, and an instance of His goodness, and is peculiar to Him, what none of the gods of the Gentiles could give (Jer. 14:22).

"Both the former and the latter, in his season": There were two particular seasons in the year in which the land of Israel had rain; one was in the month Marchesvan, corresponding to part of October and part of November, and this was the former rain, after the seed was sown in the earth. And the other was in the month of Nisan, corresponding to part of March and part of April, just before the time of harvest, and this was the latter rain.

"He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest": Which was reckoned by weeks, because of the seven weeks between the Passover and Pentecost. The barley harvest began at the former, and the wheat harvest at the latter, called the feast of weeks (Exodus 34:22). And these were appointed of God, the harvest itself (Gen. 8:22), and the weeks in which it was gathered in (Lev. 23:15). And these appointments and promises the Lord carefully observed, and faithfully kept.

It is God that gives rain to make our crops grow. Without rain, crops die. Rain, as is spoken of above, can also symbolize the Spirit which is poured out on mankind as a blessing from God. To get the full impact of the latter rain of the Spirit read Joel chapter 2 beginning with verse 23. It is God who sets the time to plant and the time to reap. The end of the Gentile age is spoken of as the time of harvest. There will come a time when God will separate His wheat from the stubble. There is a harvest time. There were seven weeks between the Passover and the wheat harvest (feast of weeks), which is Pentecost.

Jeremiah 5:25 "Your iniquities have turned away these [things], and your sins have withholden good [things] from you."

Whereas of late years rain was withheld from them in common, and they had not the former or latter rain in its season. Nor the appointed weeks of the harvest, and so their land was barren, and famine ensued. This was to be ascribed, not to the want of goodness and faithfulness in God, but to their own iniquities. These mercies were kept back from them in order to humble them, and bring them to a sense of their sins, and an acknowledgment of them.

"And your sins have withholden good things from you": As rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons. And had also brought many evil things upon them; for more is understood than is expressed.

One of God's ways to punish the sins of the people was to withhold their rain. Their sins brought judgment in the form of punishment upon them.

Jeremiah 5:26 "For among my people are found wicked [men]: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men."

Not a few only, but in general they appeared to be so, upon an inquiry into their character and conduct. For otherwise it would not have been so difficult to find a good man among them, as is suggested (Jer. 5:1).

"They lay wait, as he that setteth snares": Or, "they look about"; that is, as Kimchi interprets it, every man looks in the ways, to see if a man passed by, that he might rob him of what he had. As a man that lays snares, or sets a trap to catch birds in: or, "everyone looks out, when they that lay snares rest". And so, they are more diligent and constant in catching men than such persons are in catching birds.

"They set a trap": Or "dig a pit, or ditch"; for men to fall in (see Psalm 7:15).

"They catch men": And rob them of their substance; or by their ill examples and counsels draw them into sin, and thus into ruin; or circumvent them in trade and business.

God has not stopped calling them His people. He is like a father who is greatly disappointed in the moral character of His children. He is saying to them, you are living like the world, not like my children. They have forgotten to do unto others as they would have them do unto them. They are evil. They sin against their fellowmen.

Jeremiah 5:27 "As a cage is full of birds, so [are] their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich."

Jarchi and Kimchi understand it as a place in which fowls are brought up and fattened, what we call a "pen". And, so the Targum renders it, a house or place of fattening. The word is rendered a "basket" in Amos 8:1, and may here describe one in which birds taken in snares, or by hawking, were put. The Septuagint version, and those that follow it, render it, "a snare": which agrees with what goes before. It seems to intend a decoy, in which many birds are put to allure others; and, what with them, and those that are drawn in by them, it becomes very full. And this sense of the comparison is favored by the rendition or application, which follows.

"So are their houses full of deceit": Of mammon, gathered by deceit. As Kimchi interprets it; ungodly mammon; riches got in a fraudulent way, by cozening and cheating, tricking and overreaching.

"Therefore they are become great": In worldly things, and in the esteem of men, and in their own opinion, though of no account with God.

"And waxen rich": Not with true riches, the riches of grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ, His durable riches and righteousness. Nor indeed with the riches of the world, honestly and lawfully gotten; but with unrighteous mammon.

We see from this that their wealth did not come as a blessing from God. They have cheated and stolen to take what belonged to others. They are so full of sin and deceit, they are like a cage of overcrowded birds. They must be thinned out.

Jeremiah 5:28 "They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge."

Or, so fat that they shine. By reason of their wealth and riches they pamper themselves till their eyes stand out with fatness (Psalm 73:7). Their wrinkles are filled up with fat, which makes their faces shine.

"They overpass the deeds of the wicked": Either, they go beyond the very heathen themselves in wickedness (Ezek. 5:6-7); or rather, they escape the hardships and sufferings that others undergo (Psalm 73:5-8), they escape better than others. Or they slightly pass over judgments threatened by God.

"They judge not the cause of the fatherless": Such whom even the law of nature commits to their patronage. They either disregard them, or wrong and injure them, either by refusing them a fair hearing (Isaiah 1:23). Or giving a wrong sentence against them in courts of judicature (Zech. 7:10), expressly forbidden (Exodus 22:22).

"Yet they prosper": Things go well with them and they live happily, according to their desire (Job 21:7), or that they might prosper, in other words that God might bless them.

"And the right of the needy do they not judge": Because they are poor, and cannot charge them, they will not undertake their cause. Or, if it comes before them, they will not do them justice, being bribed by the rich that oppose them.

They have used the wealth they have attained, for their own personal wants. They are dressed up and groomed, because they use their money on themselves. They have no compassion for the needy. Everything they do is for self.

Jeremiah 5:29 "Shall I not visit for these [things]? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

"Shall I not visit for these things": It is expressed as a thing taken for granted, He certainly will. Can I be a God, and wink at such things? It cannot be (see this explained in Jer. 5:9).

God is explaining that He is justified in the punishment they receive because they are so sinful. Their sin is both physical and spiritual. Sin has become a way of life for them. The wrath of God will come upon them to cause them to repent and seek Him.

Verses 30-31: The people who were responding to the corrupt priests and prophets liked things the way they were. That human tendency to exult in sin has remained constant (Rom. 1:32). When "the end" comes, the ones who are intent on rebelling against God will be left with no recourse.

Jeremiah 5:30 "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;"

Judah's sin is so exceedingly evil that it is described as being appallingly "horrible" and staggeringly "wonderful" (wondered at, in shocked disbelief).

It is wonderful because it cannot be explained away by man. The judgement is so unexpected and so controlled that there will be no doubt at all it is from God. It will be horrible from the standpoint of those who are being punished. This will be a terrible time for these backsliders of God.

Jeremiah 5:31 "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love [to have it] so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

“Prophecy falsely”: These included prophets with bogus messages, priests who asserted their own authority and also followers who indulged such falseness. All are guilty before God.

There were false prophets in the land. The priests had changed God's law to fit their own needs. Now the law was not God's, but the law of the priests. Jesus spoke harshly about the way God's law had been handled. He called it “your law”. The prophets, the priests, and the people were all guilty. This is true in our churches today. There are many false prophets. We have ministers who twist the Word to fit their own needs. It is the obligation of the people to try the spirits and see whether they be of God or not. All have sinned. We all need a Savior.

Jeremiah Chapter 5 Questions

1. What is verse 1 showing?
2. What was the difference in these people and the people of Sodom?
3. What had God done, and they refused correction?
4. Why do they not repent?
5. Why could you classify them as foolish?
6. How does the author relate this to our church attendance today?
7. They are religious, but do not have a _____ with God.
8. Where can the Truth be found?
9. Who are the great men speaking of in verse 5?
10. What is the lion in verse 6, symbolic of?
11. What is meant by the "wolf"?
12. What does the "leopard" mean?
13. What is a common saying of today that would cover verse 7?
14. What does idleness sometimes cause?
15. What is the adultery of verse 7?
16. Is the sin of adultery here of an individual? Explain.
17. Why is the attack coming on Jerusalem?
18. What does "battlement" in verse 10 mean?

19. Why did they believe God would not punish them?
20. Why does the speaking of the prophet seem like wind?
21. Whose Words will be fire?
22. How do we know the nation coming against them is not a Hebrew nation?
23. What is a "sepulcher"?
24. Besides destroying the city, what will the enemy do?
25. God will leave of them, a _____.
26. They had gotten so deep into their idolatry, they had lost their _____.
27. What are the people called in verse 21?
28. What is the author's prayer to God?
29. What is God explaining in verse 22?
30. What kind of heart does this sinful people have?
31. Where can we read to get a fuller impact of the latter rain?
32. God is greatly disappointed in the _____ of His children.
33. How does God describe what has happened to them in verse 28?
34. What had the priests done that was wrong?