

JEREMIAH, PART 1 (RETURN TO ME)
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WEEK 2 (912302)
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SERIES: Jeremiah, Part 1 (Return To Me)

TITLE: Program 8 – Too Far From The Lord?

WEDNESDAY

OPEN

Have you or someone you know, Beloved, walked so far away from God that you think or they think, “It’s no use. I’ve gone too far. I’ve made my bed. I’ve got to sleep in it.” He’s saying, **“Return, [to Me] O faithless sons, [and] I will heal your faithlessness....” (Jeremiah 3:22)** Now what are you going to believe? Are you going to believe what God Almighty says, or are you going to believe what you feel? We’ll talk about it today.

PART ONE

Jeremiah’s message just isn’t easy, is it? And yet when you look at it, it is filled with such hope, such compassion, such everlasting love that you get a glimpse of God. You get a glimpse of His righteousness, His holiness, but you also get a glimpse of His justice, and God has to judge sin. And so, He is reaching out to these people that are literally on the brink of disaster. The enemy is going to come down; the enemy is going to take them captive. And

what is His message to this woman, this wife of God, Israel, Judah, that has played the harlot with many lovers? It's: Return to me. **“Return, O**

faithless sons, [and] I will heal your faithlessness....’”(Jeremiah 3:22)

We're going to talk today about eight principles or precepts about returning to God. But before we do that, Beloved, we need to go back because there's two more things that I needed to share with you about what happens when a nation walks in harlotry. What happens when a nation turns its back on God and goes after other lovers? What does God have to do? So we have two more principles that you need to write down. And I want to make sure that you get them. I told you that there were seven things; we've looked at five. Number one, harlotry pollutes the land. When we turn away from the knowledge of God, when we go after other gods, and remember when we get idols in our lives, and the Bible says in Colossians chapter 3 that greed is idolatry, (See Colossians 3:5) then what does it do? It pollutes the land. Number two, it invites the judgment of God through nature. God moves, and He tells them, He says, [“OK, this is why I've withheld the spring rain. I'm in charge of the rain. I'm in charge of the elements.”] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 3:3) It is not Mother Nature. It is all Father God. The third thing that you learn is this: that harlotry consumes the labors of the people and it consumes our children. It hurts our children. And the children in the United States of America are suffering because of the harlotry, the infidelity of their parents. We have walked away from God. We have raised a generation, the little schools, the playschools, the childcare agencies, have raised a generation that doesn't know the Word of God. We have a generation that is totally oblivious even to the stories of the Bible. We have a generation that sin is normality and righteousness is abnormal; it is strange. The fourth thing it does, it brings the judgment of God. God has to move in judgment. Not just in the weather, but He begins to move in other ways. With Israel, He's moving and bringing an enemy into their land. And we saw how that happened in 9/11. The fifth thing is this, that evil touches the heart. Your

heart does not go unaffected when you get involved in evil. So then the sixth thing is this, it brings devastation. And I want you to look at Jeremiah chapter 4 because our two chapters of study this week are chapter 3 and chapter 4. So in Jeremiah chapter 4, in verse 20, this is what he says, **“Disaster on disaster is proclaimed, for the whole land is devastated; suddenly my tents are devastated, my curtains in an instant. How long must I see the standard and hear the sound of the trumpet?” (Jeremiah 4:20-21)** The trumpet says the enemy is coming, and he says my tent, my house, is falling apart. It is devastated because it brings devastation. Look at verse 27, **“For thus says the LORD, ‘The whole land shall be a desolation...,’”** and then He says this, and this is the heart of God, **“...Yet, I will not execute a complete destruction.” (Jeremiah 4:27)** I won’t execute a complete destruction. Why? Because He loves us with an everlasting love, and that’s why no matter where you are, it is not too late to return. This is what God shows us, He shows us this principle, this precept about Him in the book of Jeremiah. Well, what’s the seventh thing that harlotry does? And this is what is so sad: It destroys you. You are destroyed by what you love. In other words, that awful thing that you go after, you take a drug, then you want a little bit more, and then you’ve got to have more. And it destroys you. They’re ruining their minds. They’re self-destructing. And what we see in verse 30 and 31 is this, of Jeremiah chapter 4, **“And you, O desolate one, what will you do? Although you dress in scarlet, although you decorate yourself with ornaments of gold, although you enlarge your eyes with paint, in vain you make yourself beautiful. Your lovers despise you; they seek your life.”(Jeremiah 4:30)** You see, the things that people have come and offered others. They’ve offered them drugs. They’ve offered them alcohol. They’ve offered them money. They’ve offered them fame. And in the process, they have seduced them. They are destroying their lives. They don’t care about them. God is the one that cares about you. And He is saying, “Look, you haven’t gone too

far. You haven't gone too far because I, Almighty God, am saying to you, **“Return, O faithless sons, [and] I will heal your [unfaithfulness]....”**

(Jeremiah 3:22) So it destroys you. In verse 31 it says, **“...I heard a cry as of a woman in labor, the anguish as of one giving birth to her first child, the cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath, stretching out her hands, [and] saying, ‘[Oh,] woe is me...I faint before murderers.’”**

(Jeremiah 4:31) Help me, help me, help me. And God wants to help. This is what harlotry brings upon a land. This is what happens, you are seeing it in the United States of America. And I want you to know, Precious One, you have just seen the beginning. If there is not a wholesale returning to God, it's going to get worse, and worse, and worse until we destroy ourselves, all because we would not return. So what I want us to do is I want us to look at eight precepts that will help us return to God, that show us how to return to God. All right, the first one is seen in chapter 3, in verse 7. But what I want us to do is I want us to lead up to these verses because I do like to take you verse-by-verse. In chapter 3, verse 1 it says, **“God says, ‘If a husband divorces his wife and she goes from him and belongs to another man, will he still return to her...?’”****(Jeremiah 3:1)** Now what He is doing is He is taking them mentally back to the law, back to the book of Deuteronomy, where God allows them to divorce their wives, as Jesus tells us in Matthew 19 because of the hardness of their heart. (See Matthew 19:8) Now what He is doing is He's trying to protect the wife. So He says if a man is displeased with his wife, and he gives her a bill of divorcement. Then he has to know the consequences. He has to say, “OK, I'm divorcing her because she displeases me. Here is the bill of divorcement.” She's not an immoral woman, and then when she leaves him she can never come back. (See Deuteronomy 24:1-4) She can never come back because when she marries husband number two, then she is never allowed to return to husband number one. You know why? It pollutes the land. It confuses a society. It messes us up. I mean the average family get together in the United States of America is

with all sorts of relatives from different families, but not the original mother or the original father together. So this is what He is saying, He says, **“...Will not that land be completely polluted? But you are a harlot with many lovers; yet you turn to Me,’ declares the LORD. ‘Lift up your eyes to the bare heights and see; where have you not been violated...?’”** Look up to the bare heights. Look down here. Is there a place where you have not been violated? **“...By the roads you have sat for them like an Arab in the desert....”** You have sat, and you have waited for your lovers to come along. **“...And you have polluted a land with your harlotry and with your wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withheld...there has been no spring rain yet you had a harlot’s forehead...,”** He says, **“...You refused to be ashamed.”** (Jeremiah 3:2-3) What you and I need to do as we study Jeremiah is, we need to not only take in these things, but we need to communicate these truths to our culture, the society that you run in. If you’re on Facebook, if you are on MySpace, let’s get on there and let’s put out the Word of God. You say, “But I’m afraid of the criticism.” O Beloved, don’t be afraid. Be afraid instead of the face and judgment of God. We’ll talk about it in just a minute.

PART TWO

I’m glad you’re back, Beloved, because this lesson is so absolutely crucial. It can be an absolute life changer. The problem is that many times people don’t sense or grasp the gravity of their sin. They look around them; and everybody else is acting this way. Everybody else is being immoral. Everybody else is drinking their alcohol, doing their drugs, and stuff like this. It’s the society that we move in where there is really, in a sense, no knowledge, no acceptance of the fact that there is good and that there is evil, and that there is a distinction, and that there are absolutes. So what happens? We think, “OK, God’s not gonna stay mad at me forever. God’s a God of love. He is going to come, and He is going to accept me.” Listen to what it

says in Jeremiah chapter 3, verse 4, **“Have you...just now called to Me, My father, You are the friend of my youth? Will He be angry forever? Will He be indignant to the end?”....**” He says, **“...Behold, you have spoken and... done evil things, and you have had your way.”**(Jeremiah 3:4-5) Yes, I will be indignant with you. Yes, I will judge you. But if you’ll [return to me faithless one, I will heal your unfaithfulness.] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 3:22) But just know this I’m not going to get weary of my righteousness. I’m not going to change. I’m not going to alter. You are the one that needs to return. Remember we saw it in the first day of this week’s lessons and that was “shub” return. Come back, turn from evil, and turn to good. So then we come to verse 6, and in verse 6 it says, **“Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, ‘Have you seen what faithless Israel did...?’”** (Jeremiah 3:6) Now when it says, “in the days of Josiah the king” that’s a time phrase. Now remember Jeremiah started his ministry in the thirteenth year of Josiah’s reign. And so when he started his ministry, we know from this passage that this prophecy, because his ministry goes all the way through Zedekiah the final king of, of Judah, who is destroyed by Babylon. So he’s prophesying all that way. So any time we find mention of the days of a king we want to mark it. It’s a time phrase. It puts us into context. Because the book of Jeremiah is all over the place chronologically. It is a message. It is the call of God to His people to return before He has to judge them. And so this is the appeal of Jeremiah so it says, **“Then the LORD said...in the days of Josiah the king, ‘Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up under every high hill and...every green tree...she was a harlot there.’”** She just laid down in her harlotry, in her prostitution. **“‘[And] I thought, “After she has done all these things she will ‘return’ to Me....”** (Jeremiah 3:6-7) Remember I told you how to mark that word. You underline it, and then you bring that arrow around, showing that there is a return. And He said, **“I thought, [surely] “After she had done these things...,”** after she had been out there, after she had played

the harlot that “...**she [would] return to Me;**” **but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.”**(Jeremiah 3:7) Now you may be like many, many Christians: Who is this faithless Israel? Who is this faithless Judah? So I want to stop and explain for a minute. Now, if you got the study guide that goes with this, then you know all of this because it’s right there. You have a marvelous chart that shows you what happened when Israel and Judah separated from one another. Remember in our last program we looked at Solomon, and how God was going to judge Solomon? What did He do? After Solomon died because his heart was turned away from God because he played the harlot, so to speak, in his heart by following the idols of his wife, then God tore the kingdom in two. (See 1 Kings 11:1-13) It’s in 1 Kings 12, where the kingdom is divided. (See 1 Kings 12:16-24) And it’s divided into two parts, 10 tribes that become the kingdom of Israel, two tribes that become the kingdom of Judah, or the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. So the Northern kingdom goes all the way up to Tel Dan, OK? Its southern border is very close to Jerusalem. Then below that is the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Southern Kingdom is made up of Benjamin and Judah; those two tribes. What happens is God sees the harlotry of the Northern Kingdom, the Kingdom of Israel. And what happens is He judges them, because they go into idolatry immediately, you can read about it after the program. It’s fascinating. Just read 2 Kings 12 when there were 12 tribes, and the 12 tribes were divided into two kingdoms. And then read 2 Kings chapter 13, and you will see that they went into idolatry immediately. So in 722 B.C., and this is before the days of Josiah, God sends the Assyrians down. And the Northern Kingdom of Israel is taken into captivity. And so God is using this as an illustration. And He’s saying, “You saw what your sister did, and I would expect you to learn a lesson from it.” Just as I’m saying to you, “You see what God did to Israel, America, learn your lesson.” He said, “**...But she did not return, and her treacherous sister...saw it. And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel,**

I...sent her away...,” into captivity is what He is saying, **“...and [have] given her a writ of divorce...,”** like He was talking about there. **“...yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear...she went and...[she played the] harlot also.”** (Jeremiah 3:7-8) It’s like the words, **““Will He be angry forever? Will He be indignant [forever]...?””** (Jeremiah 3:5) God’s righteousness demands His judgment on sin. And so it says, **““Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and [she] committed adultery with stones and trees.”** (Jeremiah 3:9) Now what do I want you to see? This is the first precept for returning to God. And that is to understand number one: God wants you to return. God is saying, “Return to Me. Return to Me. I will give you a new heart.” Well, as you look at this, I just want to make sure that you understand that no matter where you’ve been, that no matter what you have done, Precious One, it is God’s desire for you to return to Him. Not to say, “Oh God will change His mind.” But to acknowledge that God has every right to judge you, and yet His heart towards you is that your heart would return to Him. This is the longing of God’s heart. And if you will return, He says, He **“...will heal your faithlessness....”** (Jeremiah 3:22) So the choice is really yours, isn’t it? No excuse. It’s not that you have gone too far, and it’s not that God’s gonna change His mind. He says, “Return to Me.”