

Jeremiah 7

Read Jeremiah 7:1-3: God is communicating to people who are seeking him. If we seek him we will be blessed with improved direction. Note that God communicates with us in places where we gather as a body of believers in his name. We put too much emphasis on frustrations with our local church. Ask how I can build up the church body...not if church is always a meaningful experience to me. In other words, it is like a Christian who refuses to vote because the system is so messed up. Be a contributor...not just a consumer. Christian maturity is the transition from being only a receiving member...to eventually study on your own and being able to feed others God's word. Church sermons are like fast food. You can live off of it; but it is not the intended design. We tend to hop around radio channels and churches as connoisseurs of the word. Each of us needs to spend daily time going through the scriptures book by book, chapter by chapter, and line by line prayerfully. Topical-driven studies are really looking for something that we expect to find. Read the scriptures at face value. Not with any predisposition. Let God reach out to you naturally as you go through the full counsel of God. Do your own mining. Spend the time.

We are to be light to others; and be influential. If we are critical of the pastor or the ushers or people who forgot to say hello to me, we are too self-focused. Church is not entertainment. Even though I might not get much from the pastor's message at times; I find that through more prayer my ears will pick up on personal messages from the living word.

Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. (Isaiah 55:3)

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: (Isaiah 55:6)

Are we looking in the wrong places for God? Are we seeking him to bless us and our plans as-is, or are we seeking his view of things? Can we confuse our weekly-religious patterns for what God really wants?

The living word has endless information for each of us. Even those who don't read the scriptures can't help but see God's hand. There are messages being sent to us every day; but who is reading them?

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. -Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. -There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. -Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, -Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. -Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat. -The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. -The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. -The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. -They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. -Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.
(Psalm 19:1-11)

The message spoken in this chapter is: turn or burn. Why is the message of repentance not a common message from the pulpit today? Are the seeker-friendly churches like false prophets who only spoke enjoyable messages? The signs of the times should include that God's word is not highly-regarded; and that dividing God's word with a heart to serve is uncommon.

Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. (Revelation 2:16)

Read Jeremiah 7:4-7: These verses speak of thoroughly amending our ways. Re-assess our habits for 2015. It is time to grow up in our faith. God wants us to heed his word; not just hear it. Being in the proximity of godly activity is not sufficient. Religious statues and being surrounded by other Christians is not enough. The Jews were not saved by the temple (as a safety zone); or by being sons of Abraham (by special birth). The temple was only a reminder of God's promises; not an actual solution. Going to church is not what defines us. What part of the bodily function (necessity) do we provide? If we all only consume; we have a body that is not functional. In fact it should be a small part of our weekly walk with God. How are we applying God's word in our every-day life? Who did I connect with; and draw to the LORD today? Did I feed or clothe a person in need? Do I support any orphans or people who have no voice? What do I do for others that is inconvenient or unpleasant?

-But Solomon built him a house. -However the most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as says the prophet, -Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? says the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? (Acts 7:47-49)

Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say to you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. -And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which brings not forth good fruit is chopped down, and cast into the fire. -And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? -He answers and says to them, He that has two coats, let him give away to him that hath none; and he that has food, let him do likewise. -Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said to him, Master, what shall we do? -And he said to them, Take no more than that which is appointed you. -And the soldiers

likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. (Luke 3:8-14)

Was there a double-life between their church life and public life? Were some temple worshippers considering their temple visits as the entirety of their obligation to please God? Are we doing the same things? The USA has social Christians in places. We have Bible belts where Christian top-40 music plays all day long. It is interesting to discover that it can be hard to find a solid Bible teaching church in the Bible Belt. It can be hard to find fiery faith in Christian colleges as well.

Comparing Us to the 7 Churches in Revelation

The book of revelation has a diagnosis and prescriptive solution for various kinds of churches in its letters to the seven churches. Let's look through the 7 churches listed in Revelation to see if there are a few resonating comments that fit our church today:

The church of Ephesus tested those who claimed to be apostles. Why do so many listen to lies and garbage? Why are lying and shallow televangelists so popular? When we do not spend time in God's word we cannot tell the difference between his voice and false prophecy. The scriptures need to be studied on a line-by-line, chapter by chapter, book by book basis to really understand what it is saying.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. -But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. -To him the porter opens; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. -And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. -And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. -This parable spoke Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spoke unto them. (John 10:1-6)

The church of Pergamos held to the doctrine of Baalam. We are very-much a careful-speaking church today. There is an effort to not offend. Plurality is a bad thing in the church. I think that we also have incorporated some Biblically-contrary teachings, to leave room for alternate views and science and political correctness. You can't have both.

The church of Sardis was alive, yet was dead while we live. Looking and sounding like a Christian may not be enough. God has eyes of fire that penetrate all false facades. The telling factor of spiritual life is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. -And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. -They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: -But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. -While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. -And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him. -Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. -And the foolish said to the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. -But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. -And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. -Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. -But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. -Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 25:1-13)

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Most churches and members are probably not born again and Christ-following. A living soul has an appetite if they are healthy. How is your appetite for the word of God? Is it a boring obligation to keep out of trouble?

The Bible is usually relied upon as a literal guide. God tells them who only hear men's teachings that he is coming like a thief in the night. The church of Philadelphia was told that it is God who holds

the key of David; and Jesus opens the doors that no man can shut...and shuts the door that no man can open. It is a Jesus-only proposition. Not good works or religion.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. -Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit. -Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. -Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me. -I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. (John 15:1-5)

God tells the Philadelphia church that they have an open door (opportunity) set before them; though they have little strength. Take the bird in the hand, and you will be given something bigger. Serve the LORD in small way today. God says that he will keep them from the hour of temptation that comes upon the whole world. We still have some opportunity before us to share the gospel and disciple others. The rapture is coming soon. Get your work done now; because time is about up. The church of Laodacea was told that they are neither hot nor cold. That is probably accurate for us. We are instructed to buy the gold tried by fire; meaning that we should not hold back in the face of opposition. The challenge itself adds character and faith to us. Don't shrink away from hard opportunities.

God is speaking about the reality of true religion. There are many business applications here. We have to trust God a little more. Do not conduct unfair dealings. Your negotiations should result in win-win solutions; not win-lose deals. Think again about if you are really impartial to your interests verses others'. Don't subject the disadvantaged to a raw deal. We sometimes really don't care how beneficial the deal is for our customer as long as they are happy enough to continue our gravy train. If you are trying to cream a deal where others get relatively-nothing; you are not making a righteous deal. That does not mean that our customer's interest can't be so

different than ours that...we can't keep all of the gains. Some deals have differing objectives.

Read Jeremiah 7:8-15: What are we really doing at church if we just go home and live according to the ways of this world? We are not enthusiastic about church because it has ceased to be interesting and transforming. It might be more accurate to say that we have been resisting God's clear instruction all along; and thus are growing disinterested and deaf to him.

It seems unbelievable that actually people stood in God's temple and also worshipped Baal. They did not stop going through the motions of faith. We know that human nature has not changed. We must somehow be doing the same thing. Are we going to church; while we are somehow bowing to this world's forces? The gods of that age were: pleasure, profitability, intelligence, crop productivity, war and domination.

God tells the people to use Shiloh as an example. That was the place where God-worship was centered before it moved to Jerusalem. The priests there were worthless. Eli and his sons were completely-fleshly priests there. They were completely-carnal priests who were rejected by God. Shiloh was completely destroyed. God probably hates misrepresentation more than pure sinful lust.

The people saw the temple and the ark of the covenant as good-luck charms. They used them to align themselves with God's favor. In reality, God wanted his laws written in their hearts. Do we feel better about ourselves after going to church; or after a solid time of walking and talking to him?

-And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore has the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. -So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of

hosts, which dwells between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. (1 Samuel 4:3-4)

-This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (Hebrews 10:16)

-For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. -Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; -IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE. -"THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'" -After saying above, "SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them" (which are offered according to the Law), -then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. -By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:4-10)

Read Jeremiah 7:16-20: These members of the local body of 'believers' were not true. God actually instructed Jeremiah to not even pray for them. They are playing a game with God. God will not be mocked. These verses also show us that God considers idol worship a cause to destroy men in order to save others.

Read Jeremiah 7:21-34: These people are not true believers. God will destroy them. The Jews had a zeal for their own accomplishments. God rejects that approach. The Jews spent 40 years going in circles; and not arriving at their desired destination. Any country that worships any other god will be lost. India has many gods; and they are essentially a nation loaded with street people.

Read Acts chapter 7 (unfaithful history of Israel).