

Jeremiah 14

Progressive Corrections

God has been talking to the Jews through Jeremiah. He has been telling them that their idolatry is going to be their downfall. The words of the prophets have been falling on deaf ears for hundreds of years. Now it time to use negative reinforcement. God normally uses *progressive judgements* and increasing levels of pain and loss to bring about repentance. This chapter is about the coming drought. We could call draught a starter plague. Words are not working, so this is like their *time out*. A drought is the slowest-moving judgement. Like Covid, it is largely survivable. There is plenty of time to repent; as the conditions worsen.

In Deuteronomy 28:15 Moses tells the Hebrews that if they disobey God's commands, they will initially experience failures in their crops and livestock enterprises. If they keep on behaving poorly, things ramp up to include mental illness, disease, and military invasions.

Similarly, the Revelation 16 Bowl Judgments in the Great Tribulation start out milder and become increasingly severe. It begins with sores all over men's bodies. That would get our attention; but people are not dying. Then the sea, lakes and rivers turn to blood, then solar flares wipe out everything in its path, then darkness, then Armageddon. We dictate how hot the popcorn popper has to be turned up, before we convert. Those duds who refuse will be burnt up.

Read Jeremiah 14:1-7: Judah is experiencing a drought. The conditions of the land and nature are testifying against God's failing governors. They are absentee and remiss. We have been poor stewards. Droughts are compared to God's judgement; and rain is compared to blessings from heaven. It is amazing that our good God has given us record rains in California for the last two years; while we continue to turn away from him. When you walk away from God you are walking away from provisions and life and abundance. The desert is compared to the barren and bleak existence apart from God. God designed man for gardens, not deserts.

I can recall living through a drought as I was growing up on the ranch. It is a sinking feeling to see your large ranch wells just run dry and stop pumping water. It is an eye opener when your house well cannot keep up with watering the grass. I still cringe when I see a child let the water just run in a hot shower, while making finger drawings on the steamy shower door...while water runs down the drain. It was not so long ago that the San Joaquin Valley ranch wells had to get pushed down from 400' to 1,800 deep ' to hit good water flow. The word used here is *bassoret* H1226. It is defined as a restraint (to withhold). The most obvious lack of food and water is impactful on everyone.

NOAA tells us that the recent California drought was the worst drought in 1,200 years. It produced a \$17 billion loss. It was worse than the dust bowl drought of the 1930's. There are

some interesting observations that can be made surrounding droughts. Crops may not grow, and topsoil can be lost; but some weeds still grow. Foxtails, thistles, tumbleweeds (Russian Thistle), Poison Sumac and Poison Hemlock do well. Unfortunately, hungry livestock are forced to browse on more-bitter poisonous plants and abort or are killed by liver poisoning. River estuaries do not flow the same into the sea, so the ocean's salinity travels upstream further distances, making irrigation water too salty.

I had Valley Fever in High School; which increases as the San Joaquin Valley's topsoil becomes barren and dust blows in the wind, and mold spores become more airborne. I do get asked by x-ray technicians if I ever had TB, because of the spots it left on my lungs. Mental health statistics bear out that a general public's sense of wellbeing plummets during a drought. Animals do not cycle or produce normal litters. Plant and animal life dies off in large numbers. Disease and pests get the upper hand on the surviving fauna. In San Diego County the silver bark beetle destroyed a vast number of pines, when the drought caused normal tree sap to stop flowing (natural insecticide). Then, of course, the forest fires multiply.

The plague of drought is very much like the first corrections that God made in the bible. It is an added level of hardship and desperation for mere survival.

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3)

The fact that we are described as returning to dust (not soil) here suggests a cursed desert atmosphere, not a well-watered garden.

And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth." (Genesis 4)

Adam and Eve were put into a more severe and difficult environment, as was Cain for their disobedience.

Read Jeremain 14:8-16: Jeremiah is telling God that he could easily save them, but he is acting like someone who has no interest in what is happening. Jeremiah is telling God that he is ignoring his own people. God reminds him that it is not God who abandoned them. They abandoned him. He is essentially saying that they are actually not his people. It is hard to ask

God for help when you know that this course of action is the only way to get the attention of hardened hearts.

God actually tells Jeremaih not to pray for them. The false prophets have been telling the people lies; and affirming their hopes that things will turn around on their own. It is interesting when I speak to Christians about hard times. They almost invariably tell me that it will get better. Why would they assume that? These curses come with an increasingly godless world.

The false prophets will personally experience the things that they assured others will not happen.

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18-19)

Part of being a good shepherd is desiring to pardon the unpardonable.

Read Jeremaih 14:17-22: The bible repeats the fact that mankind is truly a hopeless mess, unless God performs a heart and mind transplant. Giving us freewill is almost a guarantee of disaster, short of divine intervention. Jeremaih is contrite about it. That is not the lowest state to be in. It is the healthiest spiritual state. It is a sobriety to the entire situation and our hopelessness apart from God's mercy.

God responds to the intent of our heart. Not checklists or empty prayers. Jeremiah had a tough job. He was connected to a people who he could not save. It is like a parent with a drug abusing child who disowns his parents. The lies never stop. God is bringing destruction to his people and his people have disowned God. Jeremiah is stuck in the middle of an unfixable situation. God tied his prophets to his people. Both Moses and Jeremiah were living under the same harsh circumstances. They saw that God was going to destroy their people. They interceded with God to save their people. This is stretching the prophet to experience a new level of compassion and love. Loving the completely unlovable ones.

And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt." Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us,

then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them." And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel. Then the LORD said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." And Moses said to the LORD: "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, are among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, 'Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.' And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.' Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD— because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. (Numbers 14)