

Jeremiah 4

Read Jeremiah 4:1-4: This chapter begins by telling the lost children of Israel how to be spiritually healed. Repent. There is a comparison made between hard ground and hard hearts. God has to plow the hard ground with even harder circumstances. A plow turns soil upside down and breaks it up, so that seeds can penetrate and push in roots. Nothing grows in a hard heart or in hard soil. Water is compared to God's softening word on our hard clods.

Saul of Tarsus was a hard-core enemy of the church. God had to knock him off of his high horse and blind him to understand his vulnerability to God and his agenda. That is one man. This chapter is about a whole country in need to repent.

Is this information in vain? Has a nation ever really repented, and turned back from the face of destruction? Is the drug of sin so strong that nobody can just walk away from it?

There are two types of repentance. One limited form of repentance is to stop all outward acts of evil. The other way is full repentance unto salvation. The second way is to not merely stop doing evil...but to pursue righteousness in Christ.

Jesus told his hometown residents that they saw enough miracles to change their approach to living. He said that if John the Baptist performed the same miracles in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would not have burned up.

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. (Matthew 11:21)

So why didn't God send more prophets to Sodom? After all, God gets no pleasure at seeing sinners burn.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

A time comes when we become so hardened that nothing can affect us. Any temporary change of heart is not unto salvation. It would have been to steer away from immediate destruction. This is like Jonah in Nineveh. The whole city repented and avoided destruction. We do not hear about any faith coming out of Nineveh afterwards.

And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 'Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed.' " Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered: "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate, (Isaiah 6:9-11)

The Old Testament talks about physical salvation (not being destroyed). The New Testament talks about spiritual salvation (not going to hell).

Some of the greatest moments of national salvation came under King Josiah.

But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “Concerning the words which you have heard—because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,” says the LORD.

“Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.” ’ ” So they brought back word to the king. Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him. (2 Kings 22:18-20, 23:25)

In the early centuries of Christian history, God accomplished similar works: through Gregory “the Illuminator,” resulting in the conversion of Armenia; through Frumentius, in Ethiopia; through Patrick, in Ireland; through Columba, as he preached the gospel to the Scottish Picts; and through Methodius, in his ministry among the Slavs. In later centuries, the ministries of reformers such as Savonarola, Wycliffe, and Knox revealed a similar supernatural working of God among his people. Place names such as Hernhutt, Northhampton, Fetter Lane, and Cane Ridge are still remembered by Christians as sites where a significant movement of God once took place. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries especially, many communities experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This was the era of celebrated preachers and evangelists such as David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Charles Finney, Jeremiah Lanphier, and Dwight Lyman Moody. While these names remain well known among contemporary Christians, God used a host of others as well to bring significant revivals to churches and communities.

Salvation and destruction are frequently placed side by side in the same chapters in the bible. It is unfortunate that we literally have to be moved by fear to ask God to spare us.

Read Jeremiah 4:5-8: Ancient cities did not have cell phones or a way to reach people beyond earshot. The people were taught that when they hear a certain type of trumpet blast that they should come running back inside of the city walls. An invasion was coming their way. God is blowing the trumpet, and telling the people that disaster is almost upon them. Act accordingly.

Babylon is described here as a lion coming out from cover. Babylon has wiped out every nation in its path, and now it's bearing down on Judah. They have come to destroy the cities and leave the nation uninhabited. That should really scare these exposed people. The competing issue is how we want to make our life comfortable and forget our problems.

It's time to break out the scratchy sackcloth and repent. It's time to get a little uncomfortable and focus on what you have been ignoring. The prophets often wore this itchy gunnysack clothing as a constant reminder to pray.

Read Jeremiah 4:9-18: God is sending the Babylonians to change things that God cannot tolerate any longer. It is a similar theme to the tribulation. The Babylonians are like a scouring pad being used to clean off a dirty plate so that the land of Israel can be re-used for a more blessed life. It needs to be cleaned off and re-purposed.

Read Jeremiah 4:19-22: Jeremiah feels estranged from his people. He has a love and a concern for them; but they are just acting like total fools. There seems to be no way to stop them from making bad decisions. Jeremiah sees clearly that judgement is upon them. It is a very sad situation. Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"
(Matthew 23:37-39)

Read Jeremiah 4:23-31: This is a very interesting group of verses. It is an example of multiple fulfillments. The Old Testament is full of prophecies that are true in one way in the near term, and true in another way later on.

The immediate application here is for the wasteland that the Babylonians will turn Judah into. Secondly, it alludes to the worldwide destruction and creation of wastelands during the Great Tribulation. The whole world and the universe will seem like they are wrecked and not functioning as before. Thirdly, it seems to describe the reversal of the creation account. All animal life, human activity, planetary stability, and normal patterns of solar days and lunar nights are all gone. It is like God is throwing creation into reverse and erasing the unfolding of blessings backwards to the beginning. He is undoing man's effect on the world. It is reversing back to the earth being formless and void. Man has ruined his place of blessings. He is losing his privilege of governorship.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (Romans 8:20-23)