

**Jer. 3-6: Overview and First Study**  
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**A. Overview of the Book so Far**

1. ch. 1: Jeremiah's call
2. ch. 2: God's *rebuke* against Judah; formal complaint. Her idolatry and alliances with other nations, turning from the Lord.
3. ch. 3-6: note strong headings at 3:6 and 7:1. Extended section, with much detail about the coming invasion of Babylon.
  - a) 3:6-10, Everyone can see how Judah fails to learn from Israel.
  - b) 3:11-4:2, Recollection of God's dealings with Israel.
    - 1) Note v.12, "toward the north"
    - 2) Name "Israel" in 3:12,20,23; 4:1
  - c) 4:3-6:30, consequences on "men of Judah and Jerusalem" (4:3) for failing to heed Israel's example.
  - d) **Application:** Heed the examples of others, whether godly examples that show God's faithfulness, or examples of wickedness and his retribution. NB: The actions of others are not an *excuse* for us; we must stand before God on our own. But they can be an *encouragement and warning* for us.

**B. 3:6-10, All can "see" Israel's sin and Judah's carelessness.**

Note the date: "in the days of Josiah," the time of revival. Yet we will see that this revival didn't penetrate very far into the hearts of the people.

The backbone of the paragraph is a series of three statements about people seeing things: what Jeremiah sees, what Judah sees, and what the Lord sees.

1. Jeremiah sees God's dealings with Israel.
  - a) The "turn" word play the first time "backsliding," which occurs 13/16 times in Jer (the other three are in Hosea). Means "to turn away"--"backsliding" gives the notion that you've just slipped a bit, but the idea here is of really going back the other way, so a better term would be "apostate." But the same root is used in God's invitation to his people to "repent"--literally, "turn." People have turned away from God; he wants them to turn back.
  - b) What Jeremiah sees is depicted as an interaction between God and Israel.
    - 1) 6, Israel: committing fornication in the idolatrous sanctuaries. Recall the same wording in 2:20, and cf. 17:2.

- 2) 7a, God's expectation: "And I said, 'After she has done all these things, she will return to me.'" "Return" is 3fs, not 2fs. This is the OT parallel of the father of the prodigal son, patiently waiting for her to return. One might expect her to tire of her sinful way, and heed the invitation of the prophets God sent to her, Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea. Note his grace in even contemplating restoration after such sin! We must never presume on God's grace--but we can never say that he isn't ready to receive us, if we only turn to him.
- 3) 7b, Israel: She would not return.
2. 7c, Judah sees these dealings, too: Israel's sin, God's gracious offer through the prophets, Israel's refusal, and what is not expressed but certainly lurking in the background, the captivity in Assyria that followed. She knows that God is ready to forgive, but that sin must be judged.
3. 8-10, God sees Judah's insensitivity to what he has done with Israel. The basic structure is, "I saw ... that [lit. 'and'] treacherous Judah neither feared nor turned, but went on fornicating, in spite of all the punishment I poured out on Israel." Full translation: "And I saw, though [concessive KIY, BDB 473 2c] because apostate Israel had committed adultery, I sent her away and gave her her certificate of divorce, that treacherous Judah her sister did not fear, but she too continually fornicated; and in fact, as though that weren't enough, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and tree; indeed, in all this her treacherous sister Judah did not turn to me with all her heart, but only superficially." Main elements: what should have warned Judah; what Judah didn't do; what Judah did do.
- a) What should have warned Judah, 8a.
- 1) Israel committed adultery (cf. v.6).
  - 2) Because of this, God sent her away and gave her a certificate of divorce. Draws on imagery of 3:1-2. NB: Why does God "divorce" her when the biblical penalty, Deut. 22, was execution? Because God's purposes include restoration, which the law does not cover.
- b) What Judah did do:
- 1) "Went and played the harlot," played the harlot continually.
  - 2) "through the lightness of her whoredom," "as if that weren't enough," she went from physical immorality to spiritual apostasy.
- a> "Defiled the land." Cf. Num. 35:31,33. The land is defiled by sin (murder, adultery). Deut. 24 uses the idiom that

the land sins, as though it would then be punished, and in fact drought, famine, etc. are often depicted as consequences for sin, in which the land as well as man suffers. Cf. Rom. 8, "the creation is made subject to vanity"; the effect of man's sin on the creation.

b> "Committed adultery with stone and tree." The reference here is to stone and wooden idols; Judah "commits adultery" with them by worshipping them, thus forsaking her husband YHWH.

c) What Judah didn't do.

1) 8b, She didn't fear at what Israel experienced from the Lord's hand.

2) 10, She didn't turn wholeheartedly to the Lord, but only feigned repentance (recall v.6: this is under Josiah!)

#### **4. Application:**

a) The value of public example in correction. It is not inhumane or cruel; it *is* a divinely-sanctioned means of motivating others not to sin.

b) Our responsibility increases with increased knowledge. Matt. 11:20-24. How blessed it is to know the Word of God and follow it! But how much more severe will be our judgment if we turn from it. 2 Pet. 2:20-22.