

LESSONS FROM THE SHOCKING STATE OF ISRAEL SINFULNESS

Emmanuel Adeoye (Evangelist)

- REASONS FOR CAPTIVITY
- FAILURE TO KEEP THE SABATICAL YEAR
- UNGRATEFULNESS
- TOUCHING GOD'S ANNOINTED
- IDOLATRY

LESSONS FROM THE SHOCKING STATE OF ISRAEL SINFULNESS

I suppose there never is a time when serving God is easy, but some periods in history are especially difficult for spiritual ministry, and Jeremiah lived in such an era. Consider what the history of Judah was like during Jeremiah's lifetime.

- ***Rebellion instead of obedience.*** To begin with, Jeremiah was born during the reign of King Manasseh, the most evil man who ever reigned over the kingdom of Judah (***2 Kings 21:1-18***). The son of godly Hezekiah,³ Manasseh came to the throne when only twelve years old, and the officials around him easily influenced him toward idolatry. *"Manasseh seduced them [the people of Judah] to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the Children of Israel" (v. 9, NKJV)*. When Manasseh died, his evil son Amon continued his father's evil practices.
- Thus, Jeremiah grew up in Anathoth⁴ at a time when idolatry flourished in Judah, children were offered in sacrifice to idols, the Law of Moses was disregarded and disobeyed, and it looked as though there was no hope for the nation. Godly priests were not greatly appreciated.
- ***Reformation instead of repentance.*** In 639 B.C., some of Amon's servants assassinated him. Josiah his son became king, reigning until his untimely death in 609. Josiah was quite young when he began to reign, but he had godly counselors like Hilkiah, and thus he sought the Lord. In the twelfth year of his

reign, he began to purge the land of idolatry: six years later, he commanded the priests and workers to repair and cleanse the temple.

It was during that time that Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law in the temple and had it read to the king. This document may have been the entire five books of Moses or just the Book of Deuteronomy.

When the king heard the Law of God read, he was deeply moved. He tore his robes and sent to Huldah the prophetess for instructions from the Lord (**2 Kings 22**). Her message was that the people had forsaken God and therefore judgment was coming, but because of Josiah's sincere repentance, judgment would not come during his reign.

■ **SHE IS UMTAMED CALF 2:20**

A stubborn animal (v. 20). Jeremiah often used animals to picture the behavior of people, and here he compared the Jews to an unruly animal that won't wear the yoke.⁶ One of his recurring phrases is the stubbornness of their evil hearts (**3:17; 7:24; 9:14; 11:8; 13:10; 16:12; 18:12; 23:17**, NIV).⁷ When people, made in the image of God, refuse to obey God, they become like animals (see **Ps 32:9; Prov 7:21-23; Hos 4:16**).

■ **A HARLOT SEEKING ILLICIT LOVERS 2:20, 25**

But they had given themselves so much to sin that they despaired of being saved. "It's no use!" (**2:25**, NIV) was their excuse. "It's hopeless!!" They sounded like confirmed alcoholics or compulsive gamblers who can't break the habit, or like the invalid at the Pool of Bethesda who had been sick for so long that he'd given up hope (**John 5:1-9**). Jesus Christ, however, specializes in hopeless cases. "He breaks the power of canceled sin/He sets the prisoner free.

■ **A DEGENERATED VINEYARD 2:21 ISAIAH 5:1**

A degenerate vine (v. 21). Israel as a vine is a familiar image in the Old Testament (**Ps 80:8-16; Isa 5:1-7; Ezek 17:1-10; Hos 10:12**). God planted His people in the good land He gave them, but they didn't produce the harvest of righteousness He desired.

"So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes" (**Isa 5:2**, NIV). Because they worshiped false gods, they became like their degenerate neighbors. How could dead idols ever produce living fruit in their nation.

■ **AS DIRTY PERSON WHOM SOAP WILL NOT CLEANSE 2:22**

A defiled body (v. 22). No amount of good works or religious ceremonies could wash away their sins, because the heart of the nation's problem was the problem

in their hearts. They had sinful hearts because they had stubborn hearts — hearts that refused to listen to God's servant and obey God's Word. Josiah's reformation was only a cosmetic change in the kingdom of Judah; it never reached the hearts of the people so that they repented and sought forgiveness from the Lord.

■ **AS A YOUNG CAMEL OR WILD MONKEY IN HEAT 2:23-24**

An animal in the desert (vv. 23-25). Even if the people denied that they were defiled, their actions proved otherwise, for they were like animals: a lost camel looking for an oasis; or a donkey in heat, running here and there looking for a mate.

As the Jews pursued the false gods of the pagan nations, their shoes wore out and their throats became dry. How much better had they drunk the refreshing water from the river of God! But they had given themselves so much to sin that they despaired of being saved. "It's no use!" (2:25, NIV) was their excuse. "It's hopeless!!"

They sounded like confirmed alcoholics or compulsive gamblers who can't break the habit, or like the invalid at the Pool of Bethesda who had been sick for so long that he'd given up hope (***John 5:1-9***). *Jesus Christ, however, specializes in hopeless cases.* "He breaks the power of canceled sin/He sets the prisoner free."

■ **AS A THIEF CAUGHT RED HANDED 2:26**

A disgraced thief (vv. 26-28). A thief caught in the act may protest his or her innocence, but the evidence is there for all to see. Any visitor to the kingdom of Judah could see what God saw: people turning their backs on God and talking to deaf idols, but then turning desperately to Jehovah for help when they found themselves in trouble. They were caught red-handed!

■ **LIKE THE ETHIOPIA SKIN OR LEOPARD SPOT (13:23)**

The disgraced prostitute (vv. 22-23, 26-27). According to the Law of Moses, prostitution was not permitted in the land (***Lev 19:29; 21:7,14***), and public exposure sometimes disgraced the prostitutes.

If a prostitute discovers herself stripped, shamed, and abused, why should she be surprised? That's what she asked for! The people of Judah prostituted themselves to heathen idols and turned to godless nations for help. Now they were asking, "*Why have all of these things happened to us?*"

People may live as though sin has no consequences, but those consequences will come just the same. Just as Ethiopians can't change the color of their skin or the

leopard remove its spots, so the wicked nation can't naturally do anything good. These people are too accustomed to commit evil. Only God can change the human heart.

■ CONCLUSION

God reminded the people how richly He had blessed them. Yet they rebelled against Him (2:29), forgot Him (v. 32), and lied to Him (vv. 33-35), claiming to be innocent. One of the major themes of the Book of Deuteronomy is that the nation should remember the Lord and what He had done for them.

Yet the people took their blessings for granted and gave their allegiance to dumb idols. They were so skilled at their harlotry, worshiping false gods, that even the most wicked prostitute could learn new things from them! They exploited the poor and were stained by their blood, and yet they pleaded innocent (see Amos 2:6-8; 5:10-12).

Because the nation at that time was enjoying a measure of political and economic prosperity, they concluded that God's blessing was proof of their innocence! They didn't realize that God can bless the wicked (Ps 37 and 73; Matt 5:45) and that the goodness of God should instead lead them to repentance (Luke 15:17-18; Rom 2:4-5).