



Jeremiah 3

Jeremiah CHAPTER 3

Let's turn now to Jeremiah 3 as we continue our journey through the Bible. The first five verses of Chapter 3 really belong with Chapter 2 in that it is a part of Jeremiah's first message to backslidden Judah and it begins with 2:1 and continues to 3:5. Chapter 3, verse 6, begins his second message to backslidden Judah. Here he is concluding the first message. It is tied together to the second message as we will see. Some of the commentators say that "they say" is a contraction of the phrase that Jeremiah so often used, "the word of the LORD came to me saying" and they believe that in the copying they just put "they say" rather than "the word of the LORD came to me saying" which is a very common phrase for Jeremiah.

They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lover; yet return again to me, saith the LORD (3:1).

Under the Law if a man divorced his wife and she married another man, that did not work out, under the Law she could not come back to the first husband. They could not have sellers remorse and say, "Oh we made a mistake, let's try it again." So that was something that was forbidden in the Law. The LORD said the land would become polluted. Yet here is God reminded what the Law says. Yet He declares that Judah has turned from Him, she has committed adultery, she has gone out and worshipped other gods. You need to know that in a spiritual sense, there is spiritual adultery. You are married to God. Your love and devotion is to be toward Him. The relationship should be like a husband and wife, the fidelity, the faithfulness to each other. For you to worship another god is like having another wife or husband. It is, in God's eyes, spiritual adultery. Judah was guilty of spiritual adultery though she was married to God she went out and began to worship Molech, Mammon, Baal, Ashteroth and other gods so God looked at that as spiritual adultery, turning from God, and under the Law you could not come back to your husband but God said to Judah, "Come back to Me." So the LORD was calling for Judah to return unto Him.

Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with (3:2).

Actually it was the custom to build the alter and the temples and the places of the worship of the pagan gods in the highest spot of the city, in the acropolis. So when you go to Greece and there in Athens on the acropolis you will see the big temples that were built to their gods and goddesses. In Corinth there at the top of the hill, above Corinth, that was just the common thing. In the highest places, I guess the idea is that you feel closer to heaven if you are on a high mountain. They would take the tops of the hills and that is where they would build their pagan alters and temples and their places of worship of their pagan gods. God said, "Look around at all the hills, the tops of all of the hills, and on the tops of all of the hills you have built alters to the pagan gods. You have erected the idols of the pagan gods, you have built the places of pagan worship. You cannot find a hilltop around here." What a tragedy that God's people should be taken in spiritual adultery to such a tremendous extent that there was not a top of hill in which there was not an alter built for the pagan gods. So God said, "Look around to the high places."

In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness (3:2).

They are tuning to these false gods. They were waiting as a prostitute waiting to go out after some new god or other god. Therefor because you have turned from God, you have been worshipping these other gods:

Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed (3:3).

God brought His judgment, He withheld the rain and He worked in nature, they were going through a drought. Do you find that your water has been rationed lately? Maybe God is trying to say something to us and surely we should be listening. I would not blame God if He turned the faucet off completely in California. This has become such a corrupt place and I am glad that I am going soon. I trust that you will be going with me. I am looking forward for the Lord coming for us. I can't see this place going on that much longer. Even so come quickly Lord Jesus.

Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?
(3:4)

Turn back to me, cry unto me, "My father," again acknowledge me and my relationship to you knowing that God guided them at the beginning of the nation, God made them strong, the hand of God was on them, they were seeking God and God gave them His Law and His statutes. So the call to return was given.

Will he reserve his anger forever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst (3:5).

You cannot get any worse as was Judah and yet God is calling them to come back. The love of God, that stubborn love of God, that just won't let go and He won't just let you go. He continues to just draw you back to Himself. So verse six obviously begins a new section.

The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king (3:6),

This is another message that came to Jeremiah in the days of Josiah the king. Now we remember that Josiah was king when Jeremiah began his prophecies so one of the earlier prophecies of Jeremiah is given here.

Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot (3:6).

The northern kingdom of Israel at this time was already destroyed. They were already carried away as captives, or lead away as captives to Assyria where they were dispersed and repopulated through the world at that time. They were lead away with hooks through their noses on leashes lead as captives to Assyria. They ceased to exist as a nation. The cities were wasted and desolate. The reason for her being taken captive was that she had gone up to every high mountain and under every green tree and there played the harlot. Idolatry, alters and places of worship on every high mountain and under every green tree they were serving and worshipping these idols and false gods.

And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it (3:7).

In spite of the fact that she had turned away from God, God was calling still that they would return to God but they yet did refuse. The nation was divided into the two kingdoms; the northern and the southern. The northern was called Israel and the southern was called Judah. The northern comprised ten tribes and the southern comprised two tribes and thus we have Judah, treacherous sister of Israel saw what happened to Israel, saw the judgment of God upon Israel.

And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also (3:8).

They saw the consequences, they had the advantage of seeing what idolatry to their relatives to the north, it brought their destruction. They had the opportunities of seeing the consequences of sin and yet Judah did not turn but followed after the same evil practices.

And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks (3:9).

The stones were the little idols that they carved out of stones, the stocks were the little idols that they carved out of wood and so the abundance of these little idols that they worshipped as gods and they would do their whole religious oblations before these wooden and stone idols; whoredom, turning from God to worship other gods.

And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD (3:10).

During the reign of Josiah when Jeremiah received this prophecy, there was a spiritual revival. Josiah had ordered that the idols be destroyed. He had ordered that the places of worship be torn down, the alters on the high places that were erected to Baal and Molech and the other gods, he ordered them destroyed, the places of the worship of the pagan gods destroyed. The idol that had been set in the temple of Baal and the alter that was there, he had that destroyed. They cleansed the temple, they went in and cleaned the place of all of the junk and the filth that had been accumulated. Having cleansed the temple, cleaning it out and refurbishing it, they began worshipping God in the temple. They began the daily prayers and the daily sacrifices and the people began to attend the services at the temple coming for prayers and coming for the holy days. The reinstitution of the Passover and the feast days was done.

From the surface it would appear that there was a real movement toward God, that there was a revival that was going on. But God, who looks at the heart, said that they had not returned to God with their whole heart. It just became the popular thing as there are movements in the world today and a certain thing becomes popular. And everybody gets into disco and then going to the gym. These things seem to come by these fads. So it became sort of a fad to go to the temple, it was the in thing and everybody is doing it, let's go. Yet it was not with a whole heart. Half of their heart was still in the world and in the things of the flesh then God had His place and they would give God the Sabbath but the rest of the week was pursuing the flesh. God said that Judah had not returned with her whole heart but only feignedly, it was just an outward thing. It was not something that was really deep down in their heart, it had not really affected deep in their lives. It was just something that was just surface.

And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah (3:11).

In other words, Judah is really worse off than Israel who was destroyed because of this half hearted relationship. God does not want a half hearted relationship. Jesus said because you are neither hot nor cold but because you are lukewarm I will spew you out of My mouth. He does not want a half hearted relationship. He wants a full on loving relationship with you. He wants that you would put Him first and above everything else. What is the first commandment? Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. God means that. He does not want you to have any interest, any love, any yearning for anything that supersedes your love and your yearning for Him. He wants first place in your life. That is understandable for if you love a person deeply you want that love to be returned. You don't want them flirting around with everyone but you want their full devotion and love. God wants your full devotion and your full love, He does not want a half hearted relationship. Here is Judah in a worse shape because of a half hearted relationship. The Lord said that He would rather that you be either hot or cold. "I would rather you be cold than lukewarm." You see, if you are really cold the Lord can deal with you. If you are lukewarm you say, "Oh well, I go to church." You are hard to reach. Judah is really worse than backsliding Israel.

Go and proclaim these words toward the north (3:12),

Israel was already gone, it was carried away captive, but go and just proclaim these words toward the north because they were carried off to the north through Assyria.

Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger forever (3:12).

If you return, God is saying, I will be merciful, I won't be angry forever. In God's anger they were carried away to Assyria. God is saying return backsliding Israel for I am merciful.

Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God (3:13),

John, in writing his first epistle said, that if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse from all unrighteousness. But God is saying, acknowledge that you are a sinner, acknowledge that you have sinned, confess your sins. The Bible said he who seeks to cover his sins shall not prosper but he who will confess his sin will be forgiven.

Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD (3:13).

He wanted them to acknowledge their tragic consequence of the things that they were experiencing, this tragedy of being captives and being slaves was not God's fault. They like so many people do their own thing, go their own way and live after the flesh and when calamity comes they say, "Why would God allow this to happen to me?" You have not been serving God, you are not under God's protection, God has no obligation to you.

Many years ago when I was pastoring in Tucson, Arizona there was a lady who came to the church who's husband was in the Air Force, she had a daughter who had Polio and she brought her daughter in a wheel chair. In those days it was a small church and I had a custom of calling on the visitors of the church. So the following week I went to make a call at her home in the evening. Her husband who was a major in the Air Force answered the door. I introduced myself as Chuck Smith and that I pastored the church over here and your wife and family were visiting and I thought I would come by. The guy began to curse me and was angry and was shaking. He said, "We have just come back from the doctor and my second girl has been diagnosed as having Polio. I cannot believe in a God that would allow my children...." He went on just raving and cursing and so angry at God because his daughter had Polio. My heart went out to him and I knew the anguish of his heart. I could see it and feel it and my heart went out to him. And I said, "Have you been serving God?" He said, "No." As we stood there at the door and we talked a bit and I found that his father was a Presbyterian minister but he had turned his back on God and He had gone his own way, he was living after the world and the flesh but when something goes wrong, who do they blame? That is so typical.

Here is Israel who turned against God and was worshipping all of these pagan gods, had turned their hearts away from the true and living God and yet when calamity comes they want to blame God instead of looking at themselves and saying it is my fault, I have sinned, I have committed iniquity, I have transgressed against the Laws of God. So God was wanting them to acknowledge their guilt, not blame God anymore for the calamities that had come but realize that it was because they had forsaken God that the calamities did come because they were now out from the protection of God.

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you (3:14);

God is still acknowledging that this marriage exists and God loves them still.

and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion (3:14):

There will be that remnant, one out of a whole city, two out of a family, those remnant who are faithful and true to God and I will give you and I will bring you to Zion; the restoration of the faithful remnant that God will bring back.

And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding (3:15).

Years ago when I felt that God was calling me into the ministry, I more or less, took this verse as the theme of my ministry. I said, "Lord I want to be a pastor after your heart." David was called the king after God's own heart. I wanted to be a pastor after God's heart who would feed the flock of God with the knowledge and understanding of God. I have made that the real thrust of my ministry, the teaching of the Word because it is through the Word that we come to a knowledge and understanding of God. Thus a pastor after His heart is not one who will talk to you about psychology, relationships, how to get along with your wives and your kids and your in-laws but one who will teach you how to get along with God and seeking first the kingdom of God and these other things will be added, teaching and feeding with the knowledge and understanding of God.

And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD (3:16),

This is now a prophecy of the last days and goes out to the kingdom age when the Lord has returned and gathers together His remnant and the Lord is there in their midst in Zion. The 'those days' is a common reference in the Old Testament to those days when the Lord comes and is reigning.

they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it: neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more (3:16).

The ark of the covenant was the symbol of that covenant that God had made to the nation of Israel whereby they would relate to Him and be His people and He would be their God. In the ark of the covenant were the two tables of stone upon which the Lord had engraved the Ten Commandments. Thus within the ark you were related to God by the Law. The Bible said that he that doeth these things shall live by them. It symbolized their relationship to God through obedience to the Law. When Jesus came he said, "A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another even as I have loved you." He said, "Greater love has no man than this that a man will lay down his life for his friends." So when he took the bread and he broke it and gave it to them, he said, "This is my body that is broken for you." When he took the cup he said, "This is a new covenant in my blood which is shed for the remission for sin." For the blood of Jesus God's son cleanses us from all sin. So now we relate to God not through the old covenant of the Law but through the new covenant of Jesus Christ and faith in the sacrifice that Jesus made for our sins. That is how we relate to God.

The old covenant, the ark of the covenant, will not be a fixture in the kingdom age when the Lord himself is reigning in Jerusalem. The ark of the covenant will not be a feature, it will not even be thought of because it was the place where man met God and the high priest would go in twice on one day a year on Yom Kippur and he would offer the sacrifices for the nation and he would meet God. But now God is dwelling with man, God with us, Emmanuel, Jesus is here, Jesus is reigning. The relationship to God will not be through the old system of the Law but now through Jesus Christ. The ark of the covenant of the Lord will not come into mind neither will they remember it neither will they visit it neither shall that be done anymore.

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD (3:17):

Jesus will be there and will be reigning there. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord.

and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart (3:17).

Oh God hasten the day! We read that in the time of Noah that the thoughts and the imaginations of man's heart was evil continually. That is the commentary of Noah's day. Jesus said, "And as it was as in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man." The heart and the imagination of man's heart was nothing but evil continually and I can tell you that we are getting close. But in the glorious day of the

Lord when Jesus reigns from His throne in Jerusalem they will no longer walk after the imagination of their evil heart.

In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel (3:18),

No longer divided as they were at the time of Jeremiah, that sharp division between the people but they will walk together.

and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, You shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me (3:18–19).

This will be done by their turning back to God. How shall I do it? There has to be the repentance. God is wanting to do wonderful things for His children. Jude exhorts the church to keep yourself in the love of God, keep yourself in the place where God can demonstrate and manifest His love for you. Jude uses Israel as a classic example of those who failed to receive the full blessings of God because they failed to keep themselves in the love of God. God was wanting to do wonderful things for them as His bride and people. God was wanting to just lavish His love upon them to bless them. But they turned from God, they did not keep themselves in that place of blessing. Jude points out that even though God had delivered them out of Egypt yet they perished in the wilderness.

Some of you God has delivered out of the bondage of the world, you are saved but you have not come into the promised land. You are not dwelling in the land of blessing but you are wandering in the wilderness. There is still a longing for Egypt in your heart as the children of Israel in the wilderness began to lust after the flesh pots of Egypt and they began to say, “Oh remember in Egypt how we had all the meat that we could eat.” And they were lusting after the flesh pots in Egypt. That is the tragic story of many a believer today. They are kept in a state of arrested spiritual development. They have not grown, developed or have come out of the wilderness into the promise, the land of promise, the land of victory, overcoming life in Christ. You are still on the other side of Jordan. The Lord wants to do much more for you but you have to be in that place where God can do for you the things that He is desiring to do for you.

So the children of Israel limited the Holy One of Israel by their unbelief. They limited the things that God wanted to do for them and they did not inherit the land of promise because of unbelief. Some of you, cause you are still drawn after the flesh and after Egypt, your Christian experience is not one of overcoming joy and victory and glory but it is tough, it is barely surviving as you are perishing really in the wilderness rather than coming into the fullness of God’s blessing.

Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me (3:19).

When there is that union again, turning to God

Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD (3:20).

They have dealt treacherously with God. What they did was horrible. As the Lord said they have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters and they have hewn out cisterns but they are broken cisterns that can hold no water.

A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God (3:21).

Not only have they turned from God but now they have forgotten God. So the Lord calls even to them. The grace of God and the mercies of God and the patience of God are something to be marveled at. If I were God I would say “forget you” and would look for another wife. But God is so patient and He said:

Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God (3:22).

This is their response; behold we come unto thee for thou art the LORD our God. The cry to return and the remnant shall return.

Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel (3:23).

There in the hills, their places of worship and their alters to hope that these false gods can save them is sheer folly, in vain are you hoping in salvation in your false religious systems in the enlightenment of the New Age. "Surely the New Age is going to lead us in the glorious new world." Oh come on, help me! The things that people are willing to put their trust in: Rampha speaking from thirty-five thousand years ago saying, "You are gods!" And people are paying \$700 a weekend to hear that stuff and hoping in salvation by these things. "I am going to save the world." The ecologists are out there saving the world. In vain you look for salvation from the hills and the multitudes of mountains. Truly the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel and only in Him is there salvation. Only in Him is there hope for the future.

We are in a complete mess. Look at the problems that we have, now you are paying 7 1/2% in taxes. If you live in some cities you are paying 8%, 8 1/4%, do I hear 8 1/2%? San Diego county is 8 1/2% and going up! I read where they are going to lay off a lot of the state employees, of course they have voted themselves a raise. That is got to be the height of something that in the midst of all of the talk of deficit budget to vote themselves a raise. They are telling us, "We are going to take more from you because we need more for ourselves." Hey, when are we going to wake up? We cannot afford government anymore, even Beverly Hills has financial problems. That is really bad. So we see that government is giving less and demanding more, less services and yet they are asking for more. Take a look. It is because we are supporting the arts, these poor starving artists who are not good enough to paint things that people will buy because the stuff that they are painting you would not hang in your home. You would be embarrassed and you would want to hide it in your closet or something. You would want to burn it. They have to be supported, something is wrong in Denmark and in the U.S. too.

This is the kind of condition that was taking place with Israel and Judah. God was dealing with it but it was the end of the road. They had gone over the line even as I feel that we have gone over the line. Trusting in their false gods to save them.

For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God (3:24-25).

An honest acknowledgment, an honest confession. Our land is being destroyed, the banks are failing. The saving and loans have failed. The insurance companies are starting to fail. How far does it have to go before we wake up and say, "We have sinned against the LORD." But rather than turning from sin we are seeing only an increase in sin. A teacher came to me today and handed me a paper or syllabus that they are requiring all the teachers in Orange County to attend these classes that will be taught by a group of homosexuals from Long Beach that will help the teachers help the children to understand that homosexuality is a good way to live. It is not something evil or something sinful. There are people that have adopted and have taken to this lifestyle and we should embrace them and accept them and give them special privileges in housing and jobs and everything else. They are a minority of course. Our Orange County school teachers are required to attend this class. She said, "I thought you might be interested," and she gave this syllabus from which they will be teaching the teachers so that they can help the children understand that this is an acceptable, viable, alternative lifestyle.

Instead of repenting and turning back to God and saying we have sinned we have turned from Him and we are reaping the consequences of our sin and we are only going deeper into the sin. How can we expect

God to bless our nation when we have forsaken Him and turned from Him as we have? So Jeremiah, crying unto the people, in the next chapter is going to tell of how he was just moved inwardly in his crying for the conditions that were existing. So next week we will go on in to chapter 4 as we continue slowly our journey through Jeremiah. I think that it is so relevant for today because of the parallels and the similes that we see between Judah before her fall and the United States, the parallel situations. You see the things that brought the fall of the nations and you see them repeated in our nation today. Let's pray.

Father, we are deeply concerned for the condition of our community. The gang wars, the violence, the drugs, the crime. We are deeply concerned for our state, the pending legislation, the ungodly liberal bent of so many of the legislators and senators who seem to be in the majority. We are concerned about our nation, it has turned its back on You and has outlawed God from the public sector and from our national life. God, not only turned its back but outlawed You. We can understand, oh God, how You could be justified in turning Your back on our nation. Lord, as your people we cry to you that You God would work Your mighty work even in these days. Begin it in our hearts and take us, Lord, from a half-hearted relationship into a full blown relationship with you. Lord, forgive us our backslidings, our sins, heal Lord, and may we go forth as your people proclaiming your righteousness to this dying world. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

In the midst of all the bad news there is some glorious good news. God is alive and He loves His people and if His people who are called by His name would humble themselves and pray and seek His face, He will hear from heaven, He will heal their land. The Lord is coming again soon to deliver His people even as the conditions of Sodom became such that the homosexual community became very aggressive. That was the final straw before the judgment of God. But you remember the story, God delivered that righteous man Lot. The angel said, "Hurry, get out of here. We cannot destroy this place until you are out." I believe the Lord is going to say to His church, "Get out of there!" The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God and we who are alive and remain will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord. I don't think that can be very far off. It can be none too soon as far as I am concerned. The darker the outlook, the brighter the uplook. Just keep looking up, Jesus is coming!