

## Meditation on Jeremiah 6-10

By Trisha Gerstel

It generally holds true that we Christians spend 90% of our “devoted” time reading, quoting, and meditating on the Gospels and other books of the New Testament, leaving the Old Testament books for tasks such as relating the story of creation, pointing to various prophecies about the Messiah, or reciting the Ten Commandments. Given the nature of our faith, this is understandable. After all it was Jesus Himself who said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20b, NIV, emphasis added). We focus on the Gospel and the books of the New Testament because they tell the story of our Redeemer as well as the transformation of man’s soul when he accepts the precious gift of Christ’s sacrifice. And, of course, there’s the whole “yikes factor”: we tend to shy away from the Old Testament because, well, it isn’t always pretty. The New Testament is about love and redemption whereas much of the Old Testament is about failure and consequence.

But there are important messages in the books of the Old Testament. Not only does the literal meaning of the words reveal to us God’s Holy nature, but often there are analogies for our own lives within the stories of the Old Testament.

In chapter six of the book of Jeremiah we read of God’s wrath against Jerusalem. In these words I see a reflection of my own life before I accepted Christ’s gift. God had to come in and lay siege to “loathsome conduct” (verse 15), and there was within my soul a need for change so I sought out “the ancient paths”, the ways of the Lord (verse 16). Throughout this period in my life I thought I was living as a “good person” and doing good, but my works were in vain because I did not “listen to [His] words” (verse 19) and He could not see past my sin (verses 27-30).

Chapters seven through ten speak of not only God’s longing to have us returned to His flock, but also tell of His warning against the deceptions of the world. While the exact words may refer to ancient idols represented in Biblical times by physical statues we no longer see today, the caution against false religions and idols is still very important: as the Scripture states, thinking that anything but the Lord can deliver us and make us joyful not only angers Him, but also harms us (17:18b – 19). And there certainly is no difference between the nature of the greed (8:10), slander (9:4b), or deceit (9:6) that tempted the Israelites and that which tempts us today; nor is there any less truth in God’s proclamation that He “is the true God; He is the living God, the eternal King” (10:10a, NIV).

Reading Old Testament passages such as this also is important because it refreshes our understanding of and gratitude for exactly what Jesus did for us when he was nailed to the cross. We no longer need to fear the wrath of the Lord, but are assured that – as Jeremiah had prayed for himself – we will be corrected with justice versus anger (10:24) and in the end will be accepted into the Kingdom of Heaven!



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