***Jeremiah 5:1-14 “Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places If you can find a man, If there is anyone who executes judgment,
Who seeks the truth, And I will pardon her. 2Though they say, ‘As the Lord lives,’ Surely they swear falsely.” 3O Lord, are not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, But they have not grieved; You have consumed them, But they have refused to receive correction.
They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to return. 4Therefore I said, “Surely these are poor. They are foolish; For they do not know the way of the Lord, The judgment of their God. 5I will go to the great men and speak to them, For they have known the way of the Lord, The judgment of their God.” But these have altogether broken the yoke And burst the bonds. 6Therefore a lion from the forest shall slay them, A wolf of the deserts shall destroy them; A leopard will watch over their cities. Everyone who goes out from there shall be torn in pieces, Because their transgressions are many; Their backslidings have increased. 7“How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me And sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, Then they committed adultery And assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses. 8They were like well-fed lusty stallions; Every one neighed after his neighbor’s wife. 9Shall I not punish them for these things?” says the Lord.
“And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this? 10“Go up on her walls and destroy,
But do not [***[***b***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=jeremiah+5&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-19069b)***]make a complete end. Take away her branches, For they are not the Lord’s.
11For the house of Israel and the house of Judah Have dealt very treacherously with Me,” says the Lord. 12They have lied about the Lord, And said, “It is not He. Neither will evil come upon us, Nor shall we see sword or famine. 13And the prophets become wind, For the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them.” 14 Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts: “Because you speak this word, Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, And this people wood, And it shall devour them.***

We’re back with Jeremiah again tonight. Recall with me that Jeremiah is prophesying against the House of Judah. They have turned away from God, being called more treacherous than Israel, which is already in captivity, and more treacherous Sodom. They consider themselves righteous because they are religious, but their heart is far from God. Jeremiah is speaking God’s words to the people about the coming battle with Babylon and the Chaldeans, a battle that will see Judah taken into captivity and Jerusalem burned down. In Jeremiah 46, God says that, if all the Chaldeans were defeated and only wounded remained, they’d still burn Jerusalem with fire. In other words, God has ordained this and His word will not return void.

In Verse 1 it says*“Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places If you can find a man, If there is anyone who executes judgment, Who seeks the truth, And I will pardon her.* God opens with an urgency. Run to and fro. The people have become completely degenerate. God invites the people to see now and know with certainty that, no matter where or how they search, be it even in the open places or the open markets, where all citizens frequent, where the whole population gathers, none will be found that do righteousness. Search for a God-fearing man seeking to do righteousness, but none administer justice or seek truth, none deal faithfully and uprightly. No one is seeking God and His Kingdom among the people. If such a person is found, God will pardon the city. Recall with me that, in the days of Sodom, God offered to pardon Sodom and Gomorrah if ten righteous men were found. Now, God says that if ONE can be found, He will pardon. This implies strongly that Jerusalem is far worse than Sodom on the day it was destroyed. We know Jeremiah is there, Baruch his disciple is there, and undoubtedly there were others following God there. The point is to highlight how few righteous exist and how deeply wicked Judah and Jerusalem have become. The wicked far outnumber the righteous.

Verse 2 *Though they say, ‘As the Lord lives,’ Surely they swear falsely.”* Though they swear and take oaths by God, they are doing so only with their lips, and it doesn’t come from their heart. They are not sincere when they use the Lord’s name or take an oath. People do that today and it causes me to wince when I hear them swear or use God’s name when I know they are insincere. Just because someone calls the name of the Lord, it doesn’t mean they are sincerely seeking the Lord. Matthew 7:21 *Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*.

Verse 3 *O Lord, are not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, But they have not grieved; You have consumed them, But they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to return.* Clearly, in the first two verses, God was speaking. Now, Jeremiah takes up the conversation. He begins by acknowledging that God’s eyes are on Truth and that He searches and knows men’s hearts deeply. He knows their motives and dispositions. God has stricken them with affliction to bring them to repentance and turning back, so He can spare them, but they are not grieved. They are not humbled, but remain obstinate and proud. God has sent enemy upon enemy, but the people have refused to receive correction. They’ve remained steadfast in their pursuit of evil and wickedness, willfully rejecting God’s counsel and disregarding the judgements. They’ve set their face away from God.

Verse 4 *Therefore I said, “Surely these are poor. They are foolish; For they do not know the way of the Lord, The judgment of their God.* Jeremiah, at first, tries to give them the benefit of the doubt, writing evil and the failure to follow God off as ignorance. He said to himself – surely they simply don’t know or understand or were poorly instructed as children. He tries to excuse the people.

Verse 5*I will go to the great men and speak to them, For they have known the way of the Lord, The judgment of their God.” But these have altogether broken the yoke And burst the bonds.* Therefore, Jeremiah decides to seek the great men. They’ve been better educated and given opportunities to learn God’s ways. Surely, they’ll be found to be more in line with God. Instead, he found these men to be worse than the others, completely rebelling against God’s word and ignoring the Law altogether.

Verse 6 *Therefore a lion from the forest shall slay them, A wolf of the deserts shall destroy them; A leopard will watch over their cities. Everyone who goes out from there shall be torn in pieces, Because their transgressions are many; Their backslidings have increased.* A lion, indicating Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans, will slay them. Recall with me that Babylon was well known for having the lion as it’s mascot. Jeremiah also names the ravenous wolf and the stealthy leopard as imagery. The deserts can be understood as the wide open spaces used for pastures, where sheep are vulnerable to attack. Everyone will be torn in pieces. Their sin has brought this upon them.

Verse 7 *How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me And sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, Then they committed adultery And assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses.* God will not condone or give a wink and a nod to sin. He can’t be expected to forgive that which is never repented of. His justice is pure and His judgements always right. He appeals to the people revealing that the children have forsaken Him, meaning all the people whether in the city of the countryside. They have become apostate and have sworn by idols and spent all their time worshipping that which is not God. They have robbed God, which is exactly what we hear in Malachi so many years later. God has given them abundance and blessing, and they have repaid with adulterous relations with idols. Ease and prosperity make a people weak. True then and true now.

*.*Verse 8 *They were like well-fed lusty stallions; Every one neighed after his neighbor’s wife.* God now uses the picture of stallions chasing a mare. Men chased other men’s wives. It gives the image of a wicked nation doing whatever their lusts lead them to do. In today’s terms, this is the slogan – if it feels good, do it. Terrible, terrible counsel.

Verse 9*Shall I not punish them for these things?” says the Lord. “And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?* Our sense of justice tells us that, when someone does something wrong, there has to be a way to make it right. I would not want to serve a God that gives a wink to the wicked and just smiles at injustice. We want mercy for ourselves and justice for others. God is a merciful God, but consequences and justice must prevail. Our answer is – of course He must punish and avenge. God is Holy and Jealous. He will not let evil and wickedness prevail. Every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess. Judgement will be perfect and we will all kneel before Him one day.

Verse10 *Go up on her walls and destroy, But do not make a complete end. Take away her branches, For they are not the Lord’s.* God now calls to the Babylonians to go and execute this punishment. Destroy, but don’t destroy completely. Leave a remnant. Through this remnant, God will keep His promise of Jesus. Take away the branches, meaning the battlements and fortifications around the city. For they are not the Lord’s – God now disavows and disowns this wicked and adulterous generation.

Verse 11 *For the house of Israel and the house of Judah Have dealt very treacherously with Me,” says the Lord.* God confirms that Israel and Judah have dealt treacherously with Him, doing wicked and adulterous things, when He provided only good and blessings.

Verse 12 *They have lied about the Lord, And said, “It is not He. Neither will evil come upon us, Nor shall we see sword or famine.* The priests and the prophets have lied about God, denying His providence and ultimate power over all human affairs. They’ve written the catastrophes off to chance or bad luck. And we do that today. The prophets claim that God has not spoken the calamities into existence. This is a lie about God. Even today, we hear the prosperity gospel and love to listen to the tickling of ears. Let us be painfully aware that God’s judgement is imminent and let us be repentant and in prayer on behalf of our wicked nation and world.

Verse 13 *And the prophets become wind, For the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them.* The prophets become wind, in other words they prophesy in vain and serve no purpose to the people. The word of God is not in them and the evils that they say are not coming upon the people will be the very evils that come upon them.

Verse 14 *Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts: “Because you speak this word, Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, And this people wood, And it shall devour them.* Jeremiah, now in the name of God, gives an answer to the denials of the unfaithful prophets. He gives honor and all glory to God, acknowledging that God alone will bring the judgement. Because the prophets have been scoffers, denying God’s true word, God will make His word fire and the people and the city will be devoured as though only dry wood. Only the remnant will remain.

Next week, God willing, we will learn more of the earthly judgement coming upon Judah and Jerusalem. For now, we leave Jeremiah, as he continues to faithfully cry God’s Word to the people. His words are not heard because of the pleasant words spoken by unfaithful priests and prophets. The people love their sin and the words that condone their sin are music to their ears. And so it is today. People love to believe that there is no consequence to wickedness and no end to the ease and comfort they waste their time on rather than being about God’s business. God says no. There will come a day of judgement, not just on the individual but upon all nations. May we, in Jesus Christ, be found serving and waiting for the Master, faithfully in relationship with our God, doing His work each and every day.