

A Haunt of Wolves (Jer. 9:11a)
The continuing contemporaneity of Jeremiah

Jeremiah was strange. God's odd one. No fun at a party. He had weird eyes. He saw through people. His sight didn't stop at their outsides. He saw through their faces, down under those smug expressions, those false smiles, down to where their motives lay, all coiled and ready to strike, or all weak and twisting. So he scared people. Especially princes, politicians, priests - sorts who have special fears of being seen through.

As I said, Jeremiah was not someone you would invite for supper. Not if you thought you were somebody. For you might catch sight of yourself in those weird eyes of his. And you might sicken on your own image mirrored there. As I said - prophets don't make pleasant company. perilous fellows.

They get themselves persecuted. Goes with the job. And they're lonely too. So naturally, no true prophet wants to be one. It's a compulsion. Always has been. Still is.

Jeremiah didn't want to be one. "Ah! Lord God!" he responded. "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." (1:6). He swore he was too young, and that he did not have a facile tongue. God knew that wasn't so. A Whopper. So he made Jer. one anyway. A prophet - not insane, as some made out, just inspired. He saw with God's eyes.

And to see with God's eyes is weird, for it's to see both side of everything heaven and hell. I In the first place, to see too much too well - that's hell alright. It was hell for Jeremiah. For 40 years. 40 years of hell he had. He was young when he started. 16 may be. 18-20 And for 40 years he watched and fought against the fall of his beloved country. Foresaw it and could not prevent it. That's hell, isn't it? To watch the disintegration of what you love. And in 586 Jerusalem fell just as he said. Defeated. Destroyed by the Babylonians. Sacked. Burned. Jerusalem became precisely what he said it would - all along. A waste land. A desert. "A haunt of jackals" he called it. And that was hell for him.

So history vindicated the homily of Jer's visions. And we still find him inspired. Curiously, frighteningly, weirdly - contemporary.

Chapter after chapter, there it all is: 1. international turmoil, 2. Social injustice, 3. Rebellion of the young, 4. Anarchy in the streets, 5. Religious hollowness, 6. Even environmental pollution, and of course 7. immorality on all level everywhere- in fact, reading Jer., you get the curious feeling we are a Re-Run, a late summer Re-Run, of an ancient series of corruptions, as though we were a slow replay of the same old cycle of sins. "Harvest is past, summer is almost over, and we are not saved," sighs. Jeremiah the singer of God's truth and its true yet. 100's+100's of harvests are now past since his day, thousands of summers are over, and by our cleverness, we have harvested more than he ever dreamed

of (we have harvested ~~the moon~~ Venus have we not?) but still we are not saved.” His 2500 year old descriptions still describe us.

With eyes like God, he sees the nation like this:

Ch 2: vs 5b – “Pursuing empty phantoms and themselves becoming empty.”

Sounds like our drugged culture, doesn't it? The “empty phantoms” of alcohol, + cocaine + marijuana, even the soporific late-late show and that narcotic mania – i.e. some drug for everyone – so that everyone from smallest moppets to great grand mama “becoming empty” on it.

Or take ch2:vs 7 – “I brought you into a fruitful land to enjoy its fruit and the goodness of it; but when you entered upon it you defiled it and made the home I gave you loathsome.”

How's that for environmental pollution. Polluting fields and streams and air, for squandering and defiling and making uninhabitable the good green earth? Or this for ecological sin? This one's unbelievable for 500-600 B.C.:

Ch5:vs25 – “...your wrong doing has upset nature's balance order, and your sins have kept you from her kindly gifts.” And again - do we not see our own delight in the pagan and orgiastic in this from Jer.?

Ch 5: vs 7 - “your sons have forsaken me and sworn by gods that are no gods.

I gave them all they needed, yet they preferred perversity/adultery & haunted the trollops.”

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and here too is our guilt ridden “death of God” theology.

Ch 5: vs 12 “You have denied the Lord, saying ‘He does not exist’”

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Yet here too is our desperate God – need - rising up to haunt us anyway in this age of astrology and witchcraft and heathenism & other like inanities + insanities:

Ch 2: vs 25

“...you said, ‘No, I am desperate,

I love foreign gods and I must go after them’”

(2:29 - “you are Rebels, every one of you.”)

and here too is our moral corruption and social injustice.

Ch 5: vs 27-29 “Your houses are full of fraud, as a cage is full of birds.

you grew rich and grand, bloated & rancorous;

your thoughts are full of evil, and you refuse to do justice,

the claims of the orphan you do not put right

nor do you grant justice to the poor.

Shall I not punish you for this? says the lord;
Shall I not take vengeance on such a people?"

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And here too is the hypocrisy of institutional religion:

Ch 5: vs 30-31 "An appalling thing, an outrage has appeared in this land;
prophets preaching lies and priests go hand in hand with them
and my people love to have it so.
How will you fare at the end of it all?"

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And here also is the breakdown in law and order + fear in the city's streets

6:7 "Violence and outrage echo in your streets."
6:25 "And do not go into the country,
do not walk by the high road;
for the foe, sword In hand
is a terror let loose."

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and here also is the fear of thieves, terrorists, kidnappers in the night:

9:21 "death has climb in through your windows,
it has entered your palaces,
it snatches up the children in the open air..."

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and here too is our fear of one another:

9:4 - "Be on your guard, each man against his friend,
put no trust even in a brother.
Brother is jealous of/supplants brother
and friend slanders friend."

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+Here is our disclaimer of guilt; our undeclared involvement in initial sin

2:35 "You say, 'I am innocent' ...
but I will challenge your claim
to have done no sin."

2:23 - "how can you say I am not polluted, not !!"?

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There too is what we are not doing about it.

ch4:vs30 - "and you, what are you doing?

When you dress yourself in scarlet,
deck yourself out with golden ornaments
and make your eyes big with eye shadow - antimony.
You are beautifying yourself to no purpose.
Even your lovers spurn you and are only out for your life"

And so on and on it goes.

So there is nothing new in hell now is there? 600 B.C. or 2000 A.D. hell is just the same as always. The same old dull, dangerous business.

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So Jeremiah like some modern folk prophet of doom - sings his strange hymn to uncreation sees the world Regressing to the primeval chaos. the old chaos monster of Genesis returning. -

Tohu-wabohu "Without form and void." As though he saw a post thermal nuclear war - Jer. wrote -
ch4:vs23 "I saw the earth and it was once again without form and void;

the heavens and their light was gone.

I saw the mountains, and they reeled; and the hills rocked to and fro.

I saw, and there was no man, and the very birds had taken flight.

I saw, and the farmland was wilderness, and the towns all razed to the ground,
before the Lord in his Anger" (after the holocaust?)

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I told you Jeremiah was eerie, didn't I? He saw the world with timeless eyes - weird eyes - the eyes of God

That seeing with the sight of God, the prophetic vision is not all hell.

II. There's a vision of heaven in it also. and that's the 2^d pt. - if you are looking for points. -

There's always hope beyond the hell. That's the final point. Says Jeremiah:

ch4:vs78 - "your own ways, your own deeds

have brought all this upon you;
this is your punishment,
and all this comes of your rebellion."

Therefore

4:14 – “O Jerusalem, wash the wrong doing from your heart
and you may yet be saved.”

But he doesn't think you can clean life up all neat and tidy with deodorant and detergent: “though you wash with soda and do not stint the soap” (2:22b) you will not be saved.

No. What its going to take is =

It's going to take a scrubbing of the heart

Jer. 31:31ff

“The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah,” says the Lord “I will set my law within them and write it on their hearts.”

Ah, there's the point. The real hell in the world is in the human heart. Jer. was Right. That's “the haunt place of wolves jackals.”

And right there is also where heaven has to start – “I will set my law within them and write it on their hearts.”

That's right, Jeremiah – that's what Jesus thought too. Heaven has to start with the heart of man. And that takes some doing beyond man. That takes God, that's what Rel. is all about.

The remnant is God's vision.

It takes faith to see it.

But it's there.

(9:23-24) As Jer. – with his weird eyes - saw –

“Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom

nor the valiant of his valor;

let not the rich man boast of his riches;

but if any man would boast, let him boast of this,

that he understands and knows me.

For I am the Lord, I show unfailing love, I do justice and right upon the earth;

for on these I have set my heart. This is the very word of the Lord.”

Let us pray :

Oh Lord Christ, thou who didst come to write a new cov. on the hearts of men and women.
help us - to do justice and right upon the earth- to show unfailing love - to set our hearts here –
for this is the way and the truth and the life of God

Amen

The book does not have a sequential text – but is a collection (hodge-podge) of Jer’s sayings, poems,
prayers, oracles, hymns, proverbs, visions + stories – that can (if you push it - be grouped into 4 sections
Very long book, 52 chps. (25 selections-)

Jer. fell in 586 B.C.

After the armies of the ruler Gedaligh shortly thereafter fled to Egypt – there he died. His faithful
anemias. Dauch