A PATTERN OF DEPARTURE

Intro: The Old Testament was written for our profit; Rom. 15:4 “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” Jeremiah was a great prophet of the Old Testament. He is described as the weeping prophet. He was sent by God to warn God’s people to return to Him. His pleas and tears because of their rebellion to God fill the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations. Jeremiah tells us that Israel had:

1. Forsaken God; Jer. 2:13 “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”
2. Forgotten God; Jer. 2:32 “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.”
3. Corrupted God’s teaching and worship; Jer. 5:30-31 “A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?”
4. Jeremiah adds that the people love to have it this way; Jer. 5:31.
5. Jeremiah describes Israel’s departure from God in five steps in Jeremiah 6:10-16 “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days. And their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord. For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

a. Jeremiah could have been describing the conditions of today.
b. These conditions exist in the world and in the church.

I. THEY REFUSED TO LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD.

A. Jer. 6:10 “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.”

B. God has spoken His Word.

1. Heb. 1:1-2 “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”
2. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”
3. That Word is the only direction we have for life and godliness.

   a. Jer. 10:23 “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”
   b. Psa. 73:24 “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”
   c. Psa. 119:11 “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”
C. **The people’s reaction to God’s Word.**
   1. They did not delight in that Word.
      a. They did not find their joy in spiritual matters.
      b. Psa. 1:2 “But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”
      c. Psa. 37:4 “Delight thyself also in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”
   2. They considered it a reproach.
      a. The word reproach means a disgrace or shame.
      b. God’s Word was not progressive enough for them. It would not allow them to do things they wanted to do, they considered it old-fogy.

D. **Are we like Israel of old?**
   1. Do we read God’s Word.
   2. Do we study God’s Word; 2 Tim. 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”
   3. Do we delight ourselves in spiritual matters or physical concerns.

II. **They Were Obsessed With Material Things.**
A. **Jer. 6:13** “For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.”
B. **The sin of covetousness.**
   1. Covetousness chokes out spiritual things; Mat. 6:24 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”
   2. Luke 12:15 “And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”
   3. Eph. 5:5 “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idoler, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”
   4. Col. 3:5 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”
C. **Covetousness leads to other sins to obtain material things.**
   1. 1 Tim. 6:9-10 “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
   2. Many, just to receive more of this world’s goods, will lie, cheat, steal or embezzle, etc.
D. **We are to concern ourselves with spiritual matters.**
   1. Mat. 6:19-21 “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
   2. Col. 3:1-2 “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”
III. THEY DELUDED THEMSELVES WITH FALSEHOODS.

A. Jer. 6:14 “They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”

B. When men live in rebellion to God and His Word they justify themselves by saying everything is fine.
1. They do not want to hear what is wrong.
2. They will get preachers and teachers who will tell them what they want to hear.
   a. Isa. 30:9-10 “That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: 10 Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:”
   b. 2 Tim. 4:2-4 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”
3. There are plenty who are ready and willing to tickle their ears;
   a. 2 Cor. 11:13-15 “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”
   b. Elijah stood alone against the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18).
   c. During the days of Micaiah (1 Kings 22) there were 400 prophets who told Ahab and Jehoshaphat to go to war (what Ahab wanted said).
4. But, when man is determined to go astray, God will allow them to do so;
   2 The. 2:10-12 “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

C. We must have a love for the truth.
1. Pro. 23:23 “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.”
2. Psa. 119:97 “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.”

IV. THEY WERE NOT ASHAMED, COULD NOT BLUSH.

A. Jer. 6:15 “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.”

B. Israel had no shame.
1. They lived in open sin and rebellion to God.
2. Some of their sins.
   a. Murder; Jer. 2:34 “Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.”
   b. Idolatry with its attending immorality; Jer. 2:27 “Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have
turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.”

c. Jer. 7:9-11 “Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord.”

d. Drunkenness; Jer. 13:13 “Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David’s throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness.”

C. Our permissive society.
1. Immorality is prevalent.
   a. Nudity (pornography) has become acceptable, (cf. Playboy) and defended as normal and protected under our “Bill of Rights”.
   b. Premarital and extramarital relations are acceptable and encouraged.
   c. Immodest clothing abounds (both by women and men).
   d. Homosexuals fight for their “rights” and that this is just “another or alternate life style.”

2. Cruelty on the increase.
   a. Hollywood is trying to invent ways to shock the American people, with greater violence; they simply cannot seem to do it.
   b. Violent crime is rampant.
   c. It is difficult for the Christian to be tenderhearted.

3. Disobedience is the norm.
   a. Parental disobedience, including a lack of respect.
   b. Disobedience to any and all recognized authorities (home, school, governmental, eldership).

V. THEY REJECTED THE ONLY CURE.

A. Jer. 6:16 “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

B. The “Old Paths” are the paths of God.
1. In the days of Jeremiah they needed to go back to the Law of Moses (the law to which they were subject).
2. To do what they did during the days of Josiah; 2 Kings 22.
   a. The Law had been lost.
   b. It was found in the temple.
   c. They went back to doing and living according to the Law.

C. In our modern society, we also must go back to the Word of God.
1. We have those today who wish to change and alter God’s law.
   a. Some even style themselves as change agents.
b. They want to continually change everything concerning God and His will for man to keep up with the modern times.
   (1) Book by Jim Woodroof; The Church In Transition.
   (2) Book by Rubel Shelley and Randall Harris; The Second Incarnation: A Theology for the 21st Century Church.

2. We must return to the New Testament pattern (the law to which we are subject).

a. We must not change God’s Word in any way.
   (1) Gal. 1:6-9 “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
   (2) 2 John 9 “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”

b. We must return to that pattern for our salvation, worship, the way we live our lives and the attitudes we have.

3. We must restore New Testament Christianity today.

a. We can only do that which God authorizes.
   b. Mat. 21:23-27 “And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? 24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? 26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. 27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”
   c. Col. 3:17 “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

4. Go back to the Word of God for all we do and say.

Conclusion: When we depart from God today, God calls us back to him. He urges us to repent and do the first works; Rev. 2:5 “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” This is the same plea Jeremiah made to the people of his day; return to the old paths, return to the teaching of God’s Word found in the Bible, obey what God says. Israel’s answer was, “We will not walk therein.” What is your answer?