

# NOTES ON THE PROPHECY AND LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

“The Weeping Prophet”

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## CHAPTER SIX

### THE MARRED GIRDLE: “WILT THOU NOT BE MADE CLEAN?”

(Chap. 13)

**“Thus saith the Lord unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water”** (ver. 1).

The Lord would now teach by what is evidently a vision, as it is hardly to be supposed that Jeremiah actually carried the girdle all the way to the river Euphrates. On the other hand, if a literal occurrence, it but exemplifies his obedience to the commands of God. *The girdle, is the sign of service, as is evident in many scriptures.*

The Lord Jesus frequently so speaks of it, as in Luke 12:35, where He bids His servants have **“their loins girded about,”** and in the 37th verse of the same chapter, where He tells of His perpetual service for His redeemed throughout the ages to come. In John 13 we see Him as the girded servant washing His disciples’ feet, that they may be cleansed from earthly defilement and thus **“have part with Him;”** and when He appears in glory to the beloved disciple on the isle of Patmos, He is **“girt about the breasts with a golden girdle.”**

Israel had been the Lord’s girded servant from of old; but, alas, a faithless one, as Christendom has been since. The girdle was the sign of service. Jeremiah gets one, and girds himself therewith.

The word of the Lord comes again, telling him:

**“Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in the hole of the rock”** (vers. 3, 4).

So should the faithless nation be carried away to Babylon and be defiled, by the Euphrates. Jeremiah does as he is commanded. **“After many days”** (indicative of the captivity by the Euphrates where they were about to be carried) he was sent to get it again; but, **“behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing”** (ver. 7).

The application is readily made: captivity would not change the state of the people’s heart.

Only genuine self-judgment could effect that. Israel had been caused to cleave to the Lord as a girdle to the loins of a man, **“that they might be unto Me,”** He says, **“for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear”** (ver. 11). Therefore they must as an untrustworthy servant be put away.

By the parable of the bottle their emptiness is set forth (ver. 12). They shall be filled, not with the joy of the Lord, but with the wine of strong delusion, which will make them drunk with self-confidence and lead them to destruction.

The prophet’s soul enters fully into this awful word, and he cries as from an anguished heart:

**“Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it grass darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord’s flack is carried away captive”** (vers. 15-17).

He sees his light-rejecting people about to be given up to judicial darkness. He would still arouse them to the solemnity of their condition. If they sleep and refuse to hearken, he will weep bitterly as his own predictions come to pass.

There are differences between the darkness of nature, the darkness of choice, and the darkness of judgment.

In Ephesians 4:18 we read of the Gentiles **“having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness”** (or hardness) **“of their heart.”**

The result of long years of turning away from God is that men are born in natural darkness. God has, however, sent the Light into this scene of gloom; but in John 3:19, 20 we learn that **“this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”** This is deliberate, willful darkness. In such manner had the men of Judah and Jerusalem refused to come to the light when God was speaking to their consciences by His prophet. The inevitable result must be judicial darkness. They would be given up to the darkness they had chosen.

So will it be, in an even more dreadful sense, with highly favored Christendom after the Church has been caught away to be forever with the Lord. **“God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie [of the Antichrist]: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”** (II Thessalonians 2:11, 12).

By commandment of the Lord, our prophet addresses himself directly to the king and the queen as the responsible leaders - probably Jehoiakim and his consort. He calls upon them to humble themselves and sit down. Their warlike preparations could be of no possible avail. It was repentance that was needed, not arms and soldiers.

The captivity was decreed. Judah, as Israel before, should be borne away from their land. **“Them that come from the north”** (ver. 20) refers to the Babylonian army.

How touching and yet solemn the question put to the unfaithful king, **“Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?”** The king had not been to them an example of subjection to God, but rather of defiance to Him. So he is asked, **“What wilt thou say when He shall punish thee?”** As a travailing woman’s pains come suddenly, so should his sorrows take him; as indeed they did very shortly after (ver. 21). And if the question is asked **“Wherefore come these things upon me?”** the answer is, **“For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare”** (ver. 22).

Could they then make themselves pure in the sight of God? Far from it. It was just as impossible for them to do good who had become accustomed to do evil, as for the Ethiopian to become white - or the leopard to change his spots. How little do the modern apostles of the religion of culture enter into this! As no account of washing can alter the black skin of the negro, so no merely human effort to reform can effect a real change if there be not first a divine work in the soul.

**“Altogether unprofitable,”** they should be scattered as the worthless stubble is carried away by the wind of the wilderness. This was their due reward (**“the portion of thy measures”**), because they had forgotten the Lord and trusted in falsehood (vers. 25, 26).

Sin had made them as an utterly reprobate and loathsome adulteress, whose shame was to be openly manifested. Idolatry had been their ruin. **“Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem!”** he cries; but because God is gracious and long-suffering still, he entreats, **“Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?”**

Alas, alas, they were turning away in their folly from the only One who could cleanse them, and the black clouds of doom were fast gathering overhead.

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