

“IF YOU WILL RETURN TO ME” Says the Lord..

This Bible message is based on Jeremiah chapter 4

¹ "If you will return, O Israel, return to me," declares the LORD.

"If you put your detestable idols out of My sight and no longer go astray,

² and if in a truthful, just and righteous way you swear, 'As surely as the LORD lives,' then the nations will be blessed by Him and in Him they will glory."

³ This is what the LORD says..."

God is speaking to the nation of Israel through the prophet Jeremiah. A mighty servant of God. For more than 40 years he faithfully proclaimed God's judgment to Judah while enduring opposition, beatings and imprisonment. Jeremiah began his ministry at the age of 20 under the good King Josiah with whom he enjoyed a good relationship. After Josiah's death opposition to the prophet increased. King Jehoiakim destroyed all his writings which the prophet later rewrote. Later King Zedekiah allowed Jeremiah to be imprisoned.

When the forces of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon took Jerusalem in the 585 BC Jeremiah was freed and given the choice of going to Babylon or remaining in Jerusalem. He chose to remain in Jerusalem but was later taken to Egypt by the Jews who escaped the forces of Babylon. In Egypt he preached a few more years and apparently there he died. He was commanded by God to deliver a strong message of judgment. He faced a cruel and crushing opposition but he remained faithful to proclaim God's Word.

Jeremiah is proclaiming warnings against **sin and judgment**. But he also shares a message of **hope and restoration**. In Verse 2 God promised blessings to the nation if they would repent from their sins and return to trust in Him. Let us take a look as to what the people were doing that was offending God and causing judgment on His people.

1. They were worshipping and praying to detestable idols. They had built altars on high places and made idols of gold, silver, wood and stone. God has strictly forbidden the people to make and worship idols who had no eyes to see and had no ears to hear. The people of God were living among heathen tribes and had copied their form of worship idols.

An idol is anything that takes the place of God. Modern idols that people are busy with leaving no time to worship God are:

The love of money and working day and night to make more money

Hobbies which take the place of worshipping God

Spending hours with equipment such as cars, motorcycles, sports equipment, sound systems

Watching television for many hours instead of worshipping God.

Giving priority to selfish ambitions

2. The people had done evil and perverted their ways and behavior. They were involved in sex sins of prostitution and adultery and had no shame.
3. They were pretending to follow the Lord and be believers but their heart was far away from God.
4. They were backsliding, gone astray and have forgotten to follow God's ways.
5. They rebelled against their God and willfully disobeyed His commands
6. The people did not respond to correction.
7. They were skilled in doing evil.
8. They have been utterly unfaithful to the Lord.
9. From the least to the greatest they were all greedy for gain,
10. The prophets have prophesied lies, rule by their own authority and the people love it that way.

God is telling His people what they must do in order to be forgiven and enjoy His blessings once again.

1. They must return to God and follow His ways. God's ways are clearly written in His Word.
2. They must circumcise their hearts. The meaning is figurative and has the idea of purifying and separating from sin.
3. They must wash the evil from their hearts and be saved. 1 John 1:9, The Blood of Jesus Christ purified us from all sin.
4. They must be sorry for their sins and repent
5. They must inform all the people warning the people of God's judgment on sin.

What happens if the people do not listen to man of God?

1. God's wrath will break out and burn like fire (verse 4)
2. God will send a destroyer and lay waste your land and your life will be lie in ruins. (verse 7)
3. God will send a scorching wind to bring disaster (verse 11)
4. God will bring disaster after disaster (verse 20)
5. God will cause pain, agony and anguish (verse 19)
6. God will turn His people over to murderers (verse 21)

What God will do when His people return to Him?

1. God will show His mercy

Jeremiah 3:12, "Go, proclaim this message toward the north: " `Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD, `I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful,' declares the LORD, `I will not be angry forever.

Jeremiah 3:13, "Only acknowledge your guilt-- you have rebelled against the LORD your God,

2. God will cure of backsliding

Jeremiah 3:22, "Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding."

3. Yes, we will come to you, for you are the LORD our God.

"If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14