

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

This chapter begins with foretelling a drought that should greatly distress the land of Judea, the effects of which are described in a most pathetic manner, Jeremiah 14:1-6. The prophet then, in the people's name, makes a confession of sins, and supplication for pardon, Jeremiah 14:7-9. But God declares his purpose to punish, forbidding Jeremiah to pray for the people, Jeremiah 14:10-12. False prophets are then complained of, and threatened with destruction, as are also those who attend to them, Jeremiah 14:13-16. The prophet, therefore, bewails their misery, Jeremiah 14:17, Jeremiah 14:18; and though he had just now been forbidden to intercede for them, yet, like a tender pastor, who could not cease to be concerned for their welfare, he falls on the happy expedient of introducing themselves as supplicating in their own name that mercy which he was not allowed to ask in his, Jeremiah 14:19-22.

Verse 1

The word - that came - concerning the dearth - This discourse is supposed to have been delivered, after the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Concerning the dearth. We have no historic record of any dearth that may fall in with the time of this prophecy, and perhaps it does not refer to any particular dearth: but this was a calamity to which Judea was very liable. They had ordinarily very dry summers, for scarcely any rain fell from April to the middle of October; and during much of this time, the rivers were generally either very low or entirely dry. They kept the rain of the winter in tanks and reservoirs; and if little fell in winter, a dearth was unavoidable. See an account of a dearth in the time of Elijah, 1 Kings 18:5, through which almost all the cattle were lost.

Verse 2

The gates thereof languish - The gates being the places of public resort, they are put here for the people.

They are black unto the ground - Covered from head to foot with a black garment, the emblem of sorrow and calamity.

Verse 3

Their nobles have sent their little ones - So general was this calamity, that the servants no longer attended to their lords, but every one was interested alone for himself; and the nobles of the land were obliged to employ their own children to scour the land, to see if any water could be found in the tanks or the pits. In the dearth in the time of Elijah, Ahab the king, and Obadiah his counselor, were obliged to traverse the land themselves, in order to find out water to keep their cattle alive. This and the three following verses give a lively but distressing picture of this dearth and its effects.

Verse 4

The ground is chapt - The cracks in the earth before the descent of the rains are in some places a cubit wide, and deep enough to receive the greater part of a human body.

Verse 6

Snuffed up the wind like dragons - תַּנִּים (tannim) here probably means the hippopotamus, who, after feeding under the water, is obliged to come to the surface in order to take in fresh draughts of air; or it may mean the wild asses.

Verse 7

O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us - We deeply acknowledge that we have sinned, and deserve nothing but death. Yet act for thy name's sake - work in our behalf, that we perish not.

Verse 8

O the hope of Israel - O thou who art the only object of the hope of this people.

The Savior thereof in time of trouble - Who hast never yet abandoned them that seek thee.

Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land - As one who has no interest in the prosperity and safety of the country.

And as a way-faring man - A traveler on his journey.

That turneth aside to tarry for a night? - Who stays the shortest time he can; and takes up his lodging in a tent

or caravanserai, for the dead of the night, that he may pursue his journey by break of day. Instead of dwelling among us, thou hast scarcely paid the most transient visit to thy land. O come once more, and dwell among us.

Verse 9

Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us - Thy ark, temple, and sacred rites, are all here; and thou thyself, who art every where present, art here also: but alas! thou dost not reveal thyself as the Father of mercies, who forgivest iniquity, transgression, and sin.

We are called by thy name; leave us not - Let us call thee our Father, and say thou to us, "Ye are my sons and daughters!" O leave us not!

Verse 10

Thus have they loved to wander - And the measure of your iniquity being now full, ye must be punished.

Verse 11

Pray not for this people - They are ripe for destruction, intercede not for them. O, how dreadful is the state of that people in reference to whom the Lord says to his ministers, Pray not for them; or, what amounts nearly to a prohibition, withholds from his ministers the spirit of prayer and intercession in behalf of the people!

Verse 13

Ah, Lord God! behold, the prophets say unto them - True, Lord, they are exceedingly wicked; but the false prophets have deceived them; this is some mitigation of their offense. This plea God does not admit; and why? the people believed them, without having any proof of their Divine mission.

Verse 14

The prophets prophesy lies - They say they have visions, but they have them by divination, and they are false. The people should know their character, and avoid them but they love to have it so, and will not be undeceived.

Verse 15

By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed - Jeremiah had told Jehoiakim that, if he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, he should be overthrown, and the land wasted by sword and famine: the false prophets said there shall be neither sword nor famine, but peace and prosperity. The king believed them, and withheld the tribute.

Nebuchadnezzar, being incensed, invaded and destroyed the land; and the false prophets fell in these calamities. See 2 Kings 25:3; Lamentations 2:11-19.

Verse 16

And the people - shall be cast out - They shall be destroyed, because they preferred their lying words to my truth, proclaimed by thee.

Verse 17

For the virgin daughter of my people is broken - First, the land was sadly distressed by Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt. Secondly, it was laid under a heavy tribute by Nebuchadnezzar. And, thirdly, it was nearly desolated by a famine afterwards. In a few years all these calamities fell upon them; these might be well called a great breach, a very grievous blow.

Verse 18

If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword - Every place presents frightful spectacles; the wounded, the dying, the starving, and the slain; none to bury the dead, none to commiserate the dying, none to bring either relief or consolation. Even the prophets and the priests are obliged to leave the cities, and wander about in unfrequented and unknown places, seeking for the necessaries of life. Dr. Blayney thinks that the going about of the prophets and priests of the land, is to be understood thus: - "They went trafficking about with their false doctrines and lying predictions, as peddlers do with their wares, seeking their own gain." I think the other sense preferable.

Verse 19

We looked for peace - We expected prosperity when Josiah purged the land of idolatry.

And there is no good - For we have relapsed into our former ways.

Verse 20

We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness - This the prophet did in behalf of the people; but, alas! they did not join him.

Verse 21

Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory - The temple. Let not this sacred place be profaned by impious and sacrilegious hands.

Break not thy covenant - See Exodus 24:7, Exodus 24:8; Exodus 19:5. They had already broken the covenant, and they wish God to fulfill his part. They ceased to be his people, for they abandoned themselves to idolatry; and yet they wished Jehovah to be their Lord; to defend, support, and fill them with all good things! But when the conditions of a covenant are broken by one of the contracting parties, the other party is not bound; and the covenant is necessarily annulled.

Verse 22

Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles - Probably the dearth was now coming, as there had been a long want of rain. It was the prerogative of the true God to give rain and send showers at the prayers of his people.

Therefore we will wait upon thee - If thou do not undertake for us, we must be utterly ruined.