

Sunday, March 3, 2012

Jeremiah the Prophet

Spiritual Characteristics of his Book and ministry (3)

We will resume our discussion about the elements of the divine message which Jeremiah was faithful in delivering to the people:

Fourth, Guidance

The message of God on the mouth of Jeremiah carried many important spiritual guiding points:

1. Repentance is a gain: *“If you will return, O Israel,’ says the Lord, “Return to Me; Then you shall not be moved.”* (Jeremiah 4:1)
2. Sin is a loss: *“Your sins have withheld good from you...”* (Jeremiah 5:25), *“Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord; So what wisdom do they have?”* (Jeremiah 8:9)
3. True gain lies in understanding the will of God and His counsel: *“Who is the wise man who may understand this?... Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches. But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth...”* (Jeremiah 9:12-24).
4. The key to reform is to go back to the roots: *“Thus says the Lord: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls...”* (Jeremiah 6:16).
5. Transformation should start from within: *“Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts...”* (Jeremiah 4:4), *“O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?”* (Jeremiah 4:14), *“Though you clothe yourself with crimson, though you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold, though you enlarge your eyes with paint, in vain you will make yourself fair...”* (Jeremiah 4:30), *“They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ When there is no peace.”* (Jeremiah 6:14), *“Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely... And then come and stand before Me in this house...Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes?”* (Jeremiah 7:8-11), *“All these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.”* (Jeremiah 9:26).
6. There has to be a practical transformation: *“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words, saying, ‘The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.’ “For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place... Then I will cause you to dwell in this place...”* (Jeremiah 7:3-7).

Fifth, Clarifying facts:

In the book of Jeremiah, God clarified some important facts which we need to always place them in our hearts, among these facts:

1. God’s mercy is so great: *“If a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man’s, may he return to her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; Yet return to Me,” says the Lord.”* (Jeremiah 3:1), *“Return, backsliding Israel, says the Lord ‘I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful.”* (Jeremiah 3:12), *“Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places. If you can find a man, If there is anyone who executes judgment, Who seeks the truth, And I will pardon her.”* (Jeremiah 5:1).
2. God doesn’t tolerate sin: *“Take away the foreskins of your hearts... Lest My fury come forth like fire and burn so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.”* (Jeremiah 4:4).
3. There is no god Like God: *“Inasmuch as there is none like You, O Lord (You are great, and Your name is great in might), Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? ... There is none like You.”* (Jeremiah 10:6-7), *“Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?”* (Jeremiah 32:27).
4. God is the Pantocrator and governor of our lives: *“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”* (Jeremiah 10:23).

God willing, we will conclude this series next week.

Fr. Yohanna Naseef

fryohanna@hotmail.com

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL