

Fact Sheet for **“Guard Your Heart”**
Jeremiah 11-12

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Today we will cover God's 4th message to Judah in Jeremiah 11-12. You already have a good idea of why he is called “The Weeping Prophet.” But I have found that, even in the ugliness of Judah's sin and their promised punishment, there are many bright thoughts from this book that can encourage us in our daily walk with Christ.

I want to begin with a quote from one of David's psalms, and end with a quote from another of his psalms (Psalm 26:2). This heart attitude defined David, and is why God described him with the words “a man after my heart” (Acts 13:22). Keep that thought from Psalm 26 in mind as we dive into this message to Judah.

Judah had severely violated the Mosaic Covenant (11:1-7). This was the covenant God made with them when He brought them out of Egypt... that foreign nation He described as “the iron furnace” (11:4).

ESV Jeremiah 11:3 You shall say to them, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant

The words of this verse are an absolutely clear reference to something Israel was to do when they first entered the Promised Land, at Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:11-26). Half of Israel was to stand on Mt. Gerizim and shout the blessings of obeying the Mosaic Covenant. The other half were to stand on Mt. Ebal and shout back across the valley the curses of disobeying the covenant.

ESV Jeremiah 11:6 ¶ And the LORD said to me, "Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: Hear the words of this covenant and do them."

The blessings of obedience are found in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. The curses for disobedience are found in Deuteronomy 28:15-68. In Jeremiah's day Judah had already experienced many of these curses. Now they were going to experience the worst of these curses, falling to a foreign invader and being removed from the land of Israel. The stage was set. Their punishment was assured. The curtain just had not gone up yet. (Read Jeremiah 11:11.)

God even gave Jeremiah the interesting command not to pray for them (Jeremiah 11:14).

Some people in Judah, who heard Jeremiah, then came up with an interesting solution. Jeremiah was prophesying destruction. But instead of repenting they decided to kill the messenger (11:18-23). But who were these people? They were from Anathoth. Do you remember an earlier reference to Anathoth?

ESV Jeremiah 1:1 ¶ The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin,

These were people from Jeremiah's hometown! They were likely even fellow priests. God's word to those people was that not one of them or their children would be left (11:21-23).

And it wasn't just the crowds in Jeremiah's hometown that were against him. His father and brothers were against him too (Jeremiah 12:6). Can you imagine how this weighed on Jeremiah?

Jeremiah fell back on what he knew to be true. God tests each person's heart. And Jeremiah knew that he was right with the Lord on that level.

ESV Jeremiah 11:20a But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind...

ESV Jeremiah 12:3a But you, O LORD, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you.

These are the bright spots in this two chapter message to Judah that I find very encouraging. These two statements encourage me to have the fire to test well in God's sight.

Even so Jeremiah raised a complaint to God... "Why does the way of the wicked prosper?" (Jeremiah 12:1). The people of Judah even said, "The Lord doesn't see what's ahead for us!" (Jeremiah 12:4b NLT) What arrogance! Psalm 73:11 also deals with this same thought of why the wicked seem to do so well. And like Jeremiah the psalmist remarked about something the arrogant were saying. In Psalm 94:7 those who are wicked say something similar. But of course God knows not only the past, but also both the present and the future. Here is how the Lord begins His reply to Jeremiah.

NLT Jeremiah 12:5 "If racing against mere men makes you tired, how will you race against horses? If you stumble and fall on open ground, what will you do in the thickets near the Jordan?"

Buck up Jeremiah! Grow a spine! Then in 12:7-13 God goes on to promise Judah's destruction. The last verses of Jeremiah 12 contain an interesting prophecy.

NLT Jeremiah 12:14-17 ¶ Now this is what the LORD says: "I will uproot from their land all the evil nations reaching out for the possession I gave my people Israel. And I will uproot Judah from among them. ¹⁵ But afterward I will return and have compassion on all of them. I will bring them home to their own lands again, each nation to its own possession. ¹⁶ And if these nations truly learn the ways of my people, and if they learn to swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the LORD lives' (just as they taught my people to swear by the name of Baal), then they will be given a place among my people. ¹⁷ But any nation who refuses to obey me will be uprooted and destroyed. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

That was a promise these nations did not take up.

I said I would end with quote from another of David's psalms. You may recognize this from a song that we sing (Psalm 139:23-24).

ESV Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

You find this thought both in David's psalms and in this 4th message in the book of Jeremiah. That thought calls each of us to ask these questions. "How do I test before God? Are my words and actions in line? Do my thoughts and desires please Him?" Let these words from the book of Jeremiah fire you to guard your heart before God.