

Jeremiah

Chapter 14

Famine, Sword, and Pestilence

The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought: 2 “Judah mourns, and her gates languish; her people lament on the ground, and the cry of Jerusalem goes up. 3 Her nobles send their servants for water; they come to the cisterns; they find no water; they return with their vessels empty; they are ashamed and confounded and cover their heads. 4 Because of the ground that is dismayed, since there is no rain on the land, the farmers are ashamed; they cover their heads. 5 Even the doe in the field forsakes her newborn fawn because there is no grass. 6 The wild donkeys stand on the bare heights; they pant for air like jackals; their eyes fail because there is no vegetation. 7 “Though our iniquities testify against us, act, O LORD, for your name's sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against you. 8 O you hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble, why should you be like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night? 9 Why should you be like a man confused, like a mighty warrior who cannot save? Yet you, O LORD, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name; do not leave us.” 10 Thus says the LORD concerning this people: “They have loved to wander thus; they have not restrained their feet; therefore the LORD does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins.” 11 The LORD said to me: “Do not pray for the welfare of this people. 12 Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.”

14:1–15:21 Messages delivered by Jeremiah during an especially severe drought, the date of which is unknown. (CSB)

14:1–15:9 After an initial vivid description of the drought (14:2–6), Jeremiah alternately prays (14:7–9, 13, 19–22) and God responds (14:10–12, 14–18; 15:1–9). (CSB)

14:1 drought. See 17:8. Unlike that in 3:3; 12:4, the suffering is increased because an enemy has invaded the land (see v. 18). Drought was one of the curses threatened (see 23:10) for disobedience to the covenant (see Lev 26:19–20; Dt 28:22–24). (CSB)

The various periods of drought which Jehovah sent in order to call His people to repentance, this form of punishment being expressly threatened in the curses which the Lord attached to His proclamation of the Law. Cp. Lev. 26, 19, 20; Deut. 11, 17; 28, 23. (Kretzmann)

Hebrew “droughts.” The plural may indicate its severity and duration. Apparently it occurred within the memory of Jeremiah’s contemporaries. (TLSB)

14:2 Judah mourns – The entire nation is being plunged in grief. (Kretzmann)

gates. Figurative expression for the inhabitants of the walled cities. (TLSB)

The people who usually assembled in this public meeting-place being in trouble. (Kretzmann)

cry of Jerusalem goes up – As the people give expression to their bitterness of heart. (Kretzmann)

14:3 nobles. A drought is no respecter of class distinctions. (CSB)

cisterns – Cisterns for collecting rain-water. (Kretzmann)

vessels empty – The last drops of the precious fluid having disappeared. (Kretzmann)

cover their heads. In mourning (see v. 4; 2Sa 15:30; cf. 2Sa 19:4). (CSB)

Expression of grief. (TLSB)

14:4 *ground that is dismayed* – Literally, "dismayed," joining the people of Judah in their attitude of horror. (Kretzmann)

no rain on the land. See 1Ki 17:7. Unlike Egypt, where the mighty Nile waters the ground, Palestine depends on adequate rainfall. (CSB)

14:5 *the due* – Abandoning her offspring, although noted for her affection toward her young. (Kretzmann)

14:6 *pant*. † The Hebrew underlying this word is translated "sniffing the wind" in 2:24. The meaning may be that the wild donkeys stand on the hilltops, sniffing the air, hoping to detect the scent of water. (CSB)

14:7–10 The chastened people profess sorrow for their sins. Yet the Lord knows the true condition of their hearts and remembers their wanton disobedience. Failing to heed His call to sincere repentance, they should expect no more than His punishment. Cf 2:27. (TLSB)

14:7–9 The prophet prays on behalf of the people (see v. 11). (CSB)

14:7 *iniquities testify* – Serving as a most serious obstacle to the assistance and salvation of the Lord. (CSB)

O LORD – So the prophet now makes his appeal for his countrymen. (Kretzmann)

for the your name's sake. Relieving the distress of the terrible drought in order to bring honor upon Himself. (Kretzmann)

backsliding. Thus preventing His interposing in their behalf so far as they were concerned. (Kretzmann)

sinned against you – They must throw themselves entirely upon His mercy. (Kretzmann)

14:8 *O Hope of Israel*. He who was properly the One in whom all true children of Israel trusted, since His covenant with them stood secure. (Kretzmann)

its savior – As He had so often proved Himself. (Kretzmann)

stranger...for a night – Like one who has no interest in its welfare, pitching his tent for only a very short period of time and feeling no sympathy for the inhabitants. Surely the Lord and Owner of Israel would not act in this manner!

14:9 *like a man confused* – As one taken by surprise and therefore unable to lift His hand, stunned by a sudden calamity. (Kretzmann)

mighty warrior...cannot save – Having become weak and helpless in an unexpected extremity. (Kretzmann)

are in the midst – Namely, in His Sanctuary, which He had established at Jerusalem. (Kretzmann)

called by your name. We belong to you, our ever-present. (CSB)

do not leave us – Thus Jeremiah turned to the God who had revealed Himself as the God of salvation, pleading in behalf of a people that had become guilty of rebellion against their one Source of help. (Kretzmann)

14:10–12 The Lord responds. (CSB)

14:10 *wander.* After false gods. (CSB)

Stray from the ways of the Lord. (TLSB)

They are like the wild beasts whose behavior had been described in the previous section. (Kretzmann)

the LORD does not ... their iniquity.† See Hos 8:13 (cf. Hos 9:9). (CSB)

He confirms them in their idolatrous practices. (Kretzmann)

14:10-13 The Lord instructs Jeremiah not to intercede for his people. Yet Jeremiah continues to wrestle with God, as Abraham once did on behalf of doomed Sodom (Gn 18:22-33). He dares to approach the divine judge again, with a new argument. He pleads for leniency for the masses because they have been misled by false prophets (13). However, the people have no excuse for rejecting the doctrines the Lord has persistently taught them (cf 7:13); 25:3; 35:14). (TLSB)

14:11 *Do not pray.* As a true prophet would (see 27:18; Ex 32:31–32; 1Sa 12:23). See 11:14; 14:11. There is virtually no hope for them. On various occasions, however, Jeremiah prayed for his countrymen (see, e.g., 18:20). (CSB)

14:12 *not accept them.* See v. 10. Sacrifice is to no avail when unaccompanied by repentance (see note on 6:20). (CSB)

Their service was thoroughly hypocritical. (Kretzmann)

sword, famine and pestilence. Curses for violating God's covenant (see Lev 26:25–26); the first occurrence of this triad, which occurs 15 times in Jeremiah. (CSB)

14:1–12 Jeremiah describes a drought and its effect on the land and its inhabitants. As a result of their sins, the people do not deserve God's help, but in his prayer for aid, Jeremiah appeals to God's faithfulness (v 13). Today, those who insist on a life of rebellion and self-will must eventually face God's judgment against them. As you pray for others, take heart that the Lord does not delight in destroying sinners but works continually to turn them to Him for salvation in Jesus Christ. • Grant us persistence in faith and prayer, O Lord. Upon the drought of our soul, pour out Your most gracious favor and joy, through Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

Lying Prophets

13 Then I said: “Ah, Lord GOD, behold, the prophets say to them, ‘You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.’” **14** And the LORD said to me: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. **15** Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name although I did not send them, and who say, ‘Sword and famine shall not come upon this land’: By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed. **16** And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword, with none to bury them—they, their wives, their sons, and their daughters. For I will pour out their evil upon them. **17** “You shall say to them this word: Let my eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease, for the virgin daughter of my people is shattered with a great wound, with a very grievous blow. **18** If I go out into the field, behold, those pierced by the sword! And if I enter the city, behold, the diseases of famine! For both prophet and priest ply their trade through the land and have no knowledge.” **19** Have you utterly rejected Judah? Does your soul loathe Zion? Why have you struck us down so that there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror. **20** We acknowledge our wickedness, O LORD, and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against you. **21** Do not spurn us, for your name's sake; do not dishonor your glorious throne; remember and do not break your covenant with us. **22** Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are you not he, O LORD our God? We set our hope on you, for you do all these things.

14:13 Jeremiah reminds the Lord of what the false prophets are saying. (CSB)

assured peace. Jeremiah’s elaboration of the false prophets’ “Peace, peace” (see 6:14; 8:11). (CSB)

Literally, "peace of truth or faithfulness," that is, a sure and lasting peace. By such vain promises the false prophets tried to maintain their leadership among the people and to lead them astray. (CSB)

14:14–18 The Lord responds. (CSB)

14:14 *in my name.* See Dt 18:20, 22. (CSB)

Insisting that they were proclaiming their messages by authority of Jehovah. (Kretzmann)

deceit of their own minds. Literally, "nothingness," to set forth the utter emptiness of their message, **and the deceit of their heart**, evil plans which they had laid in order to work mischief. (Kretzmann)

14:15 *I did not send* – Who were acting entirely without authority in bringing people a message of their own invention. (Kretzmann)

Those prophets shall be consumed. Perishing by the very punishments whose existence they had denied. (Kretzmann)

14:16 *none to bury them.* To remain unburied was an unspeakable abomination in ancient times. (CSB)

wives ... sons ... daughters. All would perish, because all had worshiped false gods. (CSB)

14:17 *my eyes run down with tears.* There was nothing but weeping being left for the prophet. (Kretzmann)

virgin daughter. Used of Jerusalem in Isa 37:22. (CSB)

God promised to keep His chosen people inviolate for His holy purposes, but they were unfaithful. (TLSB)

14:18 No matter where he turns, the prophet's eyes encounter the ravages of war. The destruction having rendered the country strange in their eyes, as familiar as they were formerly with every feature of the landscape on account of their frequent journeys. Thus had the Lord fulfilled the words of His threats and rebukes upon Judah. (Kretzmann)

The prophets and priests should have instructed the people, led them to repentance, and “healed” them of their sin. (TLSB)

14:19–22 The prophet prays on behalf of the people. (CSB)

Jeremiah hears the humbled people confess their guilt, reject false gods, plead for healing, and affirm their hope in the true God, though this did not come about until after the ruin of the nation. (TLSB)

14:19 *rejected Judah* – The prophet sorrowfully asks Jehovah. (Kretzmann)

loathe Zion – Feeling nothing but disgust for her. (Kretzmann)

struck us down – Terror beset them on every hand, and there was no respite in sight. (Kretzmann)

14:20 *guilt of our fathers*. This guilt was also found in the children also. (Kretzmann)

sinned against you – It is a confession in the name of those who were still Israelites in truth, since He, in the event of their repenting, had promised them forgiveness. (Kretzmann)

14:21 *your glorious throne*. The Jerusalem temple. (CSB)

Remember... your covenant ... do not break it. Jeremiah pleads the ancient promise of God in Lev 26:44–45. (CSB)

Upholding His promise made to the patriarchs. The prophet finally urges, as a consideration which ought to influence Jehovah, the fact that He alone is able to help in this emergency. (Kretzmann)

14:22 *are you not he*. Only the Lord (not Baal) can send the showers to end the drought (see v. 1). (CSB)

God, as the only Creator, the one true God, is the only One who can dispense rain and give showers as He sees best. (Kretzmann)

our hope on you. It is this understanding which is required of all men who would stand in the proper relation to Jehovah, the one God of mercy. (Kretzmann)

14:13–22 Jeremiah expresses his frustration over false prophets who tell the people that peace lies ahead, though Jeremiah has warned them that destruction is coming. People need to know they are sinners, condemned by God's Law. Then, crushed by the Law, the repentant sinner is ready for the Gospel, the healing Word of God that grants abiding peace. • Lead us to share Your Word faithfully, O Lord, and bear witness to Your grace in Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)