

Judah After Israel's Fall (725-585 BCE)

Effect of Jeremiah's Preaching

Readings: *2 Kings 22:3-20; 23:1-24, 28; 2 Chronicles 34:8-33; 35:1-19, 26-27*

Reflections:

- Did Jeremiah's preaching impact Josiah? Does this brief spiritual revival show that maybe there is hope for the nation. Time will prove that Israel will not sustain a true repentance but will once again turn back and be taken into captivity. Yet still, this season of recommitment does reveal what God was looking for from the nation.
- Josiah commands for the temple to be repaired and what is found but a copy of the book of the Law. You know things are bad in the nation when the book of the Law has actually been lost within the temple and no one knows where it is. It is like a pastor of the church losing his Bible and simply deciding to go on without one. Then decades later finds it and say, "Oh, yah. This is a Bible! I remember now. I used to read this thing." The Law is read to Josiah and he is convicted. He tears his robes in grief and declares "...our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord!"
- Josiah calls for the prophetess Huldah and her words are still very harsh. The nation will be judged but because Josiah's "heart was responsive" and he humbled himself before God, he is promised that he will not see the coming disaster but will die in peace. Talk about encouraging.
- Josiah doesn't stop there but completely cleans house and has all the people come together to listen to the Law and to be challenged with corporate repentance. The long list of things that were done to clean house again reminds us of how bad this all is. Worship to stars, sun and moon. Worship to Baal (male sexual god) and Asherah (female sexual god). Male shrine prostitutes. Child sacrifice in Ben Hinnom (Gehenna). Altars to pagan gods in the temple. Mediums and spiritists that would speak to the dead and to unclean spirits. Altars of worship were everywhere. When you clean house you find out how bad everything really is!
- Josiah's judgment takes on it's own cruelty as the priests to the foreign gods are killed and their bodies are burned on the altars where they would kill children. What a horrible era they lived in.

- Under Josiah, the nation then celebrates Passover and restores the musical worship of the temple. The reader no doubt is stirred to some measure of hope. Will this mean the nation finally gets it? Have they finally learned their lesson? No, unfortunately this is not the case. In the ongoing story of what doesn't work, this is simply a reminder that the human heart can do the right things for short periods of times, sort of the "New Year's" commitment that lasts for a little while. But before long, the old habits return and all of the good intentions, bold declarations and reordering of one's outer world falls apart and we return to the same old ways that are ruining our lives. It is great to see an alcoholic get sober. It is great to see a drug addict get clean. The question is, "Will it last?" The story of Israel reminds us with the simple truth, "Only if your heart is changed from the inside out." Praise God for the coming of Jesus and his Spirit that has the power to change our hearts and enables us to serve him with humility and faithfulness, even as he is faithful to us!