
Day 222 - August 10

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

The Great Deportation

The Reign of Zedekiah

Readings: 2 Kings 24:6-20; 2 Chronicles 36:8-12; Jeremiah 22:24-30; 37:1-2; 57:1-3; Daniel 1:1-2

Reflections:

- Jehoiachin, the eighteen year old son of Jehoikim, comes to power upon his father's death but only reigns for three months. Jehoikim is apparently no better than his father and so God continues to hold Israel accountable for their rebellion. Although many in the nation have already been taken as captives to Babylonia, this is the largest one to occur. As we will see, a prophet named Ezekiel will be taken in this round of deportation and will soon speak out on behalf of God.
- Nebuchnezzar comes himself to oversee this deportation. The temple is completely looted of all of its valued items and they are all taken to Babylonia to be placed in the temple of their god. Seven thousand of Israel's army as well as their best craftsmen are taken as well as the royal family. Only the poor now remain in the land. It is interesting that as the nation is judged that only the poor, the ones who were victimized, are left to enjoy the Promised Land. Once again we see that in God's judgment, it is those who are evil who are removed while those who are considered righteous in God's eyes remain.
- The puppet king that Nebuchnezzar puts in place is a son of Josiah, Mattaniah who is called Zedekiah. Although he reigns for eleven years he is just as evil. In fact, under his reign the temple will be destroyed as Jerusalem falls. Zedekiah is only twenty-one when he comes into leadership.
- Zedekiah's character is described this way: "stiff-necked, hardened his heart, and would not turn to the Lord." They all underscore that willful sin is what ultimately cuts off our relationship with God. As Zedekiah rebels against God, the priests that remain follow suite. Another important lesson. Evil leaders have a way of drawing other people in. We must be careful who is influencing and leading us.
- This reading ends with a telling story of the condition of Israel: "The Lord...sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his

prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.” “Neither he nor his attendants nor the people of the land paid any attention to the words the Lord had spoken...” “It was because of the Lord’s anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence.” These verses from Chronicles, Jeremiah and Kings are strong words of warning: Beware how you treat what the Lord says. If God speaks, be sure to take it very seriously. God is slow to anger but he will get angry. They had the Temple, the Torah, the territory, the traditions, the teaching of the prophets, and yet their hearts could not remain true to God. None of the externals mattered. Another powerful reminder: the story of Israel is the story of what doesn’t work!