
Day 226 - August 14

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

Jeremiah's Prophecies Under Zedekiah

Readings: Jeremiah 50:41-46; 51:1-64; 49:34-39; 34:8-22

Reflections:

- The opening prophecy against Babylon in this section is another example of a promise by God that would have been unfathomable to the listener. Would God really do something so huge, so unimaginable to Babylon, the super power of that region? Could God really “chase Babylon from its land in an instant”? These prophecies would have seemed so impossible to the listener that many would have said, “I simply can’t believe it!” It is easy to see why Jeremiah said that when this was fulfilled that “the earth will tremble.”
- “The spirit of a destroyer” is a phrase that suggests that behind this devastating judgment is a spiritual force. Was this God using demonic forces to destroy those loyal to them? Was this an angel of death as we have seen in the past? At this point all we know is that the natural forces are being moved by spiritual realities.
- One of the interesting questions is around the healing of Babylon. It as if Jeremiah is wondering if it is possible for Babylon suffering this judgment could be healed and restored. It seems that he receives a direct answer from God that says, “no, in this case, Babylon can not be healed. Have all those in captivity simply escape and flee Babylon.” We see evidence again of a basic starting point of enemy love from one of God’s leaders. Yet, God in this case declares, no just flee. There is no hope for Babylon. This reminds us that enemy love is something we are called to as a reflection of God’s character. Yet, God will ultimately judge his enemies and he alone can decide that.
- God reminds his people of his ultimate power as he announces the severity of his judgment: “He made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.” In other words, God can do anything he likes. If you have a promise by God that seems impossible, remember God can do anything he likes. His power is beyond our imagination. What seems impossible to us is nothing to him. When contrasted to idols, you can see why this prophecy declares that those who trust in idols are “senseless and without knowledge.”
- Throughout these continued prophecies, God intersperses encouragement to Israel: “See, I will defend your cause...” “Do not lose heart or be afraid when rumors are heard in the

land..." "Remember the Lord in a distant land, and think on Jerusalem." God wants to encourage his people as they are awaiting his promises to be fulfilled to be assured of his loyalty, for them to ignore what other people say and just listen to him, and to keep their spiritual focus on him and the promise he has given them. For his followers today who are hanging on to promises, these are good reminders.

- Jeremiah tells the messenger Seraiah that after he reads these prophecies to follow it up with a prophetic demonstration or mime: he is to tie the scroll to a stone and sink it in the Euphrates. God not only speaks with words and wonders but also through signs. God uses these pictures to help reinforce his truth with lasting images that stick in the minds of his people. God is the master communicator and teacher.
- The prophecy against Elam, a province that is a part of modern Iran and at this point is likely under the control of Babylon, shows us again the mixture of judgment and mercy. Although they will suffer for their part in Babylonian oppression, they will one day be restored.
- These collections of prophecies ends with the account of Israel's failure to keep covenant as it relates to taking fellow Israelites as slaves. Although at first it appears that Zedekiah was going to do the right thing and declare freedom for Israelites that were slaves, the people do not keep this commitment and again take their fellow country men and women as slaves. This particular rejection of covenant again reveals how the people are just not getting God's heart. They were chosen from all the people in the world by God because they were poor, helpless slaves. He wanted them to remember their heritage so that they would be continually concerned to help the oppressed and bring justice to the poor. Here even as they are held as slaves and are completely dominated by an evil oppressor as their forefathers and mothers were in Egypt, they are going out and adding to the oppression by enslaving their own people. Once again we are left shocked and dismayed at how these people are so blind to God's heart. Once again we are reminded that unless the human heart is changed from the inside out, we simply have no hope. The story of "what doesn't work" adds yet another account that points to the need of a rescuer to come to the planet that brings with him the power to change our hearts.