
Day 241 - August 29

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

Jeremiah's Lamentations

Readings: *Lamentations 1:1-2:22*

Reflections:

- Most scholars believe that Jeremiah was the writer of Lamentations. Instead of gloating, the weeping prophet mourns the tragedy that has fallen on his people. He identifies with their sin, judgment and suffering. He does not stand over them but mourns with them. He displays the heart of a true servant leader who deeply loves his people.
- The Lamentations accurately outline all of the judgment that has fallen on Jerusalem: 1) the people taken into captivity; 2) key leaders put to death; 3) the walls of Jerusalem broken down; 4) the temple destroyed; 5) the treasures taken away; 6) the leaders of Jerusalem proven to be false; and 7) the great suffering of the people. Again we see that everything that Israel had trusted in, rather than trusting in God, had been completely swept away.
- Jeremiah's prayer for mercy reveals how terrible it had become. This day will be repeated in 70 CE when Jerusalem is again destroyed in this exact same way by the Roman Empire. The words are terrifying: "Look, O Lord, and consider: Whom have you treated like this? Should women eat their offspring, the children they have cared for? Should Priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? Young and old alike together in the dust of the streets, my young men and maidens have fallen by the sword. In the day of the Lord's anger no one has escaped or survived; those I cared for and reared my enemy has destroyed." The judgment of God is something to be feared. How great is his mercy that we should be spared his wrath and receive such great mercy in Christ!
- There is one other thing we should notice: God is in control of this unfolding drama. Jeremiah writes: "The Lord has done what he planned: he has fulfilled his word, which he decreed long ago." The unfolding drama of Israel is something God understands full well. He was very clear with them when they received the Law that they would turn away from him. God is clearly the author of this drama, even though the players in this story are still fulfilling their roles out of their own free will. This reminds us again that this meta-narrative is revealing something about God that we would never know otherwise. He is showing us his great holiness and mercy. He is revealing what really matters: humility and trust that is grounded in true relationship. He is revealing that what matters is the heart and the heart can not be changed from the outside in. Only as God breathes into the dust of our lives are

we changed into his children. In these sad words of Jeremiah's lament, we see that God is clearly the author of history and as this sad chapter begins to come to a close, we are not left without hope. There is still the promise: Messiah will come!