
Day 211 - July 30

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

Jeremiah Rebukes an Unfaithful Nation

Readings: *Jeremiah 13:1-27; 14:1-22; 15:1-9*

Reflections:

- The object lesson of the linen belt fits well within God's approach to communication. Jesus often used practical object lessons to help people grasp spiritual truth in very concrete ways. In this case, the experiment and lesson was very simple and obvious. Sometimes in our relationship with God we need to slow down and take time to reflect on things that are happening in our lives if we are to see God's object lessons.
- The basic leadership positions are again outlined, king, priest and prophet, in Jeremiah 13:12-14. Although Josiah is trying to bring about reform, the larger leadership community is still sitting squarely under God's judgment.
- Key verse: "But if you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the Lord's flock will be taken into captivity." What a powerful parallel we will see with Jesus as he weeps over Jerusalem. We often don't contemplate God weeping for our sin and brokenness as we sit under judgment. And what ultimately breaks God's heart is our pride – our self-centered, stubborn, independent hearts that keep causing us to stay stuck in our cycles of destructive behavior and relationships.
- "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" This rhetorical question points to the hopeless condition of Israel. Yet, as we will see, lasting change can happen. Not when we try to change our appearance or our externals, but when we seek to have our hearts changed by the power of God.
- Jeremiah 14 begins by announcing a coming drought. He outlines the severity of it and how people will cry out to God in their distress. The word of God to Jeremiah is frightful though: "Do not pray for the well-being of this people. Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer [worship] I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with the sword, famine and plague." Wow! We see that God has judged this generation of Israel and has determined that all that remains is judgment. He specifically commands Jeremiah not to try to intercede for the people, even when it looks like externally they are doing all the right things. Only God knows the heart, and so

we must be careful not to judge by externals – whether the externals look good or look evil.

- The warning of false prophets needs to be carefully considered. It is possible for people to be deceived by their own imaginations. This should not make us afraid of listening to God. In this case, the evidence could not be made any clearer. In the New Testament, we will see that those that share what they believe God has said should have lives that are backed up with all the fruit of the Holy Spirit and be witnesses too by God working through them. God will affirm all those who are truly speaking on his behalf.
- The people again cry out to God but what does God say? “Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to these people.” This reminds us again that when God makes a final decision, it is final. God then sends four kinds of destroyers. The first is human (the sword) the others are natural (dogs, birds and beasts). God will use both natural forces as well as human forces to execute his judgment.
- The visions of judgment are terrifying. If these accounts awaken any compassion for those who would suffer such ends, should we not be passionately moved to do all we can to rescue as many as possible? May these ancient texts motivate us to see the incredible gift of God’s grace to us and all people in Jesus Christ!