

Judah After Israel's Fall (725-585 BCE) *Jehoiakim's Last Years*

Readings: *2 Kings 24:1-6; Jeremiah 48:1-47; 49:1-33; 22:18-23*

Reflections:

- Clearly Jehoiakim is not the sharpest tool in the shed. After intentionally burning God's word, he then rebels against the greatest power in the region. Now, Babylonia doesn't respond to crush him, maybe because he is so small that it is more like a troublesome fly than a true threat. In any case we see a frightening statement against Jehoiakim: "For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord was not willing to forgive." This is an important reminder. God will not always forgive. There is an end to his patience and only he knows when that end is reached.
- In the judgment against Moab, we read another frightful statement: "A curse on him who is lax in doing the Lord's work! A curse on him who keeps his sword from bloodshed!" As judgment is delivered against an evil nation, it is the will of God that they die. The images throughout this section are completely horrifying! Now, these same enemies will again receive mercy as they have in the past. "Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab in days to come." (Jeremiah 48:47)
- We must remember that Ruth was a Moabite and through her lineage came King David and ultimately the Messiah. But in this generation, this nation who practiced human and child sacrifice was under judgment. God was using human agents to bring that judgment to reality. This is God's divine right as the God of life and death. Praise God for the coming Messiah that will release all of his followers from any participation in such judgment and call us only to a ministry of peace, healing, reconciliation, and life.
- Moab is judged. Ditto for Ammon. "You trust in your riches and say, 'Who will attack me?' I will bring terror on you from those all around you." Yikes!
- Edom? They are judged too but those left vulnerable are promised protection: "Leave your orphans; I will protect their lives. Your widows too can trust in me."
- Damascus and Kedar and Hazor? All under severe judgment. We are reminded again that the consequences of sin and rebellion are death. This judgment reminds us again of how great a revelation is the grace we will see in the coming Messiah!

- Jehoiakim's death is both predicted and then recorded. In the past Israel had cried out for a king to come and lead them. By this point we are clearly able to say, "God is the only king worthy of our loyalty!" Jehoikim is another sad example of how a corrupt human heart has given the kind of power that brings about great harm and destruction. What a contrast we will see when "Emmanuel" (God with us) comes as the Prince of Peace and the King of Righteousness.