
Day 239 - August 27

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

Jeremiah Escapes Death

Readings: *Jeremiah 37:3-21; 38:1-28*

Reflections:

- Our story returns to Jeremiah. His experiences at this point are truly terrible. The armies of Egypt have pulled away the armies of Babylon and their siege of Jerusalem. Jeremiah as God's prophet speaks the truth but only finds himself in increasingly great trouble and danger from his own people. He tries to leave the city but is beaten and thrown in a dungeon. After that, he is brought out by the king, Zedekiah, but the king doesn't really listen to what he says. Jeremiah is then thrown into a well and sinks into a pit of mud. Without doubt he would have died here if Zedekiah didn't rescue him. The picture was that Jeremiah is so stuck deep in mud that he had to put clothes under his arms to pad himself when the king finally gave orders to pull him out with ropes. When Zedekiah secretly asks Jeremiah for a word from God, Jeremiah again tells him that he needs to surrender to Babylon if he wants to be saved. Jeremiah concludes his warning to the king with a powerful image, "Those women (his wives or female servants in his palace) will say to you: 'They misled you and overcame you – those trusted friends of yours (people who gave him the counsel not to surrender). Your feet have sunk in the mud; your friends have deserted you.'" Jeremiah basically says that what happened to him, will happen to Zedekiah if he doesn't obey God and surrender to the Babylonians. In other words, Zedekiah will face certain death. "You will be the one who will be stuck in mud!" What a powerful image for all those who chose to walk away from God and reject what God is saying to them. They are not free and secure. They are stuck in mud up to their waste and can't move a single step forward into the purposes of God.
- Zedekiah decides not to follow God's direction and simply wants to cover up the fact that he even talked to Jeremiah. Zedekiah clearly fears what people think more than what God thinks. The very next chapter in his life will be a horror story because of his hardheartedness. This serves as a warning to all who follow God: Even if you don't understand what God is doing and you are afraid of what people will do or think, don't be so foolish as to reject the clear word of God. God's word will be found to be true and the only truly safe path in life is to obey God. Disobedience will only leave you stuck in a pit of mud.

- There is another lesson too: Following God is not an easy life. Just look at what happened to Jeremiah. Imprisoned. Beaten. He even had to go through being thrown in a well so that his life could be a prophetic picture of what would happen to the king. Being God's servant isn't easy but it is one that will be richly rewarded. God will not abandon us but will rescue us even from the most difficult situations.