
Day 250 - September 7

The Exiled Nation (585-535 BCE)

End of Ezekiel's Ministry

Nebuchadnezzar's Temporary Insanity

End of Jeremiah's Ministry

Readings: *Ezekiel 29:17-21; Daniel 4:1-37; Jeremiah 52:31-34; 2 Kings 25:27-30*

Reflections:

- Ezekiel's final word creates a bit of a question regarding how God does things. Nebuchadnezzar did lay siege and destroy Tyre but didn't ultimately destroy the island and as a result, didn't receive any plunder for the army to have as pay. (The destruction of the island will happen many years later when Alexander the Great will level it in 322 B.C.E.) As a result, God gives Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar as a form of payment. Now although this may seem unjust, both Tyre and Egypt were under God's judgment and so it may be simply God telling the king not to complain about not getting more reward as God was providing a reward in an unexpected place. This reminds us that God has the ability to provide for us in ways we wouldn't naturally anticipate. He can surprise us by fulfilling his word to us in ways we would have never guessed.
- Ezekiel then ends with a passage that may at first seem cryptic but once understood is powerful. Ezekiel 29:21 – "On that day I will make a horn (symbol of power) grow for the house of Israel, and I will open your mouth (give you a voice or enable you to be heard) among them (the nations). Then they will know that I am the Lord." Here at the end of this passage about the great power of Babylon and in the background is the weak and powerless Israel, God gives the people a promise of hope. One day a power would emerge from the house of Israel, in a sense an army that would allow the truth to be heard among the nations. Israel was supposed to be a light to the Gentiles but they had rejected that calling. They were now powerless and silent, with their mouths shut. Yet, God was promising of a new power to emerge that would release the truth of God to again be proclaimed. What a great promise and how powerfully it was fulfilled through the early church as it carried the message of Christ across the world.

- At the end of the record of his life, Ezekiel is probably around 55 years old. Will he live to see his prophecies fulfilled? It would seem not. He may have seen the early signs but like many prophets, Ezekiel spoke of things that he would never witness in his own lifetime.
- Daniel 4 is a fascinating account apparently written by King Nebuchadnezzar himself in the form of a letter. It explains his own pride, a judgment from God and a temporary season of insanity where God humbled him. It ends with the king apparently converting to belief in the one true God. This account seems a bit grandiose and bizarre but again strange things do happen. The image of a tree in the king's dream will find an interesting parallel in Jesus' teaching on the mustard seed that grows into a tree. It also finds interesting parallel to the tree of life from the Garden, from Ezekiel's vision of the river (Ez. 47), and in Revelations 21.
- This account ends with a truth that aligns with the main message of the meta-narrative of Scripture: "...praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride, he is able to humble." Or as the other writers of Scripture declare, "God opposes the proud but give grace to the humble."
- The final verses of Jeremiah appear to be a footnote added by his Scribe, Baruch. The transition of kingship of Babylon leads to Jehoiachin's release and the gracious care provided by the new king. With this final note and the transition of the kingship, the ministries of the three great prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah all come to an end. They have declared the great need for God to change people from the inside out and the promise of a coming rescuer who will come to bring God's salvation. As the people wait for God's promise to be fulfilled, they now face the suffering of their broken condition.