*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 1 - 6

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, July 1 Jeremiah 21:1-14**

*“Speak to the Lord for us”*

The passage provides us with a date in Judah’s painful history. Zedekiah is king – the first reference to the last king of Judah since the beginning of the book (1:3) – and the date is ca. 588BC. With the Babylonian army surrounding Jerusalem, a royal official named Pashhur (not the priest of the same name in the previous chapter) and a priest named Zephaniah are sent to Jeremiah to ask him to inquire of the Lord. Perhaps God will work one of his wonders so that the Babylonians will withdraw.

The Lord’s reply is full of the judgmental language seen in virtually every previous chapter. God will not war against the Babylonian army but against Judah for its faithlessness and wickedness. God’s enemy at the moment is Judah, not Babylon. God is setting before them the way of life and death. Death is the fate of those who stay in the city; those who leave and are taken captive by the Babylonians will escape with their lives. It is too late for repentance – God has decided to bring disaster.

*You are not indifferent to the sins of your people, Lord. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 2 Jeremiah 22:1-17**

*“Speak directly to the king of Judah”*

Jeremiah speaks directly to (against!) the royal family. In this critical evaluation, we encounter an emphasis on royal social responsibility. The king and his administrators should do justice and practice righteousness. *Justice* is primarily associated with administration. In doing justice one works through social institutions (e.g., the courts and state agencies). *Righteousness* is more of a relational term. One is considered righteous when acting faithfully toward those with whom one is related in community.

Jehoahaz was the son and immediate successor to Josiah. He was placed on the throne after the death of his father but was subsequently removed by the Egyptian pharaoh after a brief reign. Jeremiah calls for mourning on his behalf. Jeremiah then pronounces a judgmental “woe” on Jehoiakim, the older brother of Jehoahaz, who succeeded his younger brother on the throne. Apparently the Egyptians, who placed Jehoiakim on the throne, wanted someone from the royal family whom they could control.

*We pray that our leaders do justice, Lord, and practice righteousness. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 3 Jeremiah 22:18-30**

*“The Lord will abandon you’”*

Verses 18-19 foretell the fate of arrogant and selfish king Jehoiakim who will not be mourned at his death and will not receive a proper burial. Verses 20-23 refers to Jerusalem who is told to bewail her doom far and wide, away to the north in Lebanon, to the northeast in Bashan, and in Abarimwhich lies east of the Dead Sea. The cause of Jerusalem’s doom lay in the refusal of her people to obey God ever since their beginnings (“childhood/youth”). It was only a matter of time before the divine judgment would fall.

Verses 24-30 address king Jehoiachin who was the son of Jehoiakim and naturally succeeded his father. According to the historical record in 2 Kings 24:8-17, he reigned a mere three months before the 597BC deportation of certain Judean royalty and high officials to Babylon. The young eighteen-year old king was taken to Babylon where he eventually died. He is recorded as childless, not because he didn’t have any children (he had seven according to 1 Chronicles 3:17-18), but because none of his sons would succeed him to the throne of David to rule over Judah.

*Unlike these kings, Lord, may we do justice and practice righteousness. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 1 - 6

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, July 4 Jeremiah 23:1-24**

*“What sorrow awaits the shepherds of my sheep”*

The chapter collects a number of harsh sayings against the religious leaders who oppose Jeremiah in word and deed. Included among the “shepherds” are almost certainly kings. Priests are also mentioned, but the brunt of the criticism falls on prophets who have not understood the Lord correctly and have, therefore, misled the people. Among these words of judgment are also claims that God intends to redeem his scattered people and to raise up a shepherd in whose days the “sheep” will find security.

The symbolic name of the shepherd to be raised up is “The Lord is Our Righteousness.” Christians recognize the truth of that prophecy. In Christ, God has demonstrated his righteousness and also accepted Christ’s righteousness on behalf of those who trust in his saving work. Christ is the culmination of the hopes of the royal line of David, the kings of Judah. The failures of many of those kings/shepherds to do justice and practice righteousness makes Christ’s shepherding of his people even more glorious.

*In you, Jesus, I have a true shepherd. Amen.*

**Friday, July 5 Jeremiah 23:25-40**

*“I am against these prophets”*

The validity of dreams as a means of divine revelation is questioned. In Jeremiah’s view the dream was chaff while God’s word delivered through his servant was wheat. He clearly regarded dreams as very subjective experiences which had nothing to do with a word from God. Let the dreamer tell his dream if he wishes, but do not attribute to it the statues of the word of God. The two metaphors of “fire” and a “hammer that shatters the rock” convey something of the powerful character of the word of God. It is wheat. By contrast the anemic, powerless dream is chaff which cannot move a man deeply at the moral and religious level.

Verses 33-40 form a section built around the word “burden,” where the phrase, “What is the burden of the Lord?” means “What is the word of the Lord?” In general the main thrust of the passage is that the prophetic office is to be undertaken with great seriousness. Only those to whom God entrusts his word are entitled to proclaim it. Imposters and plagiarists will incur divine judgment.

*May we only listen to those, Lord, who bring your true word. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 6 Jeremiah 24:1-10**

*“I saw two baskets of figs”*

The timing of this vision is in Zedekiah’s reign, sometime between 597BC, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin and a number of the leading citizens of Judah into exile in Babylon, and 587/586, when the Babylonians besieged and destroyed Jerusalem. Jeremiah observes two baskets of figs left as offerings at the temple. The Lord tells the prophet that the good figs are like the Judeans taken into exile, while the rotten figs represent Zedekiah and those who remain in Jerusalem and Judah. The Lord promises to do good to the exilic community, to bring them back from exile, and to give them a heart to know him.

One finds in this prophetic report a shorthand version of what the larger book of Jeremiah intends to accomplish. For those on whom the judgment of the Exile has fallen, God announces that he intends to “build them up” and to “plant” them again in the Promised Land (note the vocabulary correspondence with the call of Jeremiah in 1:10). There is also the promise of a heart prepared by God to return to him wholeheartedly.

*I praise you for giving me a heart, Lord, to know you. Amen.*