*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 15 - 20

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, July 15 Jeremiah 29:1-32**

*“I know the plans I have for you”*

In 597BC, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar carried into exile King Jehoiachin of Judah, together with other Judean nobility, craftsmen and artisans. This was the second of three deportations (the first had occurred in 604BC and included among others Daniel and his three friends; the third and final would take place in 586BC after the destruction of Jerusalem). The chapter contains a letter Jeremiah sent to the Judeans living in Babylon who had been taken in the first two deportations.

While it is Nebuchadnezzar who has ordered the deportations, God is behind them. Therefore, the people should settle down in exile and carry out the functions of daily living. The exile will not be the end of their existence as God’s people, but the beginning of a new phase of relating to God. For God has a plan for the people, plans for a good future which will include the restoration of the people to their homeland. The restoration, however, is predicated on their seeking God with their whole heart.

*I am confident, Lord, of your good purposes for my life. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 16 Jeremiah 30:1-24**

*“You will be my people, and I will be your God”*

The chapter contains prophecies that range into the near future and into the far future from the perspective of Jeremiah’s time. Regarding the near future, God worked through the historical process to overcome the power of Babylon and to provide a way for his exiled people to return to their ancestral land. With the rise of Cyrus the Persian, several groups of Jews made their way back to the land of promise. They began the process of rebuilding Jerusalem’s walls and Temple, as related in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The chapter also reminds God’s people that they should not forget the necessity of God’s righteous judgment for sin and that they should recognize their own inadequacies in healing their own failures. The prophet’s declaration that sin’s “injury is incurable – a terrible wound” (verse 12) is echoed in the New Testament which claims that apart from God’s grace, we will all die in our sin. In Christ God has bound himself to his people and provided everyone the means necessary to overcome the wages of sin.

*You are faithful to forgive our sin, Lord, freeing us from sin’s consequence. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 17 Jeremiah 31:1-22**

*“I have loved you with an everlasting love”*

God reminds his people that they can find his favor even in the desert. This can be understood in two senses: (1) reminding them that their ancestors found favor with God in the wilderness on their journey out of Egypt to the Promised Land; and (2) as a reference to the experience of exile and the hope that God will bring his people home through the desert that stretches between Babylon and Israel. The everlasting love of God for his people springs from his affection for them and his loyalty to them.

The nations are to take note that God intends to redeem his people. God, who scattered the people in judgment, is a shepherd who will gather them. The mourning of the Promised Land for the loss of her children is described through the metaphor of Rachel weeping. Rachel’s children are coming home. This means that there is hope for Rachel’s future. Thus we are made aware that the first element in the renewal of Israel comes in the restoration of exiles to their ancestral home.

*No matter our sin, Lord, you never stop loving us. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 15 - 20

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, July 18 Jeremiah 31:23-40**

*“I will make a new covenant with my people”*

Jeremiah’s inspired expression “new covenant” has been used for centuries as the heading or title to the twenty-seven documents that form the second half of the Christian Bible, that is, the New Testament. The Latin word *testamentum*, which underlies the English term *testament*, translates the Hebrew word for “covenant.” One sees this understanding as well within the pages of the New Testament. At the Last Supper Jesus describes the cup as a representation of the “new covenant in my blood.” And, the apostle Paul understands the gospel of new life in Christ to be a fulfillment of the hope expressed in Jeremiah’s prediction of the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3).

The future redemption promised by God through Jeremiah has dawned in the ministry of Jesus Christ and will be brought to an ultimate fulfillment in his second coming at the end of the age. Jeremiah’s promise to the house of Israel and the house of Judah is applied to Jewish and Gentile Christians alike, who comprise the church. Because of Christ’s coming and through the continuing ministry of the Spirit, the church has tasted the future Jeremiah foresaw.

*Through Christ, I am included in God’s new covenant with his people. Amen.*

**Friday, July 19 Jeremiah 32:1-25**

*“So I bought the field at Anathoth”*

Babylon has besieged Jerusalem for a second time, and Jeremiah is confined in the city by a royal guard for his continual prophecies about the sovereignty of Babylon over Judah and Jerusalem. While in prison, his cousin Hanamel visits him and encourages him to buy a piece of property located in Anathoth, Jeremiah’s home town. Jeremiah, having received the word of the Lord that the visit would take place, buys the field. On the surface this seems a senseless act – the armies of Babylon are surely occupying Anathoth, just a few miles north of Jerusalem, and there is no realistic hope that Jeremiah will ever be able to enjoy his property.

Jeremiah’s purchase becomes a vehicle, a symbolic act to illustrate his message. At one of the darkest moments in Judah’s history, when the Babylonian reduction of the country is in an advanced state and the successful siege of Jerusalem seems merely a matter of time, Jeremiah purchases the property as a sign that there is a future for the people of the land. After the pain of defeat and the trauma of exile, there will be restoration.

*Nothing that belongs to you, Lord, will remain under enemy control. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 20 Jeremiah 32:26-44**

*“I will do all the good I have promised”*

After the prophet purchases the field, God speaks to him again. His communication is a summary of what Jeremiah has been proclaiming for years, that a righteous judgment will befall Judah and Jerusalem and that it will proceed not from God’s weakness over against the powerful Babylonian deities, but from his intention to discipline and purge his people. Considerable space is devoted to the articulation of God’s response to the failures of the people, described as furious anger and great wrath.

In addition to the communication of wrath, God reiterates the significance of Jeremiah’s land purchase as a sign of the Lord’s resolve to restore and bless his people. Both current calamity and future blessing are the work of God. In his prayer, Jeremiah confessed in awe that “nothing is too hard” for God (32:17). Here, God’s rhetorical question asks: “Is anything too hard for me?” Through this God reassures the people that what he has promised he can deliver.

*You are true to all your promises, Lord, and I place my trust in them. Amen.*