*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 22 - 27

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, July 22 Jeremiah 33:1-18**

*“I will heal Jerusalem’s wounds”*

God speaks a second time to Jeremiah while he is confined under guard and the Babylonians are besieging the city of Jerusalem. He reiterates his promise to redeem Judah and Jerusalem. The turning fortunes of the people are here described as God’s healing them, which includes forgiveness along with such tangible signs of restoration as resettlement in the homeland, rebuilding Jerusalem, and security while dwelling there. These promises reiterate those given in previous chapters.

The joyful future for the people is a reversal of the judgment on and the misery suffered by Judah. Cities in Judah will again be inhabited. The temple will again have worship. For someone who has been as critical about the temple as Jeremiah, such a text reminds us that his criticisms presuppose no enduring hostility to the temple; only toward its misuse and corruption. In addition to the corporate restoration of the people, Jeremiah announces the raising up of a righteous descendant of King David’s line (see also 23:5-6), that is, the Messiah.

*Sin leads to suffering, Lord, but you heal all our wounds. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 23 Jeremiah 33:19-26**

*“I will never abandon the descendants of Jacob”*

The work of Davidic rule and that of priestly ministry will not cease. These announcements indicate that God’s promises (when finally realized in their completeness) will never end. God will undergird two fundamental institutions of the people in perpetuity. Someone from David’s line will be head of the people, and descendants of Levi, the priestly tribe, will always be available to officiate in public worship. Abraham was promised descendants like the stars of heaven and the sand on the seashore; here God promises innumerable descendants to the Davidic line and the Levitical priests.

God has heard the despair and cynicism of his people. Those who conclude that God has simply rejected them are wrong. God has not broken his covenant with day and night, nor has he rejected his people. In other words, just as God’s covenant with day and night is not an agreement with those inanimate parties but the expression of his sovereign resolve to maintain a beneficent order, so God has committed himself to be merciful to his people.

*Great is your faithfulness, Lord. Your mercies never come to an end. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 24 Jeremiah 34:1-22**

*“The fate of the slaves”*

King Zedekiah had initiated an agreement with his subjects regarding their Judean slaves, that they were to be set free. The reason is not stated, but most likely the dire circumstances of the Babylonian siege lay behind the decision. Some scholars have speculated that with the scarcity of food, the manumission of the slaves meant that the owners were no longer obligated to feed them. It is also possible that freed slaves were more likely to defend their freedom in the struggle with Babylon. In any case, after the release of the slaves circumstances apparently improved enough so that the solemn oath of the covenant was broken and the slaves were taken back by their owners.

In the indictment for breaking their word and reenslaving the slaves, the people are also accused of breaking the covenant God made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. At that time, the just treatment of slaves was part of the covenant obligations assumed by Israel, an obligation they have not met.

*I keep the promises I make before you, Lord, as you keep your promises to me. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 22 - 27

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, July 25 Jeremiah 35:1-19**

*“Learn a lesson about how to obey me”*

The constancy of the Recabite community to their values becomes a prophetically appropriate sign against the lack of integrity in Judah and Jerusalem. According to their self-designation, Recabites do not live in houses, plant crops, or drink wine. Instead, they live in tents (and apparently trade goods for grain and other agricultural products). Their presence in Jerusalem is the result of pressure put on the Judean countryside by the Babylonian army and their Aramean companions. The prophetic symbolism of the account is accentuated by the scene of wine cups set before the Recabites. Their reply – that they do not drink wine – is narrated for the effect such a scene will have on the larger community of Judah and Jerusalem.

God instructs Jeremiah to report the encounter with the Recabites to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. The fact that Jeremiah has invited the Recabites to meet him at a room near the temple ensures that they are observed by other members of the community. The incident contrasts Recabite obedience to their community standards with the faithlessness of Judeans to theirs.

*I will be faithful to your standards, Lord, in spite of others’ unfaithfulness. Amen.*

**Friday, July 26 Jeremiah 36:1-19**

*“Get a scroll and write down all my messages”*

Baruch is a scribe; that is, his profession is in recording and interpreting documents. In a way he is a disciple of Jeremiah. Since Jeremiah is restricted from preaching in the temple precincts, Baruch is commissioned with delivering the prophet’s message in the temple. This comes, however, after Baruch has copied Jeremiahs’ messages onto a scroll. He knows the material intimately and is able to represent the prophet in his absence. Jeremiah hopes that the hard words he wants delivered to the people will be a catalyst for repentance and change.

A solemn fast is declared, and many people in Judah stream to the temple to pray. The solemn fast becomes the occasion for Baruch to deliver the prophetic message of Jeremiah. The officials named in verses 10-14 represent Judean leadership, some of whom are sympathetic to Jeremiah. After hearing the contents of the prophetic scroll, the officials request that Baruch and Jeremiah go into hiding. In taking that advice, they may have preserved their lives until the turmoil around the messages dies down a bit (see tomorrow’s passage).

*The Bible is from you, Lord, and to reject it is to reject you. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 27 Jeremiah 36:20-32**

*“The king threw the scroll into the fire”*

The callous rejection of Jeremiah’s words by Jehoiakim is described in a manner intended to remind readers of his father Josiah and to contrast father and son. When Josiah heard the words of the book of God’s Law, a book discovered during temple repairs, he tore his garments as a sign that he recognized the authority of the prophetic scroll to judge him and his nation. His son, Jehoiakim, contemptuously “tore” the scroll and burned it, showing no respect for the word of God and refusing to repent of his sin and that of his nation.

Jehoiakim and Judah’s fate is sealed by their indifference and even hostility to the prophetic word. According to Jeremiah 26:20-23, Jehoiakim became upset with the preaching activity of the prophet Uriah and sent a delegation to Egypt to arrest him. Subsequently, Uriah was executed. Had Baruch and Jeremiah been found, execution may have been the conclusion to their arrest as well. But, as the passage notes, the Lord had hidden them and commands them to compile another scroll. The second is longer than the first.

*Thank you, Lord, for those who have faithfully preserved your written word. Amen.*