*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 8 - 13

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, July 8 Jeremiah 25:1-14**

*“You would not listen to me”*

For twenty-three years Jeremiah has been preaching the Word of God to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. The refusal of the people to heed the prophet’s warnings and calls for repentance has now led to the brink of judgment. Babylon, and more particularly, Nebuchadnezzar, are identified as a foe from the north. Verse nine describes Nebuchadnezzar as God’s “servant.” This is a shocking term to use but fully consistent with Jeremiah’s message.

The prophet portrays the historical judgment to come on Judah as God’s work against his sinful people, and an exile in Babylon of seventy years is projected. During this time, Nebuchadnezzar is not acting independently of God’s design but as an agent in the employ of God. In the book of Daniel we learn that Nebuchadnezzar himself bore witness that God is sovereign (Daniel 4:1-37). The fact that the king is serving God’s will does not make him morally superior and does not make him and his kingdom immune from God’s standards of justice. Babylon too will be judged for its sins.

*We listen and repent, Lord, for you are a just and holy God. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 9 Jeremiah 25:15-29**

*“Judgment on the Nations”*

Jeremiah was originally commissioned to be a prophet to the nations (1:5), and it is to be expected that some of his declarations would concern nations other than Judah. God’s judgment of the nations is likened to a stupefying draught which the nations are compelled to drink. Such a cup, which results in the staggering of someone inebriated and out of control, is a metaphor for the turmoil to come among the nations when God’s sword of judgment is unleashed. As a prophetic symbol of judgment, God’s cup of wrath is seen not only in Jeremiah but also in other prophets such as Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:16), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 23:32-34) and Isaiah (Isaiah 51:17, 21-22), as well as in the sixteenth and seventeenth chapters of the book of Revelation.

The long listing of states and rulers comprises a summary for “all the kingdoms on the face of the earth” (25:26). God is depicted as a cosmic Judge, and the imagery employed suggests a type of sweeping judgment beyond the circumstances of the late seventh/early sixth century BC. The face of the earth is strewn about with the effects of destruction.

*You are sovereign over all nations, Lord, and they will be judged by you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 10 Jeremiah 25:30-38**

*“The Lord will bring charges”*

God roars like a lion. His voice is heard from his holy dwelling, from on high, that is, from heaven. He brings his case against all peoples, like a lawsuit being brought against those who have disregarded him and his commands. They are filled with the guilty who will be handed over to the judgment of the sword. The disaster is vast, spreading from nation to nation like a mighty storm blowing up from the farthest ends of the earth.

The shepherds or lords of the flock are the rulers of the various nations who are called upon to howl, cry aloud, and roll in the dust/scatter ashes upon themselves as a sign of mourning, grief and humiliation as their time for the slaughter comes. They will fall like the finest rams brought for killing. There will be no escape for these rulers and kings of the nations, nor for their lands. The lion has gone forth from his lair, and their territories have become a wasteland before the blazing anger of God.

*Your anger against sin is great, Lord, and we must not ignore it. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 8 - 13

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, July 11 Jeremiah 26:1-24**

*“I will destroy this Temple as I destroyed Shiloh”*

Jeremiah warns the people that if they fail to follow the instruction of the Lord, they will bring calamity on themselves. As Jeremiah will argue in the debate with his audience, he stands in the line of prophets sent by the Lord because, like them, the Lord has also sent him. He prophesies that the temple will be destroyed in the coming judgment, just like the destruction of the worship center at Shiloh during the days of the judges and the prophet Samuel. Jeremiah’s words about the temple anger many of his listeners. It is God’s “house,” and the assumption of many in the audience is that God will protect it no matter what. For some, to speak against the temple is tantamount to speaking against God himself. This is blasphemy.

Jeremiah defends himself as one of the prophets whom the Lord has sent to warn his people about the consequences of disobedience to his instruction. He recognizes that he is in their hands – that is, he is on trial – but he warns them that if they execute him, they will incur the judgment of bringing innocent blood on themselves.

*Your word calls us to faithful living, Lord, and we obey. Amen.*

**Friday, July 12 Jeremiah 27:1-22**

*“Make a yoke, and fasten it on your neck”*

Jeremiah reports that the Lord commanded him to make a yoke and to wear it as a sign of the Lord sending him to prophesy that Nebuchadnezzar has been granted sovereignty over nations (including Judah). God has given Babylon a historical period of time in which she will rule over Judah and over the states of Edom, Moab, and Ammon (all on the eastern side of the Jordan River), as well as the city-states of Tyre and Sidon (on the Mediterranean coastline). To oppose Babylon at this time is to oppose God’s will as Creator and Lord.

The work of other prophets who oppose the message of Jeremiah, telling their respective rulers not to place themselves under the yoke of Babylon, is repudiated. They are not to be listened to. The end of Babylon’s supremacy is also acknowledged, as is God’s intent to restore the temple vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon did not take them away because God was impotent – Nebuchadnezzar is God’s servant, not vanquisher. The vessels will be returned when God is ready.

*The purpose of the yoke of discipline, Lord, is that we might return to you. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 13 Jeremiah 28:1-17**

*“Hananiah the prophet”*

Hananiah prophesies that God will soon restore to Jerusalem the temple vessels taken by the Babylonians and bring back the exiled Judean king. He performs a prophetic symbolic act in breaking the wooden yoke that Jeremiah is wearing; this was Hananiah’s illustration of his prophecy that the Lord will break the yoke of Babylon, which is constraining and humiliating Judah. Jeremiah’s first reaction to the Hananiah’s prophecy (“Amen”) seems to indicate that the prophecy impresses him. This reaction is in spite of the fact that Hananiah’s proclamation goes against what he himself has prophesied.

When Hananiah breaks the yoke worn by Jeremiah, Jeremiah does not reply immediately. This is another indication of the seriousness with which he takes Hananiah’s words. Subsequently, the word of the Lord comes to him, and he confronts Hananiah with the message that Babylon rules with God’s explicit assent and that Hananiah has made the people believe a lie. Indeed, Hananiah’s words are a rebellion against the will of the Lord.

*You will act in your time, Lord, and we will wait patiently. Amen.*