*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 19 - 24

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, August 19 Jeremiah 49:1-39**

*“This message was given concerning . . .”*

The fact that the prophecies against the nations are collected together and placed at the end of the book of Jeremiah suggests that they are preserved as witnesses to God’s sovereign justice and are to be read and pondered by those who come after the prophet. They indicate what kind of attitudes and activities are displeasing to the Lord.

They should also be read in light of the missionary concern of the New Testament that the gospel be preached among all nations. Even though the predominant note of the prophecies toward the nations is negative – that is, they have been weighed in the balance of divine justice and found wanting – it is crucial to note that the redeemed in Revelation come from every tribe and tongue (Revelation 5:9-10). Gods sovereignty over the nations does not leave them without hope and fit only for retaliatory justice; in the good news of the New Testament (anticipated by the restoration passages in the prophecies against the nations) the nations find healing for their sicknesses and spiritual renewal to overcome the horrors of their inhumanity.

*Even the vilest offender (or, nation), Lord, may be restored by your grace. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 20 Jeremiah 50:1-28**

*“Babylon will fall”*

The fall of Babylon is to be proclaimed among the nations. Perhaps this is because Babylon had subjugated a number of them, and there will be rejoicing in more than one corner of the former empire. Another reason perhaps is the public declaration of the Lord’s sovereignty by announcing the fact in public and in advance. Thus, Babylon’s joy in pillaging Judah will be turned to great shame. Babylon herself will be besieged and defeated, for it will be done to her as she has done to others.

Remnants from Israel and Judah will seek the Lord and a way back to their homeland. They are currently like lost sheep, but they will return to their true Shepherd, “the hope of their fathers.” The prophet urges them to flee out of Babylon. This is not contradictory to the advice given in chapter 29, that the exiles should build houses in Babylon and pray for the welfare of the city. That same chapter indicates a coming time when God will restore his people. The defeat of Babylon will indicate that return to Palestine is about to begin.

*Evil will not stand, Lord, for your justice will wipe it away. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 21 Jeremiah 50:29-46**

*“’The One who redeems is strong”*

God is strong, not just as Judge of sin and evil, but as the Redeemer of his people. He is to be praised as the One who vindicates his people against all who have done them wrong. Imperialistic Babylon is compared to Assyria, the earlier conqueror of Israel and much of the Near East. As with Assyria, so with Babylon – God will judge the oppressor. The overthrow of Babylon is also compared to that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Verse 44 alludes to either a people or an individual who will do God’s bidding and take Babylon, referring to the Medes and the Persians or to Persian King Cyrus himself. God has summoned several groups against Babylon, together comprising the “foe from the north” who will attack the city. In 539BC the prophecy came true when Cyrus the Great and his forces occupied the city and put the Babylonian Empire out of business. Ultimately the city itself would be abandoned, giving additional confirmation of the prophetic depiction of its demise.

*The truth of your Word, Lord, is confirmed in history. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 19 - 24

T*he Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, August 22 Jeremiah 51:1-32**

*“Let us announce all the Lord has done”*

Chapter 51 continues the contrast between the coming deliverance of the Judean exiles and the judgment to befall Babylon, with much of the imagery repeated from or similar to that in chapter 50. One of the poetic symbols Jeremiah uses is that of the “cup,” a vessel that indicates the future when its contents will be consumed. In verse 7 Babylon is depicted as a cup from which Judah and the nations drank, but now it is ready to be smashed.

Verses 15-19 celebrate the creative power and wisdom of God, and the character of the true God is set in the context of the foolishness and idolatry of the nations. In contrast to human idol-makers, God is “the Maker of all things.” The chapter portrays several of Babylon’s neighbors as threats. The Medes are mentioned twice (verses 11 and 28). They were a people to the north and east of Babylon who were incorporated into the Persian state created by Cyrus the Great. Ararat, Minni, and the Ashkenaz were also peoples from the north and northeast of Babylon who may have joined Cyrus against Babylon.

*We praise you, Lord, for the justice you apply to all peoples. Amen.*

**Friday, August 23 Jeremiah 51:33-64**

*“The Lord will silence Babylon’s loud voice”*

In verses 34-40 personified Jerusalem speaks of the torment she has received from Babylon, and the Lord replies that judgment will come on Babylon. The gods of Babylon are also judged in the fall of the city with specific attention given to Bel. The tower of Babylon is alluded to, proclaiming that God will send destroyers against Babylon, even as the city reaches to the sky – a reminder of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9.

The chapter concludes with an account of Seraiah, brother of Baruch, who traveled to Babylon in Zedekiah’s fourth year (593BC). Apparently he was sent to Babylon on diplomatic business. While in Babylon he performed a symbolic act to depict the judgment that would ultimately befall Babylon. Just as the written scroll sank when Seraiah threw it into the river, so will Babylon sink and rise no more. The last line of the chapter states that “the words of Jeremiah end here.” But note how Jeremiah’s words in collected form have lasted much longer than the great political and military nation of his day.

*Nations rise and fall, Lord, but your word is forever. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 24 Jeremiah 52:1-34**

*“He was kind to Jehoiachin”*

Jeremiah 52 covers a span of approximately 30 years. It begins with the account of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 588BC and concludes with the notice that Evil-Merodach had released the Judean exiled king Jehoiachin from prison and allowed him to eat at the royal table. Evil-Merodach, whose short reign lasted from 562BC to 560BC, was the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar.

Unless we can draw continuing significance from narration about the past, past acts remain simply events that lie behind the present. Since a retelling of the past is typically done to uncover ways in which to understand the present, we should ask why the account of Jerusalem’s fall is told here since we read of it back in chapter 39. One reason is reflected in the widely quoted maxim, “Those who do not remember the past are doomed to repeat it.” In the retelling of the story, we are reminded to live and learn from the mistakes of others. Such a reading can be instructive both personally and on the corporate level of nation and church.

*May your word, Lord, be a light unto our path. Amen.*