

Thursday, August 19, 2021—Jeremiah 47-49

When a pebble drops into a pond, the stone touches only a small area of water, but the ripples move outward to an exponentially larger area. One moment has lasting effect. Something small has broad impact.

God was bringing severe judgment on His people. The Babylonians had devastated Jerusalem. They had transported many of the Jews to Babylon. Others were unwisely fleeing to Egypt. Things were exceedingly bad for those who called themselves the people of Yahweh.

What God was doing was not limited to His people. Judgment had a ripple effect. Through Jeremiah, God spoke to the Philistines (47:1-7), those long-standing enemies of His people. They, too, were going to face judgment for their sins. The Moabites were spoiled, prideful people, but they would soon be humbled. Those who seek to glorify themselves rather than God will find that a losing proposition (48:1-47).

Ammon, Edom, Aram, and others were all going to fall under judgment. No one can escape the consequences of sin. Nebuchadnezzar was going to be God's instrument of justice over all these. Everything they worshiped, valued, and trusted would fail them and be lost (49:1-39).

Be sure. Sin plants a seed that bears the fruit of death. No one can escape it. When the harvest comes, it is devastating. Only God knows that day, so the wise choice is to repent of sin so He can renew your soul with the seed of the gospel and bring the harvest of righteousness and peace.

Wednesday, August 18, 2021—Jeremiah 43-46

God asks His people to do hard things because faith is trusting in Him, and He sees things they cannot. He knows things they cannot know, so He gives them the answers they would seek if they knew what He did.

The Babylonians had invaded Israel, and God knew He was going to punish Egypt at the hands of Babylon, too. This would have seemed impossible to those in Israel, yet God knew it as fact, so He told Jeremiah to tell the people not to flee to Egypt. That would compound their misery.

Some fled to Egypt anyway, and they took Jeremiah with them. Either they wanted his wisdom despite the fact they continually disregarded it, or they wanted to punish him by taking him to the place he didn't want to go. They certainly didn't want to obey God, as evidenced by their worship of idols soon after their arrival in Egypt (44:8).

Hearing God's rebuke is challenging, but He rebukes so He can refine and restore. His people ran from the rebuke rather than repenting and found themselves running into deeper disaster and a place of no return. God calls His people to hard things—repentance, discipline, and holiness—because the alternative is even harder—destruction, hopelessness, and death.

Hard things pave the way to deeper faith and greater usefulness in God's Kingdom. Ask God for the strength to trust Him in those areas and to embrace them as occasions to know Him better and glorify Him more.

Tuesday, August 17, 2021—Jeremiah 40-42

Nothing can thwart the plans of God. Nothing can prevent His will from succeeding. The sin of man and the actions of evil forces certainly cause suffering, and they may seem to stop or delay what God desires. His sovereignty over all things guarantees His plans will succeed.

God had called Jeremiah to be His spokesman, and Jeremiah was certain he was not qualified. Repeatedly, God assured Jeremiah and used him to speak truth. God promised Jeremiah His protection and provision. Jeremiah faced intense scrutiny and attack because of his faithfulness, but God always shielded him. As the Chaldeans were leading the people away, the captain of the guard let Jeremiah choose his destination (40:4). Even this foreign officer knew God was using this man in a special way.

The chaos of war and resettlement continued to swirl around the people, and some of them came to Jeremiah. They knew he was a source of wisdom from God, and they asked him to pray for them so God would make clear how they were to live faithfully (42:3). God told them to remain in Israel under the hand of Babylon rather than fleeing to Egypt (42:11). God wanted them to trust Him more than any human power. Running to Egypt would be running to the death they wanted to avoid.

Praise God for the peace He brings in the middle of life's hardest moments. Pray for His peace to be evident so you can be a source of wisdom and guidance to those navigating their own challenges.

Monday, August 16, 2021—Jeremiah 37-39

Human beings are by nature divided. They want the blessings of God without the responsibilities. Their selfish desires move them to sinful behavior that ultimately leads to self-destruction. They need the discipline of God truly to know the long-term blessings of God.

As the city weakened and crumbled around Jeremiah, the people did not like what he had to say. They put him in prison out of spite (37:15), but the king went to him secretly to ask for God's wisdom (37:17). Jeremiah was a continual reminder of their sin and their desperate need for God.

An angry group of men lashed out at Jeremiah and had him thrown into a muddy pit (38:6). They were weary of his calls to surrender to the Babylonians and submit to God's discipline. One of the foreigners who served the king, Ebed-melech, pled Jeremiah's case, and the king ordered his removal. He admitted to Jeremiah he was afraid of his own people and their opinions. Jeremiah told the king to obey God rather than caving into the pressure of public opinion. His life depended on it.

When Nebuchadnezzar finally invaded the city, Zedekiah and his men tried to flee rather than surrendering as Jeremiah had told them. They paid a high price for pursuing their own plans (39:5-8). The wages of their sin were catastrophic. Jeremiah, however, found favor with the invading king, and Jeremiah spoke words of promise over Ebed-melech. Trusting Yahweh and obeying Him was hard in the short-term but valuable later.

Pray for a heart that trusts and obeys God no matter the cost.

Sunday, August 15, 2021—Jeremiah 33-36

God is able to overcome circumstance. God is able to work despite circumstances. He is

sovereign and can bring good no matter our situation.

Jeremiah found himself in jail, yet God was still able to speak. God assured Jeremiah He was going to restore His people. Just as Jeremiah would one day be free, His people would be restored from captivity. How would He do this? The Branch of Righteousness, a descendant of David, would be the vessel of righteousness and justice (33:15-16). As surely as there was day and night, God would do this (33:25-26).

God speaks in difficult circumstances. God also expects obedience and worship in difficult circumstances. As the country descended into the chaos of Babylonian occupation, they obeyed the word of God and set slaves free during a seventh-year liberation. They changed their minds, however, and re-enslaved those people. God would not have this. He proclaimed the people's coming enslavement to Babylon (34:8-22).

The Rechabites were examples of faithfulness. Despite hardship and temptation, they had remained faithful to their calling to holiness and discipline. God said He wanted all of Israel to have been as faithful as this small tribe (34:15-17). God is looking for faithful followers.

Many hear the word of God and recognize its value and the need for everyone to hear it and live by it (36:16). Others decide it's worth nothing more than discarding and degrading (36:23). Praise God for giving His word in all circumstances. Pray for a heart that hears and obeys.

Saturday, August 14, 2021—Jeremiah 30-32

Jesus calls all those who are weary and burdened to come to Him, and He promises rest (Matthew 11:28-30). In His Sermon the Mount, He blessed those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and promised their fulfillment. God wants people to find satisfaction in Him alone.

The problem lies in the seductive song of sin. Temptation promises fulfillment, and there is always some short-term pleasure in sin, but sin never fills the longing. It returns, and the bondage to sin begins. God's people discovered they were suffering in their bondage, and none of the lovers they pursued were there to rescue them (30:14). God was bringing punishment on them out of love, to help them see the worthlessness of those gods in whom they were putting their hope.

God wanted His people to have hope. One day they would return home. Their tormentors would be gone. Like a good shepherd, God was going to gather His flock and protect them (31:10). God promised to bring happiness out of grief (31:13). The people would find satisfaction (31:14). He promised to satisfy the thirsty and feed the weak (31:25).

This satisfaction would come because God was going to make a new covenant with His people. He would write His Law on their hearts and forgive their sin (31:31-34) and delight in them (32:41). Jeremiah brought land and had witnesses to the deed because he had faith God would fulfill His word (32:15). Nothing is too difficult for God (32:17, 27).

Praise God for satisfaction that comes from obeying Him.

Friday, August 13, 2021—Jeremiah 27-29

Farmers who needed to work a field knew the value of a good yoke. The wooden piece fit over the shoulders of two beasts of burden and united their effort in pulling the plow, making the work more efficient. If one of the animals did not pull with the other, the yoke was wasted.

God was doing a work of judgment and cleansing among His people. He was placing the yoke of slavery on them at the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar. That yoke was also going onto the shoulders of the nations surrounding them (27:5). If they refused to submit to Babylon and “pull with the yoke,” they would perish (27:8).

No one likes words of judgment. Hanani, another man who claimed to be a prophet, confronted Jeremiah and said God had told him the Babylonian oppression would end within two years (28:2-3). Jeremiah’s description of decades of dispersion were deplorable. Jeremiah said he would like for that to be so, but the only way to know whether a man is truly a prophet is for his words to come true (28:9). Within the year, Hanani the “prophet” died for his incitement of the people to rebellion.

God wants to bless His people, even in the depths of their discipline. Through Jeremiah, God told His people in Babylon to pray for the well-being and flourishing of the place where they would live (29:5-14). He would nurture them there and one day bring them home.

Praise God for the health which comes from discipline and His presence during the shaping process.