

Class 7: Jeremiah 26-29

Second Temple Address

May 17, 2017

This study begins (returns) to the reign of Jehoiakim and ends at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah.

Jeremiah's Persecution: Once more Jeremiah is commissioned to stand at the Temple and make the proclamation that he did in chapter 7, that without repentance God would repeat the destruction of 1 Samuel 4. It may be the exact same sermon repeated here. However, when the message is heard, the priests and the prophets and the king's officials gather around Jeremiah and proclaim that he should die for this message. It is remarkable to see that Jeremiah seems unperturbed, but declares the message again when they surround him. If they seek his life, his blood will be on their hands.

This message seems to provoke the king's officials to act on his behalf. They declare his message valid; they remember the similar prophecies of Micah (3:12) and how Hezekiah preserved Jerusalem by reacting with the fear of God.

This may be because they know that they already have innocent blood on their hands. Another prophet, Uriah son of Shemaiah, also brought these words to this audience. When Uriah heard that they sought to kill him, he fled to Egypt. However, he was captured, returned, and executed by King Jehoiakim himself.

Jeremiah's life is saved by Ahikam. This scribe had served Josiah faithfully, and seems to be one who fears God. Later his son Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar would make governor after destroying Jerusalem.

Nebuchadnezzar's Yoke – in chapter 27 God causes Jeremiah to be a living model of his word. He is commanded to wear an oxen yoke around his neck to demonstrate the yoke God is bringing to Jerusalem. He is commanded to send message to the neighboring nations of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. The message is that God Jehovah has chosen Nebuchadnezzar (His servant) to rule over all nations, until the times of his grandsons. Any who resist this king will be brought to destruction, but those who submit will be permitted to remain.

This message was taken to Zedekiah personally by Jeremiah. While Nebuchadnezzar was an ungodly man (although one who we find in Daniel to fear God when humbled, and is the only gentile to be inspired to write part of the Scriptures), his work was divinely attributed.

Jeremiah must also deal with the false prophets who are declaring Nebuchadnezzar will soon return the things he took (vessels of the temple). Jeremiah declares that if they truly speak for God, it will become clear. But if Nebuchadnezzar takes what remains to Babylon, he is the true spokesman of Jehovah.

Hananiah – in Chapter 28 we meet the most notorious false prophet in Jeremiah, the prophet Hananiah. This false prophet confronts Jeremiah in the temple and declares (seemingly in concert with Jeremiah) that the yoke he bears will be broken, and that God will not permit Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the temple, but instead restore it.

Jeremiah's response is very straight forward – he declares that he would be pleased if Hananiah spoke the truth. Jeremiah's message is not one he desires to speak, but is one God gave him. As with the last confrontation with false prophets, Jeremiah makes a very straightforward claim: time will tell who speaks for God.

Hananiah does not seem content to simply make the message. He now goes to Jeremiah and breaks the yoke he carries, and then declares God will do the same to Nebuchadnezzar. This personal insult is not forgotten by God, sometime later God commands Jeremiah to go to Hananiah and to proclaim God's judgment: this year Hananiah will die for his rebellion. The chapter concludes with the death of Hananiah.

Letter to the Exiles – in Chapter 29 God directs Jeremiah to draft a letter to those of Judah who were taken into the captivity of Coniah (Daniel 1). This letter tells them that their predicament is the will of God. He gives them very simple directions: first, build homes and have families (vs 5-6), to demonstrate that they understand this (70 years) will be a long term event. Second, He tells them to pray for those over you and for the city of Babylon itself instead of Jerusalem (vs 7). Third, God warns them not to listen to false prophets (vs 8-9). He then reminds them of the 70 year prophecy, and tells them that if they remain in this place and do what He wills, He would bring them home (vs 10-11). He finishes this letter by noting two false prophets (Ahab and Zedekiah) who were also guilty of adultery, and stating that Nebuchadnezzar will kill both of these men, making their names and fate a curse.

He then is directed to address a letter to another false prophet, Shemaiah. This letter seems to come after the first was sent, as it is revealed that this prophet send letter to all who are in Jerusalem. He told them that he had been made high priest, and that the people of Jerusalem need to rebuke Jeremiah as a false prophet. It was Jeremiah's first letter that he points to as the words of a madman. When the letter was read, Jeremiah prophesied a curse on Shemaiah, that his line would end with him.

Making Applications:

1. How is the death threat against Jeremiah for proclaiming the temple to be destroyed similar to the accusation against Jesus in Mark 14:58?
2. God calls Nebuchadnezzar his servant. How is it that all Christians are called to subject themselves to their leaders (Romans 13), even non-believers? How are they God's ministers?
3. What parallels can we see between the letter to the exiles of Judah in Babylon and our lives today?