

The Prophets

Lesson #29

Jeremiah 24:1-30:24

Outline

I. *Prophecies From The Reigns Of Jehoiakim And Zedekiah (21:1-39:18)*

- A. The trials and conflicts of Jeremiah (21:1-29:32).
 1. The good and the bad figs (24:1-10).
 - a) The vision of the baskets of figs (24:1-3).
 - b) The explanation of the good figs (24:4-7).
 - c) The meaning of the bad figs (24:8-10).
 2. Prophecy of the Babylonian captivity (25:1-38).
 - a) Israel's rejection of the prophetic ministry (25:1-7).
 - b) Prediction of the Exile (25:8-11).
 - c) Judgment on Babylon (25:12-14).
 - d) The cup of God's wrath (25:15-29).
 - e) Judgment on all the world (25:30-38).
 3. Consequences of the temple address (26:1-24).
 - a) The temple address (26:1-6).
 - b) The arrest, trial and condemnation of Jeremiah (26:7-11).
 - c) Jeremiah's defense (26:12-15).
 - d) The release of Jeremiah (26:16-19).
 - e) The murder of Uriah (26:20-24).
 4. The yoke of Babylon (27:1-22).
 - a) The message to the ambassadors (27:1-11).
 - b) The address to King Zedekiah (27:12-15).
 - c) The warning to the priests and people (27:16-22).
 5. Hananiah against Jeremiah (28:1-17).
 - a) Hananiah's contradiction of Jeremiah (28:1-4).
 - b) Jeremiah's appeal to the past (28:5-9).
 - c) Hananiah's response (28:10-11).
 - d) Jeremiah's stronger pronouncement (28:12-14).
 - e) Prediction of Hananiah's death (28:15-17).
 6. Jeremiah's letters to the exiles (29:1-32).
 - a) Introduction (29:1-3).
 - b) The first letter of Jeremiah (29:4-19).
 - (1) Warning against false prophets (29:4-9).
 - (2) The seventy-year exile (29:10-14).
 - (3) The sword, the famine and the pestilence (29:15-19).
 - c) Denunciation of the false prophets Ahab and Zedekiah (29:20-23).

- d) Condemnation of Shemaiah (29:24-32).
- B. The book of consolation (30:1-33:26).
 - 1. Trial and triumph for Israel (30:1-24).
 - a) Return from captivity (30:1-3).
 - b) "A time of trouble for Jacob" (30:4-7).
 - c) Freedom from bondage to oppressors (30:8-11).
 - d) Israel's wounds healed (30:12-17).
 - e) Rebuilt Jerusalem and her ruler (30:18-22).
 - f) Judgment, then blessing (30:23-24).

Notes

Jeremiah 21:1-39:18

- The trials and conflicts of Jeremiah (21:1-29:32).
 - The good and the bad figs (24:1-10).
 - The vision of the baskets of figs (24:1-3).
 - One basket represents Jerusalem, the other represents Babylon; the figs are the people of Judah who live in those cities.
 - Zedekiah and those with him in Jerusalem would naturally assume that they are the "good" figs, while Jehoiachin and those with him in Babylon are the "bad" figs. Jeremiah sees it differently.
 - The explanation of the good figs (24:4-7).
 - The "good" figs are not good in a moral sense. They are good because they will receive "good" from Him.
 - Knowledge is something held in one's heart, in the thinking of the ancient Near East; so to have a heart that "knows the Lord" is to recognize His sovereignty in the acts He performs and submit to His will.
 - The meaning of the bad figs (24:8-10).
 - All of these figs have been "evil" in the eyes of the Lord; some are simply more fortunate than others in how the Lord will use them to achieve His ultimate will with His people.
 - They expect Jerusalem to be safe, and if not there, perhaps Egypt. Neither of these will escape the wrath of the Lord in this instance.
- Prophecy of the Babylonian captivity (25:1-38).
 - Israel's rejection of the prophetic ministry (25:1-7).
 - This was a pivotal time in Jeremiah's work. The same date is the setting for the dictating of Jeremiah's first scroll to Baruch (36:1-4).
 - This prophecy is precisely dated to show its extraordinary significance. The fourth year of Jehoiakim synchronizes with the first year of Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 36:1; 45:1; 46:2), i.e., 605

B.C. This verse and Daniel 1:1 are not in conflict. Archaeology has shown that there were two methods of chronological reckoning in the Near East -- by accession year and by nonaccession year. Judah used the first method; Babylon, the second.

- The people have been assuming that the promise of land is unconditional, and so they have felt free to break God's laws.
- Prediction of the Exile (25:8-11).
 - Now that the Babylonians are actually approaching Jerusalem, the Lord clarifies what He has been intimating for twenty-three years.
 - As the Lord's instrument, Nebuchadnezzar was to execute the divine plan for Judah and the nations. He was unconsciously doing God's will by devoting whole populations to destruction.
 - The results of His present actions will be humiliation and a loss of life's everyday pleasures.
- Judgment on Babylon (25:12-14).
 - This dark reference to 70 years of desolation is now turned into a message of hope.
 - The same divine principles that worked against Judah's sin would also be effective against Babylon. Its rule was terminated by the Medes and Persians under Cyrus (c. 536-535 B.C.).
 - The Babylonians believe they are in control of their fate; but these verses assert that, because Nebuchadnezzar is the Lord's servant, the Lord determines extent of his success (cf. Isaiah 10:5-23).
- The cup of God's wrath (25:15-29).
 - The sinful nations will become drunk with the suffering they will endure, and so they will stumble and fall to the ground.
 - The possibility is raised that some nations will try to avoid the destruction, perhaps by surrendering to the Babylonians without a fight. However, the Lord rules it out completely.
- Judgment on all the world (25:30-38).
 - The Lord is depicted as a lion stalking His prey, spreading disaster and striking fear in the hearts wherever He goes.
 - As the divine Judge, God is bringing charges against them, and then He will carry out the sentence imposed upon them.
 - Jeremiah heightens the common level of anxiety regarding the well-known danger of a lion by speaking of the danger to the shepherds themselves.
- Consequences of the temple address (26:1-24).
 - The temple address (26:1-6).

- To give the greatest publicity to his message, Jeremiah was charged to stand in the outer court, where the people assembled. It was doubtless a feast day when the people from the outskirts came for worship.
- Shiloh was not far from Jerusalem; the people could see the evidences of its destruction, even though it had been the first resting place of the ark of the covenant in the land (1 Samuel 3:1-3).
- The arrest, trial and condemnation of Jeremiah (26:7-11).
 - The reaction of Jeremiah's audience is immediate. The call for Jeremiah's execution was on the basis of his comparison between Jerusalem and Shiloh.
 - The prophets and the people apparently have their own interpretation of how the Lord is working out His will in their lives.
- Jeremiah's defense (26:12-15).
 - Jeremiah's defense was always the same: God had sent him to deliver the controversial message. Jeremiah stated the source of his message. He did not deny the truth; instead, he stressed its origin and authority.
 - In the hour of trial, Jeremiah's courage and fidelity to God shone brightly. He did not plead for his life.
- The release of Jeremiah (26:16-19).
 - The officials and people call for Jeremiah's release for "he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God."
 - They cited as a precedent the case of Micah in the days of Hezekiah (eighth century B.C.). Micah had lived more than a century before; he also prophesied about the destruction of the temple. As in law cases, citing a precedent carried weight. The reference to this prophecy turned the tide for Jeremiah.
 - The destruction prophesied is contingent on how the people react to Jeremiah's message, not on the fact he has delivered it.
 - If disaster does come, Jeremiah is shown to be a true prophet of the Lord and therefore free from prosecution as a false prophet.
- The murder of Uriah (26:20-24).
 - Not all faithful preaching had the same results as Jeremiah's. Uriah's situation turned out differently, and he paid for his preaching with his life. Except for the Lord's intervention, this could have been Jeremiah's fate also (cf. 36:26). Jeremiah did not, however, run from his mission.
 - Uriah (mentioned only here) was a true prophet from Kiriath-Jearim. His message agreed with Jeremiah's preaching. When

Jehoiakim and his military leaders heard Uriah's words, their intense hatred of the truth sought an outlet in slaying Uriah.

- The yoke of Babylon (27:1-22).
 - The message to the ambassadors (27:1-11).
 - The metaphor of the yoke is well-known in the Old Testament (Leviticus 26:13; Deuteronomy 28:48; 1 Kings 12:4-14; Isaiah 9:4; 10:27; 14:25; Ezekiel 34:27; Nahum 1:13; cf. Matthew 11:29-30).
 - Because God has created the world, He controls the fate of the nations in it (cf. Isaiah 44:1-7). There is an element of hope, though. Babylonian domination will last only three generations.
 - All the nations must submit to Babylon, just as an ox submits to the yoke. The only alternative He offers to those other nations is the same fate He has been offering to Judah -- the sword, famine and pestilence.
 - The address to King Zedekiah (27:12-15).
 - The warning already extended to the envoys of the nations is now directed toward Zedekiah. Here we have the meaning of the yoke for the Davidic king.
 - The thrust of the message is Zedekiah's submission to the Babylonians. He was a weak and ambivalent ruler who could never carry through a resolve to follow the Lord wholly.
 - Zedekiah is exhorted not to choose the way of resistance and disobedience, which would only bring disaster. So powerful was the influence of the false prophets at this time that the king had to be counseled to ignore their lying pronouncements.
 - The warning to the priests and people (27:16-22).
 - The false prophets were holding out a baseless hope that the temple vessels taken to Babylon were soon to be returned. This was a powerful incentive for Judah to revolt against the Babylonians.
 - However, Jeremiah reiterated the necessity of submitting to Nebuchadnezzar. To the prediction of the carrying away of all these things, the Lord added a promise that they would be restored in the day that He would judge Babylon. The vessels were returned to Jerusalem by Cyrus at the beginning of his reign (c. 536 B.C.; cf. Ezra 1:7-11).
- Hananiah against Jeremiah (28:1-17).
 - Hananiah's contradiction of Jeremiah (28:1-4).
 - Hananiah's "prophecy" constitutes an "official" response to Jeremiah's message.
 - His "prophecy" pins the hopes for Judah's future on the restoration of Jehoiachin as king.

- Jeremiah's appeal to the past (28:5-9).
 - Jeremiah's response to Hananiah's message is one of cautious optimism. Hananiah says what Jeremiah would like to hear.
 - The trouble with the false prophets was that they always predicted prosperity unconditionally and without need of repentance. It is always less popular to predict calamity rather than prosperity; so the presumption of truth rests with the prophet of calamity.
- Hananiah's response (28:10-11).
 - Hananiah's message contradicts the tone and content of the several messages Jeremiah has been receiving and prophesying, yet he does not quarrel with Hananiah until he has first heard from the Lord.
 - If he were to respond without waiting for the Lord's own response, he would be just as guilty as Hananiah of prophesying presumptuously.
- Jeremiah's stronger pronouncement (28:12-14).
 - God begins by reaffirming and strengthening His earlier message to Jeremiah regarding the image of the yoke of Babylon.
 - The "iron yoke" shows that Babylonian domination will persist, even in the face of repeated opposition and attempts to break it.
- Prediction of Hananiah's death (28:15-17).
 - Perhaps after an interval of only a few days, Jeremiah received a word from the Lord against Hananiah.
 - The Lord had not "sent" him before, but he is "sending" him now. He is a prophet who has been lying to the people.
 - Because Hananiah does not listen, and because he is doing harm in the name of the Lord rather than good, the Lord pronounces a swift death sentence on him.
- Jeremiah's letters to the exiles (29:1-32).
 - Introduction (29:1-3).
 - Jeremiah rightly felt he still had a God-given responsibility for the "residue of the elders," those who had not died through the rigors of the deportation.
 - We do not know the exact time for the sending of this letter, but the reference to the exile of Jehoiachin and others suggests a time soon after that event (c. 597-596 B.C.).
 - The first letter of Jeremiah (29:4-19).
 - Warning against false prophets (29:4-9).
 - Jeremiah advises the exiles to do what is necessary to show that they are going to be a part of that society for a long time.

- The message of the false prophets is one of hope and appeasement, while the Lord's true message is one of devastation and punishment.
- The seventy-year exile (29:10-14).
 - Although they are to settle down for a while in Babylon, their "expected end" is not to be found in Babylon, but back in Jerusalem; Babylon is only a temporary residence.
 - The Lord makes it clear that this is a reciprocal relationship. He promises them prosperity and a future, but He also expects reverence and devotion from them.
- The sword, the famine and the pestilence (29:15-19).
 - The exiles asked why Jeremiah insisted on an exile of seventy years when their prophets in Babylon were telling them the very opposite. Jeremiah replied that the false prophecies would be shown to be lies and their perpetrators would perish.
 - The wording of vss. 17-18 shares a great deal with the wording of 24:8-10. Zedekiah and the people still in Judah were seeing themselves as better than those already exiled.
- Denunciation of the false prophets Ahab and Zedekiah (29:20-23).
 - Jeremiah concludes his letter with a direct reference to two prophets in Babylon who are contradicting his words.
 - Jeremiah first announces the Lord's sentence against them, then he identifies their offenses.
- Condemnation of Shemaiah (29:24-32).
 - The punishment he mentions is essentially that employed by Pashur, in an earlier attempt by a priest to silence Jeremiah (20:1-6).
 - After Zephaniah had read the letter to Jeremiah, the Lord told him to send a letter to all the exiles, revealing Shemaiah's hypocrisy and announcing a twofold punishment.
- The book of consolation (30:1-33:26).
 - Trial and triumph for Israel (30:1-24).
 - Return from captivity (30:1-3).
 - Chapters 30-33 constitute a group of prophecies that has been called "The Book of Consolation."
 - The good news was the promise of the people's restoration to and their possession of their homeland, a message of glorious hope in that gloomy hour.
 - "A time of trouble for Jacob" (30:4-7).
 - Here the prophet speaks of the whole nation over which David and Solomon ruled. Jeremiah is stating that before the promise

of restoration can be fulfilled, the nation must be severely disciplined.

- The final clause of vs. 7 turns the attention of the reader from the people's suffering to the Lord's salvation from Babylonian oppression.
- Freedom from bondage to oppressors (30:8-11).
 - The promise of an eternal dynasty for David and his house is not retracted because of the actions of his descendants.
 - Their actions have brought on the exile, but it constitutes only a temporary interruption in the fulfillment of that promise.
- Israel's wounds healed (30:12-17).
 - In turning to the serious condition of Israel, Jeremiah wants to show that her punishment was well deserved.
 - Since the Lord caused the pain (vs. 15), He alone can take it away; and now He promises to do so (vss. 16-17).
- Rebuilt Jerusalem and her ruler (30:18-22).
 - Vs. 18 refers generally to the restoration of a nation's past glory. God's remarks hint at the way in which the leader will fulfill the expectations for a king, as spelled out in Deuteronomy 17:14-20.
 - The Lord will choose Israel's ruler. He will be able to approach the Lord only because the Lord brings him near.
- Judgment, then blessing (30:23-24).
 - This passage is inserted here lest the careless be given false security in their sins.
 - The Lord does His work of redemption by his power displayed in judgment. The blessings Jeremiah speaks of are only for the godly.