

September 11

Scriptures: Read Jeremiah 29 & 30

Key Verse: “And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”
(Jeremiah 29:13)

Overview

Jeremiah heard that there were false prophets in Babylon among the initial exiles of Judah, such as the false prophet Hananiah, who prophesied a speedy return to Judah. So Jeremiah immediately responded by entrusting two messengers with a letter, declaring to them the wonderful words of the Lord and specifically denouncing the false prophets with a coming judgment of doom upon them for teaching “rebellion against the Lord” (29:21-23, 31-32).

When Jeremiah addresses the people in exile, however, his tone is very different from the way in which he speaks to false prophets and the apostate people of Judah (29:15-19). To the exiles, the words of the Lord are “thoughts of peace” which give them “a future and a hope” (29:11). He once again reaffirms that the captivity would be seventy years (29:10; 25:11); therefore, while they were forced to remain in Babylon, they should carry on life as usual (29:5-6) and accept the fact of God’s chastisement, the purpose of which was to lead them to repentance and purify them, so that they might truly be the people of God. Jeremiah exhorted them to wait on God, for in His own timing He would indeed fulfill His promise of gathering them back to their homeland. He exhorts them to beware of the lies of the false prophets — a warning that the people of God must still heed today (29:8-9; cf. 1 John 2:18; Jude 3-4,16). As children of God, our safety depends upon having a close communion with the Lord and following Him, our Good Shepherd, so that we may “know His voice” and follow it alone, not “the voice of strangers” (John 10:4-5).

Jeremiah also warned them not to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar, for to do so would only increase their problems; rather, they should live contented and even pray for the peace of the city in which they had been placed (29:7; 1 Pet. 2:11-17; 2 Tim. 1-3; Rom. 13:1-7). Their first priority, however, was to obey God; in doing this they would shine like lights in the darkness of a foreign land. We also, as believers, are called to represent the Lord in a world darkened by sin, for we too are like strangers on earth; our true citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). We too are awaiting the fulfillment of God’s promise to bring us to our glorious future Homeland. Although we don’t know the year, day, or the hour of Christ’s return, we should live every day in expectation. Meanwhile, we should be responsible citizens, seeking peace in our communities and praying for our neighbours (29:7; Matt. 5:9).

Although the words of Jeremiah made no difference to the apostate people of Judah, he was still to speak them, and also write them down, as the Lord’s Spirit inspired him. God commanded him to write it, as we read in the beginning of chapter 30, so that it would be beneficial to those in exile, to those who would later return from exile, and even to us today (“in the latter days”) who find Jeremiah’s prophecies beneficial for our spiritual lives (30:2-3, 24b).

Judah was on the verge of complete destruction, which Jeremiah vividly describes as a time of great pain. Although most of his messages deal with doom, Jeremiah does bring messages of

hope, many of which are found in chapters 31 to 33. When Judah's situation seemed the darkest, the Lord gave Jeremiah great words of comfort dealing with the exile's physical and spiritual deliverance from bondage. This great deliverance speaks about more than just about Judah and Israel's return from the Captivity; it also foreshadows the future ingathering of the Lord, when all the redeemed of the Lord will dwell with Immanuel, "God with us" (30:10b). God sent Jesus the Messiah to redeem us and break the yoke from around our necks, that we might no longer be enslaved to sin and the things of this world, but that we might serve Him, the Great Son of David, King Jesus (30:8-9; Luke 1:69).

Both the Lord's goodness and justice stand out in this chapter. Because of the Lord's love for His redeemed people, He corrects them and oftentimes punishes them, for the Holy God cannot overlook sin. When He will judge and destroy the wicked nations, He will save those of His people who have heeded His chastisement and have continued to live in obedience to Him (30:11; cf. Rom. 11:22).

The ancient people of Judah suffered from the incurable and festering wound caused by sin, and they had no one to plead their cause and bring healing (30:12-13). But God sent Jesus, and through Him we can receive healing for our wounds (30:17; Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18; Isa. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:25). Also, for those of us whose hearts have been pledged to Him and are therefore His people, we have yet the hope of future glory when Jesus reigns. He will cause us "to draw near" and approach Him (30:21-22).

Prayer

Lord, Your desire is to be in close communion with Your children. Give us ears to hear Your voice and a heart to seek You first in our lives. May our response to Your voice always be "Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening."