

PROMISE KEEPERS & OATH BREAKERS

Tuesday, October 24

Reading: Jeremiah 33-34

Jeremiah 33:14 *"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. 15 "In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; He will do what is just and right in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."*

In the previous chapter (ch. 32), Jeremiah had bought some property in the area of Benjamin from his cousin. Now he explains what this action meant. Though God would destroy Jerusalem and send His people into captivity because of their sin, He will one day bring them back to their land and restore their broken relationship with Him. The land Jeremiah had bought was a reminder of this promise.

While the people would return to Jerusalem in 70 years, God gives Jeremiah a look far into the future to the coming of Messiah - the righteous Branch. He will bring ultimate salvation and security to Israel for He is "The Lord Our Righteousness."

By this time the Babylonian army had returned and again laid siege to Jerusalem. Jeremiah again warns the king of the coming disaster and his own capture by Nebuchadnezzar. But God promised that Zedekiah would not be killed. He would live out his days in Babylon and would be honored and mourned at his death.

Before the Babylonian army had left Jerusalem to engage the Egyptians, King Zedekiah had proclaimed that all Jewish slaves were to be set free. According to the Law of Moses, this was supposed to be done every seven years (Exodus 21; Deuteronomy 15) but apparently had not been enforced. Perhaps the king was trying to gain God's favor and deliverance from their enemies. And it seemed to work since soon after, the Babylonians left. However with the threat seemingly over, the people force their slaves back into servitude. The Lord condemns them for making this oath in God's name and then flippantly breaking it! He promises that their bodies would become food for the birds and beasts when Nebuchadnezzar destroys the nation.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. Though the present looked very bleak, God made a great promise: "Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (33:3). He would restore and redeem His people through the coming Messiah. What promises of God can we remember when things look bleak and hopeless? (Look up Matthew 28:18-20; John 14:1-6; Hebrews 13:5-6).
2. Despite God's great promise, the people continue in their rebellious ways. The oath these slave owners had made was serious. Walking between the pieces of the dead calf was in effect saying, "If I break my word, may I become like these dead animals." It was the same type of covenant that God made with Abraham (see Genesis 15). Breaking this oath was the worst form of rebellion and God promised to punish them in turn. How are we at keeping our promises? What should we do to make sure we are known as people who always keep their word?