

Week 34 Chronological

August 17: Jeremiah 35-37

The Rechabites are known mostly from Jeremiah 35. Their founder was Jonadab, son of Rechab, who lived in the northern kingdom. Jonadab fully endorsed King Jehu's reforms. The reforms included the demolishing of the Baal cults and other Canaanite practices. The Rechabites made an oath to their ancestor that they would not drink wine or build houses. Living in tents made it easy for them to pick up and leave the northern kingdom of Israel to the southern kingdom of Judah. God uses the Rechabites as an example to how the people of Judah should have responded to Him. The Rechabites kept their vow to Jonadab. The people of Judah did not obey God despite the fact that He has sent His prophets to warn them time and time again. God pronounces His blessings on the Rechabites because of their loyalty.

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605-604 BC), Nebuchadnezzar won his victory over the Assyrian forces at Carchemish. He began his move toward Syria. God has Jeremiah dictate a scroll to announce the impending doom. The LORD is trying to get the attention of His people. Jeremiah sends Baruch to the temple to read the scroll since he is barred from entering the temple. When Micaiah hears the words of the scroll, he alerts the scribes. The scribes, appalled at what they hear, go and ask Baruch how he came to write these words. Baruch explains it was from God. The officials tell Baruch that he and Jeremiah have to hide. They take the word to Jehoiakim. The king is understandably upset and has the scroll cut up and burned. He then sends for Baruch and Jeremiah, but The LORD had hidden them away. God then has Jeremiah dictate another scroll. God's word does not stop being law just because we do not like it. God is God and we are not.

Zedekiah is placed on the throne, fulfilling the prophecy of 36:30. Zedekiah did not follow The LORD. However, he still sent Jehucal and Zephaniah to Jeremiah asking him to pray to The LORD for them. God informs Jeremiah that Pharaoh and his army, who they had a flimsy alliance with, will return to Egypt. The Chaldean army withdraws, and Jeremiah begins heading to the land of Benjamin. At the gate, he is stopped by a guard that accuses him of desertion and is thrown in prison.

August 18: Jeremiah 38-40 and Psalms 74 and 79

Jeremiah, despite being imprisoned and on a bread and water diet, continues to deliver God's message. If the people submit to the Chaldeans, they will live. If they stay in the city, they will die by famine, plague, and sword. Some officials hear his words, approach the king, and make the recommendation that Jeremiah be put to death. They say that he is not seeking the well-being of the people. We know that is false. They are just upset that he is not prophesying good things for the people. Jeremiah is simply telling them what is to come. This is like blaming a doctor for an unfavorable diagnosis. The doctor did not make us sick, so why would we blame him? Jeremiah is not the one that is going to bring the disaster on the people, he is simply the one warning them!

Zedekiah hands Jeremiah over to the officials. They take Jeremiah and drop him in a cistern. The cistern had no water in it, but there was a lot of mud. A Cushite official approaches the king while he is at the Benjamin Gate, telling him what the officials had done. The king orders that he take 30 men and pull Jeremiah out. Zedekiah sends for Jeremiah one more time, demanding that Jeremiah tell the truth. Jeremiah confronts him, saying that if he tells the truth, the king will just have him killed. Zedekiah swears Jeremiah will be safe. The prophet again relays the message that if he surrenders to the Babylonians, he will live and the city will not be burned down.

In Zedekiah's ninth year as king, Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Jerusalem with his entire army. When Nebuchadnezzar's officials entered the city, Zedekiah and his soldiers fled. The Chaldeans pursued them and brought them back to Nebuchadnezzar. At Riblah, Zedekiah's sons are slaughtered in front of him. After this heinous act, Zedekiah is blinded. His palace is burnt down and the walls of Jerusalem are torn down.

Nebuchadnezzar frees Jeremiah and issues an order to protect him. Nebuchadnezzar makes an offer to Jeremiah to come with him to Babylon if he wants. If that does not please Jeremiah, then he can remain in Judah. Since Jeremiah does not turn to go to Babylon, he is told to go to Gedaliah, the Babylonian official appointed over Judah. Gedaliah works toward peace. He receives word that Ishmael has been sent by the Ammonites to kill him. Johanan approaches Gedaliah in private and offers to kill Ishmael for him. Gedaliah declines because he wants peace in the land.

Psalm 74 is a prayer for Israel. It asks if God has rejected them forever. Psalm 79 speaks of faith despite the confusion. These were confusing times for the Israelites. Those that remain faithful to the LORD have certainty in uncertain times. Just like the faithful could lean in and rely on God, we can do the same in these tumultuous times!

August 19: 2 Kings 24, 25, and 2 Chronicles 36

During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, attacked. Jehoiakim becomes Nebuchadnezzar's vassal for three years. He rebels against Babylon, but the LORD sends Chaldean, Aramean, Moabite, and Ammonite raiders against him. Jehoiakim dies and Jehoiachin takes over for three months. The servants of Nebuchadnezzar march up against them. They begin deporting people to Babylon. Zedekiah becomes king. Zedekiah rebels against Babylon. So, Nebuchadnezzar marches against Judah in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign. Jerusalem is destroyed. The LORD's temple is burned along with the king's palace. The walls surrounding Jerusalem are torn down, all the things in the temple are either destroyed or taken as plunder. The majority of the people are exiled to Babylon. For the few that are left behind, Nebuchadnezzar appoints Gedaliah to govern over them. Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, enters the land and kill the Judeans and Chaldeans that were with Gedaliah. All the people, from youngest to oldest flee to Egypt.

Both Israel and Judah are no more. The LORD has delivered on His promise.

August 20: Habakkuk 1-3

Habakkuk is one of the minor prophets. This book is different in the fact that rather than speaking to the people on God's behalf, Habakkuk speaks to God on the people's behalf. It is hard for the prophet to understand how God used the pagan and unrighteous nations as His instrument of justice.

The prophet cries that God is not listening to him. There is violence and He allows it to continue. Habakkuk makes the claim that the law is not effective since the unrighteous rise to prominence. God replies by telling him to look at all of the nations and be astounded. He will bring the Chaldeans to mete out His judgment on the wicked.

The prophet is concerned about the Chaldeans. He worries that they will go beyond the violence God wants them to do. God responds to Habakkuk telling him to write His words down since there will be a delay before it happens. The prophet closes his book with words of rejoicing. God is our strong deliverer. Nothing will overcome Him.

August 21: Jeremiah 41-45

Ishmael assassinates Gedaliah in the seventh month (our October).

The commanders of the armies approach Jeremiah. They ask him to pray on behalf of the remnant left behind. They promise to follow whatever God tells them. If they do not act according to God's word, they submit that the LORD will be a true and faithful witness against them. Jeremiah did not speak until he had the answer from The LORD. Ten days later, he delivers an unpopular message. God is not going uproot them if they stay in the land. The people were hoping that God would tell them to flee to Egypt.

Jeremiah is accused of lying to them. Johanan and all the commanders of the armies decided to not obey and leave Judah. They had conditional obedience for God. Earlier they stated that they would follow God's word, whether it was pleasant or unpleasant. They did not get the word they wanted from God, so they decided that Jeremiah is a liar and decide to go anyway. As believers, we cannot pick and choose which of God's commands we are going to follow.

The word of God comes to Jeremiah concerning all of the Jews living in Egypt. The people are provoking God to anger because of their desertion to Egypt. As a result, God is going to turn against them. He will send them disaster and famine. They will be an object of cursing, scorn, execration, and disgrace. At this point, it should come as no great surprise that the people continued to dismiss what God was telling them.

August 22: Jeremiah 46-48

God announces His judgment against the nations. The Babylonians are going to thrash Egypt. They will deploy many shields, harness their horses, take their positions, but the troops run for their lives the moment the battle begins. God proclaims that He will punish Amon, the god of Thebes. Amon was the chief god of Thebes. Later Amon was merged with Re to become Amon-Re, the sun god. Despite this proclamation against Egypt, God promises their restoration and reassures Israel.

God makes His judgment against the Philistines. The waters rising from the north points to the Babylonians. These floods are not going to bring fertile soil deposits. Instead, they will cause the Philistines to cry out in anguish. Three signs of mourning are prophesied for the Philistines, they will shave their heads bald, maintain silence, and gash themselves.

Moab is under judgment as well. Moab had remained untouched and had not gone into exile, even though it was located close to Israel. The nation had experienced very few invasions in its history. They will be put to shame by Chemosh is an allusion to the calf worship that Jeroboam decreed in 1 Kings 12:26-33. Moab will be a laughingstock to those around it. Even the Moabites that flee will meet a violent end. Still, God promises a future restoration of Moab's treasures.

August 23: Jeremiah 49 and 50

Ammon is next on the list for judgment. The opening verse of chapter one reflects the dispute over territory between the Ammonites and the tribe of Gad. A day is coming when God will make the shout of battle heard against the Ammonites. They will be banished. God closes this judgment against them with the promise that He will restore them at a future time.

Edom was a nation founded by Esau. The Edomites are subject to more judgment prophecies than any other nations. What is interesting to note here is that Jeremiah has a gentler tone dealing with Edom than he does with the other nations. They must endure the cup of God's wrath because of their guilt. Edom will be desolate. Others will look upon the nation with horror.

Damascus was the capital city of Syria. This city stands for the entire nation in this prophecy. Damascus had been a delight to God and had been occupied since ancient times. Kedar is an Ishmaelite tribe in the Arabian desert. Elam was the first of Shem's sons. Elam was an ancient kingdom approximately 200 miles east of Babylon.

Attention is turned to Babylon and the upcoming judgment on her. God has used Babylon to mete out His judgment on His people. He will also pour out His judgment on them. Babylon will be captured. Their god Marduk is devastated, and her idols are put to shame. A nation will come from the north against her. Babylon will be punished, and the Israelites will return to Carmel and Bashan. They will occupy the land God had promised them once more.

August 24: Jeremiah 51 and 52

The exiles are warned to leave Babylon. Another nation is coming, and it will destroy Babylon completely. Their comforts and riches will be destroyed. Sadly, there were many Jews that remained in Babylon after the exile had ended despite this warning about the future of the nation. These folks had established themselves there, were living comfortably, and probably enjoyed the opulent lifestyle the land offered them. Sometimes, God is going to call us out of our comfort zone. Will we be ready when He does?

We are reminded of God's might and power. He made the earth by His power and established the world by His wisdom. Those that make idols for the false gods are foolish. The metal gods fashioned by human hands have no power. There are further images of the desolation that is headed Babylon's way. Her sea will be dried up and the land will become a jackal's den.

At the age of 21, Zedekiah becomes king of Judah. He does what is evil in God's sight. God's anger was against him and the people, so God banished them from His presence. To his credit, Zedekiah did rebel against the king of Babylon. In Zedekiah's 9th year, a terrible famine hits the city. They have no food and all of the soldiers flee. Zedekiah is rounded up along with his sons and brought to Babylon. He is forced to watch the execution of his sons and then he is blinded.

In Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year as king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guards, enters Jerusalem and burns down the LORD's temple and the king's palace. The bronze pillars of the temple, water carts, and bronze reservoir were broken into pieces. All the treasures in the temple were carried away.