

Jeremiah 52:24-30 Hope Despite The Loss of The Land Falls Ch,AM,10/1/2023

Last week we looked at the loss of gold, silver, and bronze. Today we turn to the loss of land and to the loss of lives and human suffering that resulted from the Fall of Jerusalem.

Previously we were told in verses 4 and 5 that Babylonians surrounded Jerusalem, and starved them out for a year and a half.

We studied in verse 7 and verse 12 that the Babylonians breached the city wall and they entered Jerusalem in order to take over and destroy the city.

Then we examined the report in verses 9-10 that the king had been captured and his sons were slaughtered, and probably not slow deaths.

In verses 17-23, we considered how the Babylonian commander organized a month of dismantling the temple, carefully cataloging and looting the vessels, decorations, and objects of gold, silver and bronze to be carried back to Babylon.

As we were told out of sequence back in verse 13, they next burned down the temple, the city, the king's palace, and the nobles' great houses to the ground.

Today we move on to verses 24-27, where we learn that Judah was taken out of its land, and that the priests were put to death. Then in verses 28-30, we understand the report of the thousands who were taken as prisoners of war back to Babylon, in 3 waves out of the total 4 deportations that happened in history.

When we started reading Jeremiah, we were warned about all of this. We keep on referencing chapter 1:10, because that early was when the LORD said to Jeremiah, "*See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."*

We were warned that God would break down and destroy nations. What always seems to shock us, no matter how many times we hear it, is that God was willing to break down, destroy and overthrow His own city, His own temple, and allow His own kings, priests, commanders and warriors to be starved for months, to have their sons slaughtered before their eyes, to have their eyes put out, to be bound in chains, and for many of them, to be struck down by an evil king, and most of the remaining people to be taken out of The Land that God promised.

What are we supposed to learn about God? The main point of this sermon from this passage: **Because God was faithful to cause uprooting and destruction (Jer. 1:10), exiles can trust with a certain hope God to be faithful to re-build and re-plant.**

This applies to us because we are exiles, too. We are called to have faith and irrefutable hope that God is consistent to do what God said - to destroy then build. God said that He would allow His only begotten Son to be destroyed, then rebuilt, to be dismantled, taken out of the city, crowned with thorns, pierced with nails and a sword, and hoisted up for the death penalty of a pagan government on a Roman cross. When God said that Jesus would rise, and He arose, it builds our faith and

hope. And when we look ahead to God's promise that Jesus will come again to take us home from this-worldly-exile to the safety-of-heaven, our hope is confirmed.

**1. The slaughter of the nation's leaders (religious, military, & government!) (v.24-27a)**

In verses 24-27, there are 74 individuals specified for the commander to arrest and bring outside Jerusalem to the King of Babylon staying in a military camp to be struck down and put to death. This was not just some messy slaughter, and these were not the sort of deaths that happened in the heat of battle.

The captain of the Babylonian guard was intentional and selective in the people he rounded up for execution. It reads like Secretary of Defense, General of the Army, top officials of the Pentagon, plus the clergymen of the leading national denominations. Verse 24, the chief priest, and 2<sup>nd</sup> priest, and 3 keepers of the threshold of the temple. Verse 25, an officer in command of the men of war, and 7 men from the king's council, and the secretary of the commander of the army, and 60 others.

The people listed were official leaders being searched out by name and found. Organized effort was being expended to account for as the various branches of leadership, (religious, military, and government). Each was executed as an intentional act by the invading force. It was a demonstration by Babylon that the LORD's chief priest and second priest were dead and buried. The religious leaders were gone, so worship of the God of Israel must cease. This was strategy planned by evil Babylon, saying that all military and governmental leaders had been eradicated. There is an ominous finality. We are witnessing the death of a nation.

Only the unimportant stragglers or youngsters were taken captive in order to be used for slave labor in faraway Babylon. The LORD is telling us in His Word that He allowed all of this to happen.

How does this build up our living hope as exiles? Because before all of this executing of 74 leaders happened, before the death of a nation was demonstrated by evil king Nebuchadnezzar, the LORD had issued a promise. The promise was that after the passing of 70 years' time, God would take action. It would be Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom that would be eradicated; the kingdom of The LORD, that Nebuchadnezzar had assumed that he had destroyed, would rise from the dead.

Our God was building up the living hope of ancient and modern exiles by reminding us how powerful God is. Under the very noses of the enemies, the true kingdom of the LORD GOD would survive for 70 years. Grace in the end.

This truth is consistent with what God has told before on other occasions. For example, on the occasion of a leader named Samson. Samson was a Judge - which was one strong warrior specially equipped by God to rise up and save God's people from their enemies. Samson had the strength of a superhero, but Samson also had a lot of failures and weaknesses. God taught us to look beyond the

bumbling Samson and see God Himself at work despite Samson. We get glimmers throughout the unfolding story of Samson, but it is really at the end of the Samson story that we see the grace in the end theme. Samson was captured and his hair had been cut, which represented his disobedience and loss of power. Samson's eyes had been put out, which showed that Samson was defeated, but what was God doing? God was not defeated. Right under the noses of the Philistines, Samson survived. Bumbling and blind Samson used the strength that God provided, and in his death, Samson killed more Philistines than in his lifetime.

Same is happening in Jeremiah 52. God's weakest people, without priests, without military generals or warriors to organize a revolt, without government leaders in a position to spring them from an enemy prison, were looking as helpless as can be. But they have God's Word. God did not need priests, kings, generals, warriors, or government negotiations to save His people. In fact, during the whole time, God was teaching His weak exiles important spiritual truths. God was sanctifying His people, all while God preserved them under the noses of the enemy. God cared for His people in an enemy prisoner camp! The movement of commitment to the Word of God that carried the church in later years, started right there by the repentant exiles in Babylon. The exiles, during their 70 years, were sufficiently chastised, brought to repentance, purified, strengthened, and made ready for new things. The exiles were made ready to go home!

## **2. The uprooting of Judah from its homeland. (v.27b)**

Here we need to remember the value of the land. The ultimate penalty for their covenant disloyalty to God was being removed from The Promised Land. Their covenant Lord had promised and gifted this land to them. They had always assumed that they would never lose the land, no matter how sinful they became!

Verse 27 – Judah went into exile. Why would Jeremiah mention and single out this one group Judah here in verse 27b? It is like us asking - why tell us in Judges 16:22 that Samson's hair is growing back again? Because Samson was receiving God's grace in the end, while in enemy hands. God was saying I uphold my promises to Samson, even when Samson breaks his promises to Me.

Okay, why would Jeremiah mention in verse 27, "*So Judah was taken into exile out of its land.*" They were all taken into exile! Why make special mention of Judah? Let me give you a hint. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah! Revelation 5:5, "*one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered,..."*"

Because Judah is key to the future. The Lord Jesus Christ will come from the line of David and from the tribe of Judah! God is capable of preserving His people, right under the noses of the enemy. Samson, the line of kings in Judah.

For that matter, God is always doing something in His people. Let me read this in Acts 4:27-28, "*truly in this city truly in this city there were gathered*

*together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."* God's plan was the resurrection. God's plan was the death of Jesus, and then the resurrection of Jesus.

We even see God's preserving work in the priests in Jeremiah 52. In verse 24 the chief priest who was killed was named Seriah. He came from a line of godly priests. He was the grandson of the good high priest Hilkiah who had re-discovered the neglected book of God's Word during the reign of King Josiah. Let me read 2 Kings 22:8, "*...Hilkiah the high priest said...I have found the Book of the Law in the house of The LORD...*" God can preserve His Word. God can renew His servants. The High priest Hilkiah's grandson was this Seriah, listed here in verse 24, and Seriah was killed. However, Seriah's son lived on, and Seriah's grandson became the high priest during the return from exile!

1 Chronicles 6:14-15, "*...Seriah fathered Jehozadak, and Jehozadak went into exile when the LORD sent Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar."*

Haggai 1:1, "*In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest:...*"

Let me read Ezra 5:2, "*Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them."*

My point is that they killed the chief priest, but somewhere hidden within the groups of the deportations of the exiles God preserved the son of the chief priest. That young man later had a grandson who became chief priest during the people's return from exile! That is why Judah is mentioned. The future of God's fulfillment of the land, lay with these exiles from Judah, and God was closely overseeing every person. God can build a future out of a handful of remaining people. God can restore us to the homeland, after it was lost.

In Hebrews 11:8, we read that Abraham, "*...was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God...(v.13)...these all died in faith, not having receive the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth...(v.16) they desire a heavenly country, that is, a heavenly one...(v.17) God has prepared for them a city."* We exiles await our homeland, new Jerusalem.

### **3. The carrying away captive of surviving covenant people. (v.28-30)**

This marks the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity, 70 years of exile for God's people. how many people would you expect were taken captive?

Verses 28-30 refer to the two main deportations of Jews to Babylon in 597BC, which corresponds to the 7<sup>th</sup> year in verse 28, and 3,023 exiles were taken. The second deportation of Jews to Babylon happened in 586 BC, which corresponds to the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, listed in verse 29, and 832 exiles were taken. A third smaller deportation is also mentioned in verse 30, that happened five years later, in which 745 exiles were taken.

Are you a little surprised at the smallness of the numbers? At the end of verse 30, the report shows a total of 4,600 people. That is not a big number over a period of 15 years. Does it seem that the exile has been given a significance that is all out of proportion to its data?

The structure of the whole Book of Jeremiah, the largest book in the Old Testament, is organized around this exile event. The structure of the whole Old Testament is organized around this significant as the parting of the Red Sea to let God's people go from slavery in Egypt. Why is the exile such a big deal?

Because the LORD God has us focusing on it, in order that we learn something about our Lord. Our God is keeping track of each person.

If you are carried away captive into the place of sin, overseen by evil, God will see to it that you are protected, convicted, forgiven, restored, sanctified, and brought safely home.

Jesus prayed to God the Father in John 17:12, "*... I have guarded [the disciples], and not one of them has been lost except [Judas], that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*"

What hangs over the whole chapter Jeremiah 52 is verse 3, where God says evil was done, and verse 4, where the decisive action was God's - to be angry about their sin and cast them out from God's presence. God had a bigger purpose than Nebuchadnezzar had.

The significant fact is that these exiles were God's covenant people. No matter what happens, God will fulfill his covenant promises to them!

**Conclusion:** 1. Be built up in your faith and hope in the faithfulness of Our LORD.

Just like the Samson story, we are taught to look past our circumstances and ask what is God doing here? Jeremiah 52 is like a review of the whole book. Based on our study of the whole Book, the hope now being offered here is certain, profound and timeless. We are being asked to hope in the LORD of all history, the Lord over all nations, including our own nation. We are being reminded that this LORD is holy and so He always brings sin under judgment. That is the condition for us all, since Adam sinned and was cast out of the garden. We had all sinned and we had all been cast out of God's presence. The holy LORD is consistent in this. Yet we are being reminded that the consistent LORD is consistent in the flip side of that coin. We learned from Jeremiah chapters 31-33, that this same LORD promises salvation and restoration through His new covenant. 2 Corinthians 1:20,

*"all the promises of God find their Yes (fulfillment) in [Christ]..."* God fulfills His new covenant through the Great High Priest, who was killed, and rose again, that is God's own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:28, *"so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him."*

2. Because of your living hope in The LORD, eagerly repent of your own sins.

The priest Seriah was killed, but when we remember the whole Book of Jeremiah, we remember that Seriah was part of the problem. He was a priest who failed. All the priests failed. All the kings failed. All the soldiers failed. Every person failed. If we lament the decline of the citizens and churches in our country in our day, we must admit that we are each part of the problem. The country and churches declined because we declined. We were content with the level of knowledge, the level of service, the level of sacrifice that we had achieved in our Christian lives.

We need God's grace as much today as when we were born. We need God's grace as much today as when we were baptized, first believed, were converted or made public profession, or in the lowest point of our spiritual lives or in the highest point of our spiritual lives. The fall of Jerusalem and the loss of the homeland is the occasion that pleads with us to throw ourselves again on the mercy of Christ our Savior, and to eagerly repent of our sins, to confidently trust in His rescue of us to bring us home again, and His daily grace to us, to enable us to remain faithful to Him alone. 1 John 1:9, *"if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*