

Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

Week 34: Jeremiah 37-52 *When Judgment Arrives*

Welcome to Week 34 of the Bible Reading Coach Podcast. My name is Karl Vaters and I'm here to help you read through the entire Bible in 52 weeks.

So, last week we saw the last desperate days of a nation and a city that are doomed to destruction because of their sin. We've seen that God's patience is now at an end, even when they ask "Please, can you give us a good prophecy?" Jeremiah has to say "No, there are no good prophecies left." God's prophet at this point even seems to have run out of tears for the people. And even the ungodly King at this point seems to recognize that the country is doomed. This week, we're going to see that judgment played out in real time. So let's get right to it, shall we?

We'll begin our reading this week with chapters 37 and 38. Since Babylon has replaced Egypt as the world power, the Egyptians have promised to help Jerusalem because they hate the Babylonians even more. God tells Jeremiah to tell Jerusalem don't rely on Egypt's help, it won't last very long. And it doesn't. But while the Egyptians are there, the Babylonians do leave for a little while, because Jerusalem now has some reinforcements with the Egyptian army. While this is happening, and while there's a bit of a reprieve, someone sees Jeremiah leaving the city to go back to his home to get some things. He is at that point accused of running to help the Babylonians. And so he's thrown back into prison again. Eventually, they throw him into the cistern, the pit that they've dug, which is really an empty well that is in the middle of the prison. So not only is he in the prison and in a cell, but he's down a really deep well, which, essentially, you cannot even climb your way out of. It's narrow and it's very, very deep.

But even after he's in there, the king decides I needed to talk to Jeremiah one last time. So they lift him out. The Bible even describes in chapter 38, how they throw down some rags and old clothes and say, put them under your arm so we can pull you out the the realness of it, the graphic description of this very real situation where "How do you even get him out of a pit?" is described in detail here gives you a real sense of the grittiness and of, quite frankly, the historical reality. These are events that actually took place in real time as a fun little note there at about midway through chapter 38. Then the king asks Jeremiah, tell me what's really going to happen here. Jeremiah says, if I give you a real prophecy again you're going to try to kill me again. The Kingdom promises "No, this time, I tell you, if you give me the real prophecy, I will spare your life." So Jeremiah tells him the real prophecy is like I've been telling you all along, defeat is coming in exile is inevitable. The king then doesn't like the prophecy, but he keeps his promise. And he tells Jeremiah he will live under the guard as Jerusalem falls, and as the exile begins.

So in Jeremiah 39, then Jerusalem's fall begins and as you read through that chapter this week, you'll see it in really amazing and fascinating detail. Then in chapters 40-46, there's an interesting kind of almost interlude that happens here. Jeremiah is freed from prison in chapter 40. And then a segment of soldiers who have been more righteous than most of Jerusalem soldiers, asked Jeremiah, if God would bless them and their allies as they flee to Egypt for safety. Jeremiah says, Let me pray on that. And then he comes back to them with this message, God says, "I will only save your lives if you stay here in Jerusalem." Now a false prophet then comes along and goes, "Oh, nonsense, Jeremiah is lying, go ahead and run to

Egypt," which they do, and God condemns. And there are a handful of really harsh chapters about what God is going to bring upon Egypt as well.

Then in chapters 47, through 49, these three chapters, again, it feels like a bit of a shift, but it's all part of what's going on in the larger world around them. We have three chapters, where the surrounding nations are condemned up until now, it's really been about Jeremiah, and Jerusalem, and with a little bit of Egypt thrown in, but in these next three chapters, we see condemnations against the Philistines in chapter 47. Against Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, and Elam in chapters 48 and 49. Now why would God take a moment to condemn other nations that, up until this point, have been really sparsely, if at all, mentioned in the book of Jeremiah, the reason is this. He wants to let the people in Jerusalem know there is no escape you cannot run to your allies really close to you. They are condemned as well.

And then in chapter 50 and 51 he pronounces a long condemnation against Babylon itself. Yes, God will use Babylon to do his purposes to punish his people. But it still doesn't mean that he approves of their evil, and of the things that they have done, and even of the bad things that they're going to do to his people, he will use them, but he will not approve of what they're doing. He condemns Babylon's, violence, their pride, their idolatry, and a whole bunch of other sins that they have been and continue to commit.

And then we finally get to the last chapter of the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 52, where the end comes for Jerusalem. Jerusalem finally falls to the Babylonians. Babylon then puts a puppet King in charge, a man named Zedekiah. And it says that after 11 years as a fairly decent puppet king, or as good as puppet kings can get anyway, he then rebels against Babylon. And because of that, Babylon comes in, takes him off the throne. And at that point, they descend upon the city of Jerusalem in Wrath, destroying everything, including the temple, and then the final group of Jews are exiled into Babylon. And that's where Jerusalem ends on this note of negative and dread and doom, where the predictions and the prophecies that God will exile his people is finally fulfilled.

So it's a hard read this week, it really is. It's hard in that negative things happen. It's not hard in that it's hard to read. But it just, you know, when bad things happen, that's a hard read. But it's also really, really fascinating all on its own. Take note of a handful of things. First of all, this book is so long, in part at least because one, a lot of things happen. But also because it gives you an idea of how long God's patience actually lasts. These things don't happen overnight. They happen very slowly, because God continues to plead with his people, first of all, to repent so I can spare you of it. Secondly, surrender so that I can spare you of the worst of it, and they just refuse to do so.

Note also that God's prophet will always give God's truth even if we don't like it. Just the fact that we don't like what God's word says doesn't mean that we shouldn't obey it. We still need to obey God's word, even when it's hard because it will spare us in the long run. It's always better to follow God's will, even when it's difficult than to disobey God's will, even when it seems pleasant. Note also, that good news isn't always good, because it isn't always right. It's better to know a hard truth than a pleasant lie. Also, one thing to note, one of the exiles during this season is a young priest named Ezekiel. We'll read a lot more about him in the following week. But in this coming week, we're going to finish up Jeremiah. We're gonna see the conclusion to this amazing story, but thankfully, not the conclusion to the Israel story. Hope you get a lot out of it, and hope to see you next week.

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