

JULY 4

Laura mentioned this morning that she found it kind of cool that on the day that Josiah found the Book of the Law, the psalm we read was Psalm 1, *but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night*. I found that kind of cool too.

Today we are given some very fast-paced history which will bring the kingdom of Judah and the book of 2 Kings to an end. There are many important events here that we will read about later.

2 Kings 23:31-25:30

2 Kings 23:31-37

Pharaoh Neco removed Jehoahaz as king, showing he was boss, and installed Eliakim as king, renaming him Jehoiakim, showing again that he was boss. Both of these guys were sons of Josiah and both were bad. Neco's decision had to do with having a king in Jerusalem who would support Egypt and Assyria against the rising Empire of Babylon. The city where this took place, Riblah, is about 200 miles north of Jerusalem. That was a long way to go to get fired. Later, Nebuchadnezzar would also set up his court in that city.

2 Kings 24

Vs. 1-7 We'll meet Jehoiakim later in Jeremiah. He was a grade "A" jerk and was buried without honor. He is important for one big reason. When he made peace with Nebuchadnezzar, Neb took some of the young men captive to train them to serve him as governors, etc.. This was 605 B.C. and it began the Babylonian captivity. The clock of the Babylonian captivity was now ticking. Daniel and his friends were taken at this point. What I've never noticed before is that Jehoiakim served Neb for three years. Those three years play a very important role later.

V. 7 Babylon defeated Egypt and now controlled everything down to the Brook of Egypt, which was a river in southern Palestine and still about 100 miles from the Nile. About 20 years in the future, Neb would lead his army into the heart of Egypt and defeat them.

Vs. 8-17 Now Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son, was not a godly king. The last words of 2 Kings talk about him being taken out of prison in Babylon and being honored by Nebuchadnezzar's son, Evil-Merodach. Of course, you're wondering why you would name your kid, "Evil" anything. But the real question that you can't find answered here is why you have the story of Jehoiachin at the end of 2 Kings and also at the end of Jeremiah. You get the facts here but they mean little to you. I'll give you my thoughts when we get there.

Vs. 10-17 Nebuchadnezzar took Judah captive in three waves. The first wave which comprised only a few thousand was in 605 B.C. This was when Daniel & Co. were taken. This now would be the second wave, taking most of what was in the temple and about 12,000 of the skilled laborers. This was meant to have humbled the country, but not destroy it. If you take all the businessmen, soldiers and craftsmen, you don't leave much that a country can build on. The prophet Ezekiel was taken to Babylon in this second deportation.

As a note of interest, you have to ask yourself why Neb didn't just destroy Jerusalem and take everyone. It is because something happened in those three years that Jehoiakim served Neb, that gave him a reason not to want to destroy Jerusalem. If Jehoiakim had rebelled earlier, it would have made it tough on four Jewish boys, but once their three-year education was over, it didn't matter too much what Jehoiakim did, because Nebuchadnezzar had already had his first lesson in learning the fear of God, literally. The grace of God was working internationally before this second deportation even took place. We'll see this in great detail when we read Daniel.

This isn't something you get from reading commentaries. It is what the Spirit gives you, if you read your Bible year after year and are willing to be curious.

Vs. 18-20 Neb renamed Mattaniah (Josiah's third son), Zedekiah, showing he was boss, and left the humbled, yet existing, Jerusalem intact. God's judgment on Judah was not complete. We don't see it yet, but God was working overtime in great grace and mercy to preserve Israel as a nation in exile. It was grace upon grace and a very visible commitment to His promises to Abraham (an offspring and a nation through which all nations would be blessed), to David (his "son" would rule Israel forever) and to Solomon (that God's name would dwell in Jerusalem in the temple).

2 Kings 25

Vs. 1-7 Unfortunately Zedekiah didn't listen to Jeremiah. God told Zed through Jeremiah that he should open the gates of Jerusalem and walk out to the Babylonians. If he had done that, God promised to preserve his life and the city. Obviously he didn't obey. We'll see all of this close-up when we get there. Zedekiah was the final king of Judah.

Vs. 8-21 The city was destroyed and the temple was destroyed. When they burned the building, all of the gold melted and ran in between the stone blocks that made the foundation of the temple. These blocks were removed (and probably used for other buildings) so they could get the gold. This is why there wasn't one stone left on another and why Zerubbabel and the returnees (they were not a rock band) had to rebuild the temple foundation before they could rebuild the temple. All the cool stuff Solomon made was either destroyed or taken to Babylon, and to think that Solomon began this ruin by worshiping other gods. Most of the people were taken away into Babylon (a long walk) and only the very poorest of people were left. Jeremiah was left. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar gave special instructions about Jeremiah. I'm willing to bet it was on Daniel's advice.

Vs. 22-26 God's judgment wasn't over. When Gedaliah was killed, the people came to Jeremiah and asked him to ask God what they should do. God told them to remain in the land. They said that Jeremiah was lying, so they took him hostage and took off for Egypt. Neb followed them to Egypt and killed them and the Egyptians. I think that Jeremiah and his servant survived and Jeremiah returned to his hometown.

Vs. 27-30 This note is also at the end of Jeremiah, indicating it was years later, and after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Since Jeremiah wrote it in his book, we know he was alive.

Here is why this event is important. More than once, God told the people through Jeremiah that if they surrendered to Neb, opened the gates and went out, they would live and see God's mercy. Jeremiah said this very thing later to Zedekiah also, but no one did it, except Jehoiachin; and look what happened. Even this evil king was honored by God for obeying His Word spoken through Jeremiah. It was a last kind of proof to the people that if they had obeyed God, even in His judgment of them, He would have honored them.

The word to us as His disciples and to those we speak to in the harvest is that if we obey God, He will save and restore us.

Acts 22:17-23:10

Acts 22:17-23

Vs. 17-23 It is hard to believe that they were listening until he said the word *Gentiles*. Their fanatic racism was not to be taken lightly. Remember, this also existed in the church, therefore the necessity to give the Spirit visibly and to accompany the giving of the Spirit with the gift of tongues, tying together the experience of the Jews with the experience of the Gentiles. This racism explains these two visible manifestations.

V. 19 Notice that Paul had been involved in beating Christians - more on this later.

Vs. 20-21 This is an interesting interchange between Paul and the Lord.

V. 23 Can you imagine them flinging dust into the air. This sounds like something you'd expect to see in the primate house at the zoo. Actually, it is the heart of terrorism. We'll see this in action tomorrow.

Vs. 24-30 Paul might have been slow to show his Roman Citizen ID when he was in Philippi. Here, Paul played the card quickly. Roman soldiers like these almost whipped Jesus to death and they didn't like the Jews, for apparent reasons. These are the guys who used that cat-of-nine-tails with the metal and bone attached to the ends.

Acts 23

Vs. 1-5 Ananias the high priest was not Annas the high priest who accused Jesus. The commentators are all over the place here with Paul's response. I wasn't there, but I'll tell you what I think. After Paul was struck, he reacted. Even Jesus responded to being struck (John 18:23). But in answer to the question in v. 4, Paul got sarcastic. According to the BKC-NT, p. 419, Ananias was not known to be a good man. I believe the people did not respect this high priest and no one spoke well of him, therefore Paul's comment. If it was the case that all spoke evil of Ananias, he must not have been the ruler. So Paul said, "Oh, I didn't know he was high priest because everyone in Jerusalem tells Ananias jokes." You get the idea.

Vs. 6-10 At this point Paul began smelling "kangaroo." It was the court. Then he began smelling "goose." It was his and it was cooked if he stayed there. Paul knew there was no justice to be had with that group and that his situation was dangerous and hopeless. So Paul drove a wedge between the groups by appealing to the resurrection of the dead, which the Pharisees held and the Sadducees (the priests were Sadducees too) rejected. Amazingly it worked and the Pharisees began to stick up for their boy Paul.

V. 10 The Romans took Paul out of danger again.

In an odd kind of way here, the Lord was giving Jerusalem more grace, but they were rejecting it. Matthew 23:29-39 is a very intense word of judgment against these leaders, delivered two days before Jesus died. In response to Jesus' rhetorical question to them, how they would avoid being sentenced to hell, Jesus answered His own question, saying, *Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town.* Notice that what Jesus said was in the future tense. Before Jesus died He said this would be an attempt to keep them from being sentenced to hell, but their response would be violent toward His messengers. This is exactly what had happened to Paul. He had been scourged in synagogues and persecuted from town to town and now they wanted, really badly, to kill him.

In about 13 years, in 70 A.D., the Romans would finally be fed up with the Jews and destroy the city and the temple. Jesus said that this would happen. Just as Jesus was using Paul as an instrument of grace and judgment by putting Paul in a position to proclaim Christ, the Lord uses us the same way in the harvest today. Our job is to follow, reach out and make disciples, who make disciples of those who come to Christ. Those who hear and don't respond are responsible to the Lord.

Psalm 2

This psalm was probably written by David, sometime after the Lord had made the promise to him that his son would reign upon the throne of Israel. David's kingdom and influence was expanding because of God's blessing, and David was acutely aware that this was God's work, not his. David saw the plan of redemption and the promise to Abraham progressing through God's promise to him. Inspired by all of this, I believe that as David wrote this psalm about his earthly son, the Holy Spirit moved him to write what would become a prophetic description of the Son of David taking His millennial throne.

Vs. 1-3 This is a great question. With all we've read so far, the answer has to be the irrational power of sin in us. Even if God were visible, as He was in Jesus and will be in the Millennial Kingdom, man would still rebel against Him.

Vs. 4-6 David was seeing the Lord humble nations before Israel. This is exactly what the Lord will be doing during the Tribulation and at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. Actually, God is in charge today and regardless of what anyone thinks, the time will come when every knee will bow to Him.

Vs. 7-9 This is clearly prophetic. This never could have applied to any physical son of David. It applies to the coming Son of David.

Vs. 10-12 This doesn't just apply to kings, but to all people.

It's ironic. We are guests in God's "house;" and we decide, democratically, that we don't like His view of marriage or spirituality. We decide that His "rules" don't allow us to express our "humanity" and "freedom." The earth is terribly full of our "humanity and freedom." And the reality is that this "house" is ruined and will be replaced with a new "house." Why would the Lord want to take anyone with Him to the new house, who hated Him in the old house? The only sane people on this planet are those who know they are sick and lost, and know where to run. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it, and they are saved.

Proverbs 18:13

Oh well, I guess most of us husbands and parents are "cooked" on this one. Anyone who's trying to do better, raise your hand!