

OCTOBER 22

Today reflects a lot of dark times in the plan of redemption. In The Psalms we get Moses' reflections of 40 years leading a dying generation through the wilderness. In Jeremiah, Jerusalem is destroyed and the last of Israel is taken into captivity. And then it gets worse. In 2 Timothy, we find Paul in prison in Rome awaiting death, and I think Timothy is shaking in his sandals. It might be a good idea to get a bowl of something sweet to eat (candy corn... pumpkin pie...) as you read through these portions.

Jeremiah 39-41

Jeremiah 39

Vs. 1-14 This is a summary of the events. This happened just as God said it would.

V. 11 Notice that Nebuchadnezzar knew quite a bit about Jeremiah. There could have been a lot of sources for this information, but in terms of his desire to be kind to Jeremiah, you only have to look at the book of Daniel. Daniel had now been Neb's chief advisor for about 17 years. Nebuchadnezzar had not only worshipped God twice, but he had made it a law in his empire that Jews had complete religious liberty to worship Yahweh only.

Vs. 15-18 This is a flashback just before the Babylonians broke into the city. God tells Ebed-melech (see chapter 38) that he will be spared from the destruction of Jerusalem. Anyone who followed the Lord was spared. That says something about God and about the people. You of course noticed that Ebed-melech is the first of two very famous and honored Ethiopian eunuchs in the Bible. Notice that Ebed actually trusted in the Lord. I think his faith saved him.

Jeremiah 40

Vs. 1-6 We will not read this word of the Lord until Jeremiah 42:9. All of this is historical narrative of what happened after the Babylonians left and why the leaders and people came to Jeremiah to inquire of God. God's judgment on the ungodly wasn't finished, and what you see in chapter 42 will either shock you or you'll just say, "I should have known that was coming."

Apparently Jeremiah was rounded up for deportation to go into exile. When Nebuchadnezzar told Nebuzaradan to free Jeremiah, Nebuzaradan had to actually hunt for Jeremiah. His words to Jeremiah in vs. 2-3 show you what the leaders of Babylon understood about what God was allowing to happen to Jerusalem. I believe this is the influence of Daniel. God made Daniel a man with incredible impact. We'll see that he was the godliest man on earth at that time. The presence of such a person on earth has only happened a few times in the history of this planet. Through Daniel God protected His people in the Babylonian and Persian Empires, both preserving them and sending them back to Israel. That Nebuzaradan knew all of this about God's judgment and about Jeremiah probably means that Daniel had explained everything to Nebuchadnezzar and the other leaders. Daniel, as a boy before he was taken into captivity, would have known Jeremiah; and Daniel, as a prophet, would have been connected to Jeremiah by the same Spirit. It never says that Daniel accompanied Nebuchadnezzar on his journeys, but Daniel was his top/main/chief personal advisor, so it is possible that Daniel was there when Zedekiah had his eyes put out. It could also mean that Daniel actually met Jeremiah. Since Daniel was probably from the nobility, and Zedekiah was the son of Josiah, they might have known each other too.

Vs. 7-16 Some people suggest that it would have taken over a year to set up a government, but Gedaliah was an experienced government leader who came from godly stock. He would have known how to organize things. In a way this was no different than Nebuchadnezzar installing a new king, except that he destroyed the city and the temple, took all of the bronze and gold, and most of the people. What was left behind would have been very easy to organize and run.

V. 12 Notice that there was plenty of blessing.

Notice v. 14.

Jeremiah 41

Vs. 1-3 Ishmael had been an Israelite captain in the army. During the siege, many groups of Israel's army were outside of the city, probably hiding in the surrounding countries. I don't think Ishmael was trying to take over. I think he was sent as an assassin. The nations around Israel, including Egypt and the Ammonites, had made a treaty to fight together against Babylon. The reason Gedaliah had to die was that he wanted to obey God (whether he was godly or not) and serve Nebuchadnezzar. This is why he was killed. It is like the governments the US has set up in Afghanistan and Iraq. Their leaders become targets for assassination because they are no longer supporting the surrounding countries.

Vs. 4-10 This shows that Ishmael was a murdering opportunist. These 80 men were murdered for their supplies.

V. 10 Apparently Jeremiah was alive among the prisoners who were being taken to the Ammonites (Jordan). Poor Jeremiah. And this was nothing. Things were about to get exponentially worse.

Vs. 11-16 Unfortunately for Ishmael, Johanan liked Gedaliah and didn't like Ishmael. So now we have a happy ending, right? Johanan is a hero, right? Jeremiah is finally safe, right? O Weh!

Vs. 17-18 Now we have the stage set for the Word of the Lord mentioned in Jeremiah 40:1.

2 Timothy 1

Paul is in jail in Rome. Nero has gone officially nuts. Paul isn't under that nice house arrest like before; instead he is sitting in a deep, dark, dank dungeon facing death.

Vs. 1-2 If you look at a couple of Paul's normal greetings in Ephesians and Philippians, you'll see that the first verses of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy are different. I think that Paul is really emphasizing here that the reason we risk our lives in this dark world is because of the promise of life in Christ Jesus.

Vs. 3-8 Several sermons could be preached on this. This is very tender and Paul is trying to strengthen and rouse Timothy. I think Timothy was fearful because of the storm of persecution that had suddenly broken upon the church by Nero. It is one thing to talk about persecution. I think Timothy was in shock.

Vs. 8-12 Notice that this begins and ends with not being ashamed. Notice the tight logic and connection of these words and how one thought flows into the other, building an eternal perspective in the gospel.

Vs. 13-14 Very personal words for Timothy to keep on going and to keep working in the harvest.

The faith and love that are in Christ Jesus is what Paul received as a spiritual enablement in 1 Timothy 1:14. This phrase is a good one to ponder.

V. 15 The storm that hit Paul scattered the flock. Apparently it was a surprise and a blow to Paul that these two guys deserted him. Timothy would have known them too. Remember, Paul had some physical ailment and probably needed more than one person to attend him. We know from the end of this letter that Luke was the only one who stayed with Paul. This is the same thing that happened to the disciples the night Jesus was arrested. This could happen to anyone, but really, if we are trained in Christ, shouldn't we be willing to die for Him in the harvest? What was it that Jesus said about taking up our cross daily? The cross meant death. After the initial shock, we need to take hold of the spiritual reality of this life and fix our eyes on Christ.

Vs. 16-18 Because of the tone of v. 18, I wonder if Onesiphorus survived. I'm not sure and I've read suggestions that he died. Timothy was later told (2 Tim. 4:19) to greet his household, but that could have just meant his family. I think he might have survived, but, imagine if the government was looking for Christians to lock up and you went to visit the apostle Paul in jail.

That would be like wearing a t-shirt that said, "Hey, arrest me too!" That would be nuts, right? But Onesiphorus was a disciple who, apparently, was nuts for Jesus.

Psalms 90-91

Wow, this is a mega reading. Psalm 90 is by Moses, but Psalm 91 is anonymous. Reading them together you wonder if Moses wrote Psalm 91 also. Psalm 90 could be Moses' reflection on 40 years in the wilderness leading the people, and Psalm 91 could be Moses' reflection on 120 years being led by God on earth. Remember as you read these, that they were both songs of worship, not just theological declarations.

Psalm 90

Vs. 1-2 God was their dwelling place in the wilderness, but when they remembered the entire history of what had happened on earth from Adam to Noah to Abraham, God was the dwelling place of all generations. What an interesting thought that with all the decaying around us, God is eternal and everlasting.

Vs. 3-4 This is the life of man on earth without God. He has seen men come and go.

Vs. 5-6 This is the glory of man on earth without God.

Vs. 7-8 The effects of sin still ravage us. Even though we are saved, we still struggle with sin and this decaying body.

Vs. 9-11 This is a summary of the preceding verses. Life on earth isn't really something to die for or live for.

Vs. 12-17 And if we understand the desperate situation of life on this planet, then there is reason to rejoice in knowing the Lord. He is the only one who makes life of any value, who gives any lasting joy and who will make our lives count for anything in His redemptive purpose in this life on earth.

Psalm 91

Vs. 1-2 Notice the theme of dwelling. These are two pretty famous verses and great declarations of our hope in the Lord.

Vs. 3-6 If this is written by Moses, this could be a reflection on the conflict with Pharaoh. God didn't just protect Moses and Aaron, but His *wings* covered millions of people and led them out of Egypt.

Vs. 7-8 This is God's comfort to those who trust in Him. This might be a reflection of the peoples' fear, knowing that Pharaoh was after them, and then seeing how God saved them after passing through the Red Sea.

Vs. 9-10 Notice again the *dwelling place* and the freedom from the plagues. Those plagues could have been what happened to the Egyptians. There are other things that plague those who do not have God as their dwelling place.

Vs. 11-13 This is the promise God gives to His people. Satan knew these verses well and used vs. 11 and 12 to try to convince Jesus to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple. (Matt. 4:5-7) God will save us as He sees fit. God was about to save Paul by taking him to heaven in 2 Timothy.

Vs. 14-16 Actually, as I read this I think of Jesus in Isaiah 53 and as He suffered on the cross. It might be that as Satan quoted vs. 11 and 12 to Jesus, Jesus was thinking of these verses. Dwelling with God in His presence is the best place we could ever be. What a blessing to know Him and know His love and pleasure.

Proverbs 26:1-2

Amen.