

OCTOBER 28

This is a red letter day. You'll be finishing two books, Jeremiah and Titus. I don't mean to get you fat, but I think it would be an appropriate time for a treat of some sort.

Jeremiah 51:54-52:34

Wow, the end of the book of Jeremiah! You did it!

Jeremiah 51:54-64

Vs. 54-58 This is the end of the pronouncement of judgment on Babylon. Remember, most of this is yet to come.

V. 57 The night Babylon was taken, that brilliant and serious military strategist and king, Belshazzar, knowing his city was surrounded, decided to get everyone stinking drunk and celebrate to the gods. It was a desperate religious act, trying to find a god who would respond to their desperate need. The Persians could have taken the city with two boy scouts and a blind German Shepherd. To be fair to Belshazzar, he did get a response from "the other side." At one point King Belshazzar brought out the drinking vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem and fed wine to his wives while praising the gods of gold and silver. Yahweh took exception to that and publicly wrote a message to him in the plaster of the wall. Belshazzar died that night. Trivia question: Who was in charge of the empire of Babylon (the last Babylonian ruler) the night the city and empire fell? A Jewish exile named Daniel. Keep this in mind.

Vs. 59-64 So Zedekiah and Seraiah both went to Babylon in the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. It could be that this is the event of Daniel 3. This would have been the 12th year of Nebuchadnezzar and that fits nicely into the time frame. If so, Zedekiah was on hand to see three Jewish men risk their lives to follow God, and he would have seen Nebuchadnezzar worship the God with whom Zedekiah was in rebellion.

Just for trivia, if you do a word search on those words describing who Seraiah was related to, *the son of Neriah*, *the son of Mahseiah* (Jere. 51:59), you find that Seraiah was the brother of Jeremiah's assistant, Baruch (Jere. 32:12).

Seraiah read the prophecy against Babylon and threw it in the Euphrates. Five years later Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Seraiah was killed by Neb, and Zedekiah was severely punished by him.

Interestingly, this is the end of the prophecies of Jeremiah. Yet, we'll read more from Jeremiah in Lamentations. What follows now is all history.

Jeremiah 52

Tradition says that Jeremiah wrote 2 Kings. This might have been added here by Jeremiah as an historical summary of the final events.

Vs. 1-3 Zedekiah was a spineless man, ruled by those around him and by fear. His own lack of faith destroyed him. He rebelled against Babylon because of his officials who wanted to join an alliance with Egypt and the other surrounding neighbors to oppose Babylon.

Vs. 4-11 The reason the Babylonians could breach the city was because the famine was so severe, that no one could stand anymore to defend the walls. We have read this about the flight and punishment of Zedekiah.

Vs. 12-16 This is the end of Israel, beginning with the destruction of the temple, going to the destruction of the city and finally the taking away of the people. Thankfully God had already been working for several years to preserve His people in Babylon.

V. 14 When they burned the temple, the gold on the walls flowed into the cracks in the foundation. To get the gold, the foundation blocks had to be moved. This led to the total disassembling of that building. The foundation stones were valuable and well cut and were probably hauled away to be used for other buildings. When Zerubbabel showed up years later, he had to re-cut stones for the foundation of the temple.

Vs. 17-23 This was the total humbling of Israel. These items had been their pride. God promised Hezekiah that all of these would be removed to Babylon. See 2 Kings 20:17.

Vs. 24-27 Now this is what you did when you conquered a people. You found their leaders and you put them to death. Seraiah, whom we met in 51:59, died here. So here is a question. I mentioned that Daniel was the last ruler of the Babylonian Empire the night the Medes and Persians took over. Why didn't they kill Daniel? Why did Daniel become a beloved and key ruler under Darius the Mede? We'll figure it out together when we get to Daniel. God's amazing grace and working would be the short answer.

Vs. 28-30 Although the main deportations took place at a set time, Neb was always taking people into exile. Some of them lived in the surrounding area and some people obeyed and got out of the cities. Because of the next verses dealing with Jehoiachin, I tend to think that these minor deportations are those who obeyed and willingly surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. That would also account for the low totals here. Not many of the people were willing to obey God.

Vs. 31-34 I've seen it suggested that this is a sign that the exiles would eventually return to Jerusalem. That may be. But clearly it is a delayed fulfillment of God's promise, that if anyone left the city and surrendered to the Babylonian army, they would be taken into captivity and God would honor them. (Jeremiah 21:9) This is what Jeremiah told Zedekiah to do when Zed asked him to inquire of the Lord for him. Zedekiah didn't do it, because he didn't believe it and was afraid of his Jewish enemies. Jehoiachin, the king before Zedekiah, walked out of the gates of Jerusalem with his mother, was imprisoned, but for his obedience, was honored.

I'd like to think it was Jeremiah, 27 years after the fall of Jerusalem, who wrote these notes. I'd like to think he settled down on that acreage he bought in Anathoth, married some sweet young thing and lived in peace, writing out 2 Kings and enjoying the sunsets at night.

Jeremiah had suffered in his service for God. He was hated by most people for bringing them a message of salvation they didn't want to hear. And for all of this, he helplessly watched his people give themselves to disobedience and destruction. Yet even with this, he was much closer to God than anyone around him. When we read Lamentations 3, we'll see the deep faith and maturity of Jeremiah in the midst of all the suffering.

Titus 3

Wow, the end of Titus!

Vs. 1-8 This is an awesome passage of Scripture. At this time, Nero was beginning to light the fires of persecution. To me, the section has to do with people being salt and light in the harvest.

Vs. 1-2 This is keeping our hearts and attitudes in tune with Jesus and His love, so that we can work in the harvest. Getting lost in "civilian affairs" and being anxious and vocal about elections is a way to repel others needlessly from Christ.

Vs. 3-7 We always need to remember that we, too, were lost and in rebellion to God, hating and being hated. It was His complete love and mercy that saved us in spite of who we were.

V. 8 The main way to show the love of Christ is *good works*. Even in persecution a disciple needs to remember why he is here, and it is very hard to slander a neighbor for being a Christian when he helps your elderly parent rake leaves. There are lots of things the Spirit shows us to do in our own neighborhood, if we know our neighbors and we live in the harvest. Notice that these

good works are tied into our salvation in Christ. In fact, notice that this entire section has to do with living a life as an ambassador of Christ in a dying world. The spiritual perspective and power to live like this comes from the gospel and our own salvation, through the grace of God.

Vs. 9-11 Whatever focuses the church inward, taking on a self-righteous life of its own, is brought about by warped people. And it takes away our compassion for the lost in the harvest.

V. 12 I like this guy Tychicus. Suddenly he's everywhere. He's also mentioned in Acts, Ephesians, Colossians and 2 Timothy.

V. 13 Titus was supposed to make sure that the church supported these workers and sent them out with their back-packs full.

V. 14 One more urging of the people to be involved in *good works*, which I think means being in the harvest following Christ.

V. 15 Isn't this an interesting sentence, *Greet those who love us in the faith?* That "faith" embraced the entire spiritual perspective of life in Christ in the harvest. There is a kindred spirit of those who know what it is all about and are working hard in the harvest.

Psalm 100

Wouldn't it be great to get through something indescribably hard and dangerous, something that had been filled with difficulty and sadness, and then to stand on the other side of that "something" and celebrate the goodness and salvation of God? We get glimpses of this, and it is ultimately where we are heading.

Vs. 1-2 This will happen completely when Jesus takes His throne.

V. 3 These are just a few words, but the depth of what they mean is endless.

V. 4 That we can enter His gates and courts is enough cause for praise and thanksgiving.

V. 5 This is the declaration of David. God's *steadfast love* and His *faithfulness* are often found in tandem, and they are always found when we seek the Lord.

Proverbs 26:18-19

Wow, what a declaration from God. That little sin is the tip of a madly sinful and violent heart. Little sins have a way of seeming innocent, funny and acceptable. Those of us who have known people like this know that it definitely isn't funny.