

OCTOBER 4

You are beginning Colossians today and your feet are just getting wet in Jeremiah. You should be encouraged with how much you have read this year. Just think, you're reading your 24th book in the OT, your 12th in the NT, and you are more than halfway through your second reading of The Psalms.

Jeremiah 2:31-4:18

Jeremiah 2:31-37

Vs. 31-32 Notice that these words are written to a particular generation. This is written in the early years of Josiah, the godliest king Jerusalem ever knew. These words against these people would be fulfilled during the next three kings, still 40 years down the road. For most of his 55 years as king, Manasseh had ingrained idolatry into Judah and Jerusalem. This idolatry was now the culture and national identity of the people. Although Josiah was incredibly brave and passionate about saving his people from the wrath of God, God is saying through Jeremiah that they will not change. Those people during the years of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah forgot all that God had done through Josiah and they are this generation.

V. 33 They were so good at harlotry, that they could teach old prostitutes new tricks. No pun intended.

V. 34 This refers to the charge against Manasseh that he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood and God would not forgive. (2 Kings 24:4)

V. 35 This was the biggest sin of all. We understand this. When God is silent, we think everything must be OK.

Vs. 36-37 Jerusalem switched alliances regularly, rather than holding to the Lord.

Jeremiah 3

These words probably came before Josiah found the OT and passionately began to cleanse the land. When you see what God says to the northern (exiled) kingdom, you understand how this might have motivated Josiah to take his crusade further north into Israel.

Vs. 1-5 In saying this, God is not rejecting true repentance, but rather false profession in the face of troubles. You know how we always get "serious" when things are going bad. They did it too, but God isn't fooled.

Before Josiah, there were small temples of Baal along the roads or on the hills, each with a prostitute. People could make a quick worship stop and be on their way. Although Josiah got rid of these things, as soon as Josiah was dead, the people put them up again. People were worshiping Yahweh, and also everything else. God didn't (doesn't) like that.

Vs. 6-10 In light of those first five verses, this is what God spoke to Jeremiah. What is the message? In Ezekiel, God will take this two sister analogy and graphically develop it, giving them both names. You would have thought that Judah would have taken seriously what they saw God do to Israel. But today too, we really don't learn much from the example of others who make mistakes and are judged.

Vs. 11-18 Another word to Jeremiah, this is for the future restoration of Israel (the northern kingdom) and its reuniting with Judah into one nation. Notice the call to return. This was a great promise of mercy and restoration. Although Judah was just within a few years of judgment, God was still appealing to the people to turn to Him. Too bad it all fell on deaf ears.

V. 11 Israel was more righteous, in that it only ever had idolatrous kings. It honestly followed their example. Judah had some very godly men, but the people still defected from God.

V. 13 This is all God needed.

Vs. 19-20 God would have healed them had there been repentance.

Vs. 21-25 This might be God's call to a future generation and the confession and future repentance of Israel.

Jeremiah 4:1-18

Vs. 1-4 Notice that this returning was relational. It was not to a religion, but to Yahweh, the living God. Returning and repentance was to look like true returning and repentance. When John the Baptist was faced with the Pharisees coming to him, he told them to bear fruits of true repentance. The Pharisees walked away, but the people understood and wanted to know more. Here, there was only the show of repentance and returning, so God prophetically motivated them.

Vs. 5-18 Imagine that Jeremiah had to preach this publicly. This would be the word to those people 30 and 40 years in the future. When Jehoiakim heard these words (along with the rest of what Jeremiah wrote) it was winter, so as these lines were read to him, he cut them from the scroll and threw them into the fire. Cool, huh?

V. 10 Many places in Jeremiah, Jeremiah himself cries out in anguish. Here, I think his problem with God was that God allowed the false prophets to prophesy peace. But it was what the people wanted. It wasn't God's fault. Later, Jeremiah goes nose to fist with these prophets.

It was good that God started Jeremiah's ministry during a time of national revival, because people were willing to listen. I think these first six chapters during the time of Josiah (11 & 12 also) helped Josiah have the courage he needed to work to change the nation. After Josiah, the real battles begin for Jeremiah.

Colossians 1:1-20

Colossians was written at the same time as Ephesians, while Paul was in prison in Rome. Colossae was about 100 miles east of Ephesus. The same guy, Tychicus, carried both letters and he probably was in good shape when he was done with the delivery. It is likely that Paul had not fathered this church as he had Ephesus. It appears that Epaphras was the disciple who sowed and reaped in this field.

It is evident that as Christianity grew, there were constant problems cropping up. People took the teaching and twisted it; therefore, we have all of these letters. We also have Paul telling Timothy to guard and entrust the truth. As you read this letter you will notice how similar it is to Ephesians, but what will be important for us is to see where it is different. Those differences will point to the particular problems at Colossae.

Vs. 1-8 As Paul talks about the gospel here, notice that the gospel is *bearing fruit* everywhere it goes. That should say something to us, that if we let the gospel out, it will bear fruit. In this context, it also tells the people there that the message of the gospel is the same truth all the people have responded to. They don't need a "special" truth of their own. Not only that, Epaphras is a well-known and approved worker. It appears that Epaphras was there telling Paul and others about this church.

Vs. 9-12 This is Paul's prayer for their growth. You see parts of Ephesians and Philippians in this. Notice again the *bearing fruit*.

Vs. 13-20 This is the fullest description of Jesus' work and His deity in the NT. This also begins to hint at the problem the Colossians were facing. It was a teaching that said that Jesus was not fully God, that at some point He had been made by God and had been made a god. You get this from all the things that Paul says here. It would be good to map out all the things that Paul says about Jesus.

The *firstborn* is a reference to Jesus' position, not that He was created and was born into existence or deity. In John 1:1-18 you see the apostle John making sure everyone understood that Jesus was God. In fact, in John 5 Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of God and as the Son of Man. As the Son of God, he is God the Son, fully God, never created, always one with the Father and Spirit. As the Son of Man, Jesus was born as a man, and as a full-fledged man in submission to God, was given authority to rule by the Father. At the end of John 8, Jesus calls Himself Yahweh, I Am. There is no perfect analogy for the Trinity or the person of Jesus. We have the biblical information and are simply told it is true. We don't need to be able to figure out God.

Today we have many religions that say that Jesus was something other than a part of the eternal triune God. The Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus was Michael the Archangel who was made into a god. The Mormons say that Jesus was a god among many gods and the half brother of Satan, who was chosen to be the savior of man. It is understandable that as the gospel spread, there were people who couldn't grasp the Trinity or understand God the Son becoming the Son of Man. It took 300 years of church councils and fights to formulate the doctrinal positions on the Trinity and on Jesus that we find in church statements of faith. All of those positions find their ways back to the NT and to these words.

The truth is important, and so we entrust truth to others to be passed on. It is important what we believe about Jesus. Paul and all the NT writers describe Jesus as God who became man and took our place. To make Jesus secondary in any sense (not fully God or only one of many saints to whom we pray) eventually destroys the message that brings salvation. Paul said it to the Philippians, *For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.* Who glories in Jesus Christ except those who have been saved by faith in the Son of God? As Paul said, *Who loved me and gave Himself for me* (Gal. 2:20).

Psalm 76

Vs. 1-3 Notice the importance of Zion and the broken weaponry.

Vs. 4-9 If you put together some of the reading we've been doing, you might get an interesting feel about this psalm. The event sounds like it could be when Assyria came against Jerusalem. We just read about this in Isaiah. This gave the people great confidence in the object of God's affection, Zion; but they didn't fully turn to Him. Now with Babylon about to assail Jerusalem in Jeremiah, the people had a false confidence in Zion as if it were magic, not fully understanding that they had totally lost God, and so, Jerusalem would be destroyed.

Vs. 10-12 As you read this, remember the arrogant words of Rabshakeh in 2 Kings 18 & 19. He vented his wrath on the people, the city, the king and then on God Himself. God used his wrath, to bring Himself praise. Interestingly, the final battle on earth will occur just miles outside of the walls of this city; and, again, men will vent their wrath against God and Israel. God still says Zion is His city, and that's why the irrationality of man (and spirit) aims its hatred there. This morning in Romans I read, *"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."* (Rom. 9:33) Jesus is that living stone. Zion is the city in which He will reign. The powers of nations, earthly and spiritual, will be drawn there to that city to witness the arrival and wrath of the coming King. There, our Lord will use the wrath of men to bring Himself praise. In the meantime, we need to be bringing in the sheaves.

Proverbs 24:21-22

We would take the part about the Lord and say, "Duh, of course." But what about the part about the king? You can just imagine what the Christians in Rome thought about their governmental leaders. Take five minutes to read Romans 13. Look at what it says disciples are to do regarding

the government. Look at what it says disciples are to do regarding the harvest. The same author wrote this proverb and that chapter.

That last line is interesting. If you oppose God and oppose the authorities He has put in place, when the hammer falls, it is a double whammy.