**BCM Bible Study – October 5/6, 2022**

**Jeremiah: God’s Judgement…For Our Good (Jeremiah 24-25)**

Background: Jeremiah 24 and 25 are in reverse chronological order. We will study them in the order given in the Bible, but here is a brief timeline in order to help your sense of what is happening historically:

* 609 – Josiah (the last good king) dies; **Jehoahaz** reigns for 3 months; Judah comes under Egyptian control, Jehoahaz is exiled; Egypt places **Jehoiakim** on the throne
* 605 – Nebuchadnezzar’s reign begins, defeats Neco (pharaoh), and besieges Jerusalem; first wave of people taken to Babylon (Daniel 1:1-5)
  + **This is the setting of Jeremiah 25**
* 601 – Babylon temporarily withdraws from Palestine to focus military attention on Egypt, Jehoiakim rebels against Babylon, switches allegiance and seeks help from Egypt
* 598 – **Jehoiachin** reigns for 3 months, Neb. attacks Judah and takes 10,000+ captives to Babylon; this is the first of 3 major exiles (not including the small exile that included David in 605). Babylon places **Zedekiah** on the throne
  + **This is the setting of Jeremiah 24**

Good and Bad Figs

* To set the scene for Jeremiah 24, **Read 2 Kings 24:10-17.** Now, **Read Jeremiah 24:1-10.**
  + Describe the illustration that God gives to Jeremiah. What hope is God offering through this metaphor?
  + Given the context of Jeremiah 24:4-7, what is the end purpose of God’s judgment?
    - “The exile is now a certainty; the issue is only how people will respond to God’s decision to punish. The good figs are those who accept the need to go through the Babylonian devastation of the land and the exile itself (5). To these, the Lord now promises life again…This life lies on the other side of judgment, the ‘tearing down’ and ‘uprooting’.” (New Bible Commentary, hereafter NBC)
    - Can you think of a time when God “tore you down” in order to give you new life? What does it look like to faithfully follow God during these hard times?
  + What does God promise to give to the people upon return to the land? (v.7)
    - Does this remind you of any New Testament concepts?
    - **Read Matthew 15:1-11**
    - “*The new thing, however, is the Lord’s giving them a heart to know him, so that at last they might obey the call which once they would not hear.*” (NBC)
    - How does the passage from Matthew help you to further understand God’s comments in Jeremiah 24?
    - What is convicting about Jesus’ teaching that defiling comes from inside of us as opposed to outside the body?
    - What are some ways that we can discern or tell what those areas/parts of our hearts that are defiled are? How do we work on fixing or correcting that?
  + Who are the bad figs? Why do you think that those who remained in Judah (i.e. were not exiled) are the ones who are spoken of in this way?
    - “*The poor figs are all who refuse the punishment of the Lord. This punishment cannot, of course, be literally avoided, but refused in spirit. Zedekiah typified those in Judah who looked to an alliance with Egypt to fend off the Babylonian menace. The flirtation with Egypt symbolized rebellion against God.”*
    - How does this magnify the good purposes of God’s judgment?
    - In what way does Jeremiah 24 encourage submission to God’s purposes?

Seventy Years of Captivity: **Read Jeremiah 25:1-14**

* Why does God bring punishment upon Judah? (v.1-7)
  + We have already talked about this at length, but note again that this episode of judgment should not to be taken as a snapshot of a brash God – He was patient and gave Judah continual chances over many years to repent.
* Note that the exile will be 70 years (v.11-12). **Read 2 Chronicles 36:20-23**
  + Why was the exile the amount of time that it was? How does this expand the way that you think about the Sabbath?
  + “The prophecy of seventy years reminds believers that God’s means of testing and refining take time. As with the issues of universal justice and the fate of nations, a process of refinement is best understood at the end. How many people have confessed a quick fix in their Christian lives only to realize that God is not through with them yet?” (Dearman)
    - Both Jeremiah and 2 Chronicles use language that refers to either Nebuchadnezzar or Cyrus, respectively, as servants of God.
    - What does it mean for these two non-believer kings to be servants of God?
* What is the silver lining or hope for Judah in Jeremiah 25:1-14?
  + How does the 2 Chronicles passage offer comfort in hearing of the fulfillment of Israel’s return to their land and Babylon’s judgment?
  + What does this show about how God keeps his word?
  + How can we come to personally trust in these promises, even when they could take such an incredibly long time to come to fruition?

Cup of Wrath: **Read Jeremiah 25:15-20, 27-29, 33**

* What does this passage say about God’s coming judgment? How is the scope different than previous judgment statements?
* What image does God use to describe the pouring out of his wrath?
* **Read Matthew 26:36-39.**
  + How does the Jeremiah passage about God’s coming wrath shed light on Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane?
  + In what way does understanding God’s wrath magnify the cross?
  + “Indeed, it is about to fall on him [Jesus] as a sacrificial lamb. In prayer he struggles to bring his emotions into line with what he knows to be God’s will. He will trust God with the immediate events to come - thought they entail much suffering on his part - because he trust God with the future of all his creation.” (Dearman)

We’re over halfway through our study of Jeremiah now (in time). What do you remember about the beginning? How have we seen God’s work progress through Jeremiah up until now?