

Psalm 109, II Kings 19-24 (#85)

Psalm 109 — David appeals to God against wicked enemies who tried to destroy him. *Do we have the right to ask God to judge those who have wronged or betrayed us? Consider vv 4-7, Luke 23: 34, and Romans 12:14, 17-19.*

II Kings 19— Upon hearing the arrogant words from Sennacherib’s field commander, King Hezekiah tore his clothes in mourning and sent Eliakim and others to Isaiah to ask for his intercession and seek an answer from the Lord. The Lord responds to Hezekiah’s plea by assuring him that He has heard the blasphemy of the king of Assyria and will act on their behalf. Therefore he and his people should not be afraid of the army of Assyria. When the king of Assyria put greater pressure on Judah to surrender, Hezekiah took the letter he received, spread it before the Lord, and fervently sought for deliverance. In his prayer he recognized the Lord as the sovereign ruler of the universe who alone deserved the honor and glory (vv. 1-19). In response to his prayer, the Lord speaks directly to Sennacherib’s pride and arrogance by declaring his defeat and ultimate death (vv. 20-28). To Hezekiah, the Lord guarantees protection and deliverance for Jerusalem in order to bring glory to Himself and because of His servant David. That night the angel of the Lord came into the camp of Assyria and struck down 185,000 soldiers. So Sennacherib broke camp and returned to Nineveh being stunned by the turn of events. Sometime later he was killed by two of his sons, and another son Esar-haddon took his place as king (vv. 29-37).

If God did not come through for Hezekiah and Judah, they would have been destroyed and deported to Assyria like Israel of the Northern Kingdom. Why did God protect Judah and not Israel? What other instances in the Bible do we see God coming through for a person or Israel where if He hadn’t, they would have been killed or destroyed? Can you give a personal illustration of God coming through for you in a difficult or impossible situation?

II Kings 20— This chapter takes place more than a year before the invasion of Assyria (chapter 18 and 19). Hezekiah is informed by the prophet Isaiah that he has an illness that will end in death and therefore must put his house in order. Upon hearing the news of his death, Hezekiah cried out to the Lord in prayer with bitter weeping reminding the Lord how he had faithfully and wholeheartedly served Him. God quickly answers his prayer, extends his life 15 more years, and gives him a sign by having the sundial go back 10 steps. Hezekiah succumbs to pride and shows to the envoys of Babylon all of the riches of Judah. Isaiah rebukes the king by prophesying that in the future the armies of this far away country would take all the people and their riches, including Hezekiah’s royal descendents, to Babylon.

When Hezekiah was told that Judah and his future descendants would be taken off to Babylon, he said, “The Word of the Lord that you have spoken is good,’ for he thought: Why not, if there will be peace and security during my lifetime (v. 19, HCSB)?” What is your reaction to Hezekiah’s words? Should Hezekiah have more concern for future generations that came after him? How does the way you live your life affect your future generations?

II Kings 21— Now we come to the darkest, most evil days of Judah when Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, becomes king and does more evil than any king before him. During his 55 year reign (697-642 B.C.), Manasseh committed every pagan atrocity imaginable including setting up the image of Asherah in the temple, offering his son as a sacrifice to the pagan god Molech, building altars to the heavenly hosts in the courtyards of the temple, and the shedding of much innocent blood (including probably that of Isaiah, Hebrews 11:37b). It was because of the evil he had done as king that caused Judah to go into captivity (23:26, 24:3). The king of Assyria shackled Manasseh and took him off to Babylon, and “in his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers (II Chronicles 33:12, NIV).” The Lord brought him back to Jerusalem where he tried to undo some of the evil he had done (II Chronicles 33:10-17). Amon, Manasseh’s son, become king and continues the evil of his father. After two years he is assassinated and his son Josiah becomes king at the age of eight. *One of the most remarkable attributes of God is His mercy upon undeserving people (which is all of us) . Manasseh, the wickedest king of Judah, humbles himself and repents, and God restores him (II Chronicles 33:10-17). What other illustrations like this are we given in the Bible? See I Kings 21:20-29, Jonah 3-4, and Acts 9:1-8.*

II Kings 22— Now comes the amazing reign of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.). The writer of II Kings says about Josiah , “Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul, and with all his might according to the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him (23:25, ESV).” Because of the waning influence of Assyria, Josiah was able to annex a portion of the land of Israel (Northern Kingdom) to Judah, including Manasseh and Ephraim, and abolish pagan worship throughout Judah and Israel. He initiated repairs to the temple that had been in great disrepair due to the evil reigns of King Manasseh and Amon. While renovating the temple, the book of the law was found by Hilkiah, the high priest, who gave it to Shaphan, the court secretary, who read it to the king. Upon hearing the book of the law, King Josiah tore his clothes and wept knowing that God’s great wrath was imminent because of Judah’s evil. The king asked Hilkiah and other servants to inquire of the Lord. They went to Huldah the prophetess to find out what Yahweh would say to them. The Lord said that indeed His wrath was kindled against Judah, but that since his heart was tender and humble, the disaster that would surely come would take place after his death. *Hilkiah, the priest, with other servants of King Josiah inquired of the Lord’s direction through the prophetess Huldah. Name other women in the Bible who God used as a judge, prophetess, leader, or teacher.*

II Kings 23— Josiah commanded all the elders and people of Judah to call a holy convocation in Jerusalem in order to hear the book of law and then make a covenant in the presence of the Lord to obey His commands and decrees (vv. 1-3). Josiah did a complete house cleaning of all the false worship by removing every idol from the Temple, from Jerusalem, from every high place, from every valley, including tearing down the altar at Bethel and the high place of Jeroboam as the man of God had prophesied 300 years earlier (I Kings 13:1-2). In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah, Judah

celebrated the Passover as it hadn't been observed since the days of the judges (vv. 4-23). The national revival came to a halt when King Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Neco at Megiddo (609 B.C.). Neco deposed Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, only three months after his reign began and put his brother Jehoiakim (also called Eliakim) as king in his place (vv. 28-37). *Verse 25 speaks of the total commitment of King Josiah. This verse reminds us of the Great Commandment in Matthew 22:37-38 and Deuteronomy 6:5. Who were other people in the Bible that were totally committed to the Lord throughout their lives? What steps do we need to take to be totally committed to Christ? Does God bring to your mind any area in your life that is not totally yielded to Christ?*

II Kings 24— In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated the combined armies of Egypt and Assyria at Carchemish in northern Syria causing Judah to switch its allegiance from Egypt to Babylon which had been prophesied by Isaiah about a hundred years earlier (II Kings 20: 16-18). King Jehoiakim reigned for three years and attempted rebellion against Babylon. In 598 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege, and captured Jerusalem, and replaced King Jehoiakim with King Jehoiachin. After reigning only three months, King Jehoiachin and all his royal family were deported to Babylon including the gold articles from the temple and the palace. Jehoiachin was replaced by his uncle Mattaniah whose name was changed to Zedekiah. Zedekiah reigned eleven years and did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He rebelled against the king of Babylon which sealed his doom. *Verses 3-4 says, "Surely these things happened (destruction of Jerusalem)because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord was not willing to forgive (NIV)." What will be the necessary outcome in our world because of the millions of innocent lives that have been killed in wars, by evil rulers, on the streets, and in the womb during the last 100 years? See Revelation 9:20-21, 16:5-7, and 18:24.*

Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups . c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV. 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion c.2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc. Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc. Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009, David C. Cook. 9. Halley's Bible Handbook, c. 2000, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Understanding the Bible c. 2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Homan Bible Handbook, c.1992, Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 13. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL. 14. Life Essentials Study Bible, c. 2011, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 15. Unger's Bible Handbook, c. 1975, Moody Publishing, Chicago, IL.

Psalm 110-111, II Kings 25, II Timothy 1-4, Titus 1 (#86)

Psalm 110 – This is a messianic psalm which was quoted by Jesus in the gospels and mentioned by the Apostles in various epistles. *What does this Psalm teach us about Jesus?*

Psalm 111 – This is a song praising God's works and commending those who reverence Him. *What are some of the attributes of God's works mentioned in this psalm (see vv 2-4, 6-7)?*

II Kings 25– *The era of the rule of kings from Saul to Zedekiah came to an end with misery and defeat because of the continued disregard for God and His laws. Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.) is placed in power by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon but finally rebels against him (588 B.C.), thinking that Egypt would come to their rescue. After two years of laying siege (586 B.C.), the city of Jerusalem was broken into, and the king and his warriors fled the city. The king was then captured and brought to Riblah to be sentenced by Nebuchadnezzar. After seeing his sons slaughtered, Zedekiah's eyes were put out, and he was carried bound in chains to Babylon (vv. 1-7). The Lord's temple, the king's palace, the walls of the city, and all the houses in Jerusalem were destroyed by the Babylonians, and the poorest of the land were left to take care of the vines and the farm land. Many of the rulers of the Jews were killed by the invaders, the temple furniture and utensils were confiscated by them, and the king left Gedaliah to be governor (vv. 8-22). Ishmael of the royal family killed Gedaliah as well as those who were left to rule with him. The leaders who remained took Jeremiah and all of the people who were left in the land and went to Egypt for protection against Babylon (vv. 23-26). Meanwhile in Babylon in about 560 B.C., King Jehoiachin of David's line was released from prison and dined regularly in the presence of the king of Babylon for the rest of his life (vv. 27-29). *What book in the Bible records a prophet's sorrow at seeing Jerusalem destroyed, and who wrote the book?**

II Timothy– This book to Timothy was Paul's last letter (66-67 A.D.) and was written from prison in Rome while awaiting his execution by Nero. This epistle is full of instructions and encouragement to Timothy who has been in charge of the church in Ephesus. Many of Paul's supporters had deserted him, leaving only Luke at his side in his final months. Paul declares to Timothy his priorities which are sound teaching, faithful endurance in the midst of suffering, a commitment to discipleship, and the diligent study and preaching of God's Word.

II Timothy 1– As we read this personal letter to Timothy, Paul's deep love and affection for his spiritual son is expressed with great confidence for his authentic faith. Knowing that his own death was imminent, Paul wanted to encourage Timothy not be fearful or be ashamed of Christ's person and work but to be willing to share in suffering for the gospel (vv. 1-8). The results of the gospel are powerful since because of our Savior Christ Jesus, death has been abolished and eternal life and

immortality are now available to all who trust Him. Paul was appointed by Jesus to herald this good news. He had no doubt that because of the merits of Christ alone, God would safely guard all that he had entrusted to Him for the day of His return (vv. 9-12). God's Word and the apostle's teaching gave a clear pattern and guide for Timothy to follow, and so he must not deviate from it (vv. 13-18).

Paul told Timothy not to be fearful (v. 7) or ashamed (v. 8). How did Paul and the apostles behave in the midst of great persecution? See Acts 4:13, 29, 31, and 14:3. Where and to whom do you need to more boldly share your witness for Christ?

II Timothy 2— As Paul runs the last lap of his part of the relay race, he calls for Timothy to firmly grasp the baton he is passing off to him, and then in turn find faithful men who can continue the process of teaching others. Using metaphors of a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer to describe the fully surrendered life, Paul says that a soldier should not allow himself to be entangled in the concerns of civilian life, an athlete should only compete according to the rules, and a farmer must work diligently to merit the first fruits of the harvest (vv. 1-7). “Here is what is really important and what can't be chained the way that I am chained! It is the message I preach which is the pure gospel of salvation that is paid for by the sacrifice of Christ and declared powerful and effective through His resurrection (vv. 8-11, adapted).” Paul tells Timothy that it is important to be a diligent student of God's Word and to teach it correctly. Be careful with idle and irreverent talk since it can lead to the ruin of those who hear it. The Lord knows those who belong to Him, but our responsibility as His children is to turn away from evil (8-19). We should desire to be pure vessels, ready to be used by God for His purposes. God's servants must flee evil passion, pursue righteousness, instruct opponents with patience and gentleness trusting that they will repent and come to the knowledge of the truth (vv. 12-26).

What is Paul telling Timothy to do in verse 2? Why is this so important? Give other verses in the New Testament that declares its importance.

II Timothy 3— Paul describes a society with increasing moral deterioration which puts self-fulfillment at the center of their lives even though they might act like religious people in order to cover their inner bankruptcy. The traits of the culture in the last days will be materialism, pride, living for pleasure, the unraveling of the family, the disintegration of all morality and authority, and a love for evil. It is important that godly men and women be aware and avoid leaders who come into the church to teach that which is contrary to God's Word (vv. 1-9). Timothy had carefully observed Paul's godly life and teaching including his purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance. As a boy, Timothy saw in person the suffering Paul went through when he was stoned in Lystra which was Timothy's home town. Everyone who strives to live a godly life will face persecution. Paul then states that the scriptures played a decisive role in bringing Timothy to salvation. He firmly declared that the Holy Scriptures are God-breathed and fully able to correct and discipline us so that we will be fully equipped for the tasks God has given us to do (vv. 10-17).

What do we mean when we say that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inerrant and fully authoritative? Does the Bible say that what Paul wrote was scriptures? See II Peter 3:15-16.

II Timothy 4— Timothy was challenged by Paul to preach God’s Word at all times in order to rebuke, correct, and encourage the brothers and sisters with all patience. A time will come when people won’t tolerate the truth but will look for teachers who are like themselves. At the end of his life Paul had a confident expectation of receiving a crown of righteousness when Christ judges believers since he had fought a good fight and kept the faith (vv. 1-8). In the last fourteen verses Paul speaks of fellow workers including Demas who had deserted him. Only Luke was with him, but he wanted Timothy to come and bring Mark also. At his first defense before Caesar Paul was alone, but the Lord stood with him. Just before the final benediction Paul closes with these words, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen (v. 18, NIV).” *Paul said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my race, I have kept the faith (v. 7, ESV). How should Christians live their lives so that they will have no regrets when they face Jesus at His judgment?*

Titus— Titus was counterpart of Timothy and was used by Paul as a troubleshooter in his church planting ministry. This book, written about 64 A.D. to Titus while he was on the island of Crete forming new churches, is very similar to I Timothy in that Paul gives the qualifications of the leaders so that Titus would choose the elders wisely. He is also given the task of confronting false teachers (1:10-16). Paul had just gone to Crete with Titus to start the house churches, but now it was the job of Titus to help these churches grow and mature. Major themes in this book are; (1) that all believers live lives of integrity, faithfulness, godliness, and righteousness, (2) that salvation is by grace through faith, not by works of righteousness, and (3) that we are not to allow false teachers and divisive people to be a part of the assemblies.

Titus 1— At the very beginning of the letter Paul clearly states his purpose which is for Titus to build up the believing Cretans in the faith so that their knowledge of the truth would lead them to living a godly life. Just like Timothy, Titus was Paul’s true son in the faith and was a valuable colleague in ministry with gifts of leadership, organization, and teaching (vv. 1-4). As in the book of I Timothy (chapter 3), Paul lists the character qualities of the elders he is to appoint. The elders are to be blameless in life and testimony, in marriage and family, and have a clear understanding of biblical truth (vv. 6-8). They should have the ability to communicate this truth in order to encourage believers and refute false teachers (vv. 9-10). In the next six verses Paul gives a scorching assessment of the character and actions of these Cretan leaders and teachers, both Jews and Gentiles. Paul describes these men as rebellious, empty talkers, deceptive, dishonest, greedy, liars, lazy gluttons, detestable, disobedient, disqualified, and with corrupted consciences. *Verse two says, “In hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie, pronounced long ages ago (v.2, NASV).” On what basis can we say that those who have truly put their faith in Christ have eternal life and will never be lost? See Num 23:19.*

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Psalm 112-113, Titus 2-3, Philemon, Jeremiah 1-3 (87)

Psalm 112 — The various ways that God blesses those who love and revere Him are discussed in this Psalm. *Besides material blessings, what are some other ways that the righteous are blessed?*

Psalm 113 — The psalmist exhorts us to praise God for His lofty majesty and His care of the lowest among men. *Consider the contrasts in this Psalm, from the highest heavens to the dust of the earth. How does this show us that God is worthy to be praised?*

Titus 2— Paul stresses the importance of sound teaching that will lead to godliness making Christians attractive to others who do not know Christ. Paul gave instructions to various groups including; (1) older men (v. 2), (2) older women (v. 3), (3) older women to teach younger women (vv. 4-5), (4) young men (v. 6), (5) Titus (vv. 7-8), and (6) slaves (vv. 9-10). Now the grace of God that brings salvation has been revealed to everyone instructing us to reject evil and worldly pleasures and to live God-honoring lives. He redeemed us for the very purpose of being His own special people full of good works. As a member of Christ's kingdom right now, our eyes are fixed on Christ's glorious coming. His return is the real hope for the believer (vv. 11-15). *In verse one Paul exhorts Timothy, "You must say the things that are consistent with sound teaching (HCSB)." How can we recognize sound teaching?*

Titus 3— Paul is extremely concerned about the testimony of believers to the outside world as it relates to government and non-Christians. He reminds them of the ungodly and evil way they used to live before they were saved. Now because of God's kindness and mercy their lives have been transformed by the renewal of the Holy Spirit to be heirs of God with the hope of eternal life (vv. 1-7). Three times in this chapter (vv. 1, 8 and 14) Paul insists that brothers and sisters devote themselves to good works in order to be salt and light to the unbelieving world. Not only should their lives exhibit the love of Christ through their good deeds to those in need, but also they must reject anyone who shows himself to be quarrelsome or divisive (vv. 8-15). *Three times Paul emphasizes the need for believers to show a transformed life to the non-believing world. What are actual things we can do as Christians to demonstrate Christlike qualities to nonbelievers?*

Philemon— This personal letter was written by the Apostle Paul to Philemon in about 60 A.D. while he was in house arrest awaiting a trial before Caesar in Rome. Philemon was a wealthy Christian businessman in Colossae who hosted a church in his home. His slave Onesimus ran away to Rome where he came into contact with the apostle Paul and was soundly converted to Christ. Paul then sent Onesimus back to Philemon in Colossae with this letter asking him to forgive Onesimus and also be willing to call him his brother in the Christ. Paul also personally guaranteed payment for anything he might have stolen or wrongs he committed. After reading this chapter, *what are the steps that Paul took in order to appeal to Philemon and rebuild his trust in his runaway slave Onesimus?*

Jeremiah— Jeremiah's ministry lasted from 627 until 586 B.C. when he was forcibly taken to Egypt by a group who were afraid of Babylonian reprisals. God called Jeremiah as a young man to be a prophet of doom because of the continued evil of Judah. There was a revival under the leadership of King Josiah, but from the moment of his death (609 B.C.), the real hearts of the leaders and people were exposed. God called Jeremiah to confront them about their sin and His forthcoming judgment and urged them to repent and return to the Yahweh. The role of a prophet was very difficult for Jeremiah since the people didn't want to hear the truth. He did not declare God's judgment with a hard heart but with such a tender heart that he was called the "weeping prophet." Even though he suffered beatings, imprisonment, great persecution, and was left to die in a cistern full of mud, God promised to be with him and protect him. Although the world would say that Jeremiah's life was a failure, in reality it was a great success because for forty years he was obedient and faithful to God's calling regardless of the opposition or personal cost. #3 p. 1195

Jeremiah 1— At the very beginning of his calling by God, Jeremiah declares his inadequacy and inability to serve as a prophet to the nations. God assures this reluctant prophet that he needs not be afraid of anyone, but promises to be with him and deliver him. The Lord then made a powerful statement to Jeremiah in verse ten saying He will fill his mouth with His words and has appointed him over nations and kingdoms to uproot, to tear down, to build, and to plant (vv. 9-10). He then saw two visions from God; (1) a branch of an almond tree, and (2) a boiling pot tilting away from the north (v. 11-16). The Lord promises judgment for their evil and idolatry. God tells Jeremiah to say everything He commands and not to be intimidated by them. Although they will fight against Jeremiah, they will never prevail, and God will be with him and rescue him (vv. 17-19). Explain the meaning of the two visions in verses 11-16.

Jeremiah 2— Chapter two begins Jeremiah’s heart wrenching indictment against the apostasy of Judah. The Lord remembers back to Israel’s loyalty and love as a young bride of Yahweh when she was holy to the Lord. He protected Israel from anyone who would try to hurt her by sending disaster upon them. However, even though He brought them to a lush and fertile land, they defiled the land through idolatry. The priests, rulers, and prophets all followed useless idols that caused the Lord to bring charges against them (vv. 1-9). Here is a conundrum. All the nations who follow worthless idols are still loyal to them, but Israel who had the true God deserted Him for useless idols. They have done a double evil as they have abandoned Yahweh, the fountain of living water, and have dug cisterns for themselves that hold no water. Because of this stupidity, Israel has been beaten up, trashed, and deserted by all her neighbors. Why has this happened? Israel had abandoned the Lord and did not fear Him (vv. 10-19). Judah declared that she didn’t want the restraints of the Lord and prostituted herself before every pagan shrine. In times of disaster Judah came crawling back to Yahweh pleading to be saved, but God tells them to go to the gods they were worshipping and ask them to come to their aid (20-28). Israel killed her prophets and shed the blood of the innocent poor and yet says, “I am not guilty and surely His anger will turn away from me.” But it is a sure thing that Yahweh will judge her. In looking to Egypt and Assyria for help instead of repenting and turning to the Lord, Judah would be put to shame. The people of Judah would be taken into captivity to Babylon with their hands on their heads as prisoners of war (vv. 29-37). “We must guard against taking God’s love and grace for granted and bowing down to modern-day idols in our own cultural environment. What are some of the specific idols that often replace God—even among professing Christians?” #14 p. 988

Jeremiah 3— The law says that when a man divorces his wife and marries another, he can never return to the first wife. Israel expects God to take her back. Israel and Judah have become spiritual prostitutes and exceedingly wicked, but now they were trying to make amends to Yahweh hoping He will not hold a grudge forever (vv. 1-5). Judah saw what the Lord did to Israel because of her harlotries when He gave her a certificate of divorce and sent her into captivity to Assyria. Yet Judah still did not really return to the Lord but only in pretense, not with her whole heart. So what is the Lord asking? He is asking unfaithful Israel and treacherous Judah to return in genuine repentance to God and acknowledge her guilt (vv. 6-13). Yahweh promises in the future to give them shepherds loyal to Himself. Israel and Judah will become one and will cease to follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts. Jerusalem will be called the throne of the Lord and all nations will gather to it (vv. 14-18). So Yahweh pleads to faithless Israel and Judah to return to their Father, and sometime in the future they will genuinely repent of their great sins and will beg for mercy and grace (vv. 19-25). *There was a revival in Judah under the leadership of Josiah, but in 609 B.C. he died in a battle of with Pharaoh Neco of Egypt. What was the real reason that the country reverted back to do the evil done under Manasseh immediately after the death of godly King Josiah?*

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Psalm 114-115, Jeremiah 4-9 (#88)

Psalm 114 — This psalm celebrates the terrifying and formidable presence of God. *Put yourself in the Israelites' shoes for a moment. How would you feel to experience the Red Sea, the Jordan (vv 3, 5), or to watch Mount Sinai (vv 4, 6) tremble under the magnitude of God's presence (see also Exodus 3:6, 19:16; Acts 7:32; Hebrews 12:21; John 10:28-29)?*

Psalm 115 — The psalmist encourages us to trust in and praise God who is our help and shield. *What reasons and results does the psalmist give for trusting in God?*

Jeremiah 4— The Lord calls for a show of genuine repentance by removing the detestable idols and for them not to waver in this decision. Their hearts are like hard ground that must be plowed up. If they do not repent, God's wrath will start a fire that no one can extinguish (vv. 1-4). Yahweh will bring disaster from the north (Babylon) with the ferocity of a lion, the force of a whirlwind, and the swiftness of an eagle. On that day of ruin and destruction the king and officials will lose their courage and the false prophets will be scared speechless because they prophesied peace when the sword was at their throats (vv. 5-18). Jeremiah writhes in anguish and agony because of the devastation that will come upon the land and the people. All of this destruction has happened since the people of Judah are experts at evil and incapable of doing good. As a consequence, God's blazing anger will be unleashed (vv. 19-26). Yahweh has determined that judgment by Babylon is fixed and sure, and no amount of maneuvering on Judah's part will stop the horsemen, the archers, or the massacre of the people of Zion (vv. 27-31). *Verses 3-4 give two analogies of true repentance, breaking up unplowed ground and circumcision. Please explain what the author meant by these two analogies.*

Jeremiah 5—Jeremiah could not even find one person who was just and faithful to the Lord in Jerusalem. Both the poor and the powerful had broken God's yoke and torn off His chains. They will suffer the consequences for their rebellious acts. Their invaders are ready to strike them like a lion, ravage them like a wolf, and tear them to pieces like a leopard. Should God not punish them for their idolatry and immorality (vv. 1-9)? Judah, the vineyard of the Lord, will be crushed because of her sin, and like the trees in a forest fire, she will be fully consumed. The ancient nation from the north will totally consume everything including harvests, sons and daughters, animals, vines, fig trees, and fortified cities (vv.10-17). In grace, God says He will not completely destroy Judah, but because they served foreign gods they will now serve foreigners in a foreign land. The people of Judah do not fear the Lord or

tremble before Him, but are stubborn and rebellious. Wicked men have grown powerful and rich through deceit and evil, and have forgotten the fatherless and the rights of the needy. The prophets tell lies and the priests rule on their own without God. When the end comes the people of Judah will be speechless (vv. 18-31). *“As history continues to unfold, we should expect that human beings generally will increasingly choose sinful behavior rather than righteousness. How should the progressive depravity in our culture impact our lives as Christians?” #14 p. 995-996.*

Jeremiah 6— Coming from the north, the leaders of the army are ready to surround Jerusalem like shepherds, raise a siege ramp in order to destroy Zion and bring her to desolation for her evil and violence (vv. 1-9). Although God has sent His Word to them, they neither want to hear it or find pleasure in it. The Lord’s wrath is coming on all the inhabitants of the land since everyone deals falsely. They cry, “Peace, Peace,” when there is no peace (vv. 10-15). Judah has completely rejected the testimony of the law and God’s ways (ancient paths), but still perform the ritual sacrifices which have become completely meaningless (vv. 16-21). The warning has been sounded because a cruel nation from the north is on its way to Zion to attack and destroy her. Distress will seize the people who should be dressing in sackcloth to mourn the indescribable suffering and slaughter that is coming. Jeremiah was hoping that the fire of his message would remove the impurities like a refiner’s fire, but there is no purity in them at all and so they must be called rejected silver (slag) (vv. 22-30). *What were the reasons listed in this chapter that shows that God’s judgment on Judah was just? See verses 10, 13-15, 16, and 20.*

Jeremiah 7— The Lord commands Jeremiah to stand in the city gate and warn the people to correct their ways and repent of their evil deeds if they want to continue to live in the land. Their false theology said that because the Lord had chosen to dwell in the temple, He is obligated to protect and bless all who live in Judah irrespective of the type of life they live or the things they do. The changes that must be made are to act justly toward each other and no longer oppress the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow. They must stop the bloodshed of the innocent, stealing, immorality, burning incense to Baal and other gods. If they question whether the temple could be destroyed by God, they should remember what happened to Shiloh which was a former dwelling place of the Lord. Shiloh was not spared destruction because of Israel’s great wickedness (vv. 1-15). God wanted Jeremiah to stop praying for Judah since God will not answer him due to their sins. Since they worship and sacrifice to the Queen of Heaven, God’s wrath will burn and not be quenched (vv. 16-20). When the Lord of Heaven’s armies brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, the thing He was most concerned about was not their sacrifices but their obedience to His commands. They did not listen but followed their own stubborn desires and became more obstinate than their ancestors (vv. 21-26). Because of all of the detestable things that have defiled the Lord’s

house and the city of Jerusalem, Topheth, where children have been burned as offerings, and the Valley of Hinnom will be called the Valley of Slaughter. There will be no more joy and gladness since the land will become desolate waste (vv. 27-34). *If God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to our culture today, what things of his time would be similar to our culture, and what might be different? #6, p. 319.*

Jeremiah 8— The invaders will not only slaughter nearly everyone but will take the bones out of the tombs of the kings, officials, priests, prophets, and residents of Jerusalem and leave them exposed to the heavenly bodies they once worshiped. Why are the people of Jerusalem void of understanding and so prone to stay on the path of deceit and evil without a tinge of conscience when God’s created birds follow the pattern set out for them (vv. 1-7)? The people claim to be wise since they have the law, but they actually have rejected the Word of the Lord and will have their wives and fields taken by other men. Everyone in Zion is making a profit dishonestly and deals falsely with his neighbor. They are not ashamed of their actions or feel humiliation any longer (vv. 8-13). As the snorting of the warhorses are heard from Dan coming down from the north, the people begin to recognize that all of the talk of peace was sheer nonsense and that the armies from the north will be like poisonous vipers let loose on the city of Jerusalem (vv. 14-17). Jeremiah’s heart is broken for his people, and he mourns in horror for the future overthrow and slaughter that will soon come. He sighs and laments, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved (vv. 18-22).” *Verses 18 to 22 vividly portray Jeremiah’s grief over the sins of his people for rejecting God and His laws. Should we have this same burden for our lost family members, neighbors, friends, co-workers, and world? We need to ask God to break our hearts for what breaks His heart and be burdened for the lost souls that Christ loves and died for.*

Jeremiah 9— Jeremiah’s lament continues as he weeps and sobs over his dear people, but he recognizes that their transgressions and immorality is only growing worse, and therefore God in His justice must judge. Not only is their relationship with God broken and ruled by deception, but also their relationships with each other are marked by deceit, slander, betrayal, and falsehood (vv. 1-8). The future destruction of Judah is a foregone conclusion, all of

the animals will go away, and Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble (vv. 9-11). “The wise person will understand that Judah will be driven from My land and scattered throughout the nations because they have abandoned My instruction and voice, and have worshipped Baal,” says Yahweh (vv. 12-16). Bring out the professional women who mourn to raise a lament for the carnage that will happen to Judah and other nations who have uncircumcised hearts (vv. 17-26). *What are three things we are never to boast in? What should we boast about? See verses 23-24.*

Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups . c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV. 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion c.2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc. Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc. Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009, David C. Cook. 9. Halley’s Bible Handbook, c. 2000, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Understanding the Bible c. 2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Homan Bible Handbook, c.1992, Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 13. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL. 14. Life Essentials Study Bible, c. 2011, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 15. Unger’s Bible Handbook, c. 1975, Moody Publishing, Chicago, IL.

Psalm 116-117, Jeremiah 10-15 (#89)

Psalm 116 — This is a personal song of thanksgiving to God for deliverance from trouble. *Considering vv 1-2 and 12-14, what do we have to offer God for His goodness to us?*

Psalm 117 — This is a song of praise for God's steadfast love and faithfulness. *How has God been great to you?*

Jeremiah 10— The people of Judah were trying to act like the nations around them by worshiping man-made idols that are as worthless as scarecrows in a cucumber patch which cannot do any harm or any good. There is no comparison between the majesty, grandeur, eternity, and omnipotence of Yahweh and the impotent, lifeless, and worthless idols that are fashioned by skilled artisans. The living Lord of Angel Armies, who created the world and the heavens by His wisdom and power, also controls and sustains the earth and its ecosystem. This great God does not resemble in any way the carved images, but actually belongs to the descendants of Jacob who are His special inheritance (vv. 1-16). The Lord warns the people to pack their bags and be prepared for His judgment. Jeremiah grieves over the soon invasion from the north when the homes and families will be destroyed and left desolate because the shepherds (leaders) had no desire to seek the Lord. Jeremiah pleads that the Lord would discipline His people with justice but not in anger which might totally annihilate them. He asks God to take vengeance on the nations that refuse to acknowledge Yahweh and who mistreat His people (vv. 17-25). *How did Jeremiah and Paul respond to those who rejected their message and attacked them? Jeremiah 8:18, 10:19, 24, 13:17, 14:17 and Romans 9:1-3. How is this an example to us?*

Jeremiah 11— Judah was to listen to the words of the covenant that God made with Israel under Moses, and obey all of the commands He gave them so they would not be under the curse and lose their homeland. Judah, however, did not obey the words of the covenant but worshipped other gods who would not respond to their cries. Jeremiah was warned by God not to raise up a cry or a prayer on their behalf because He will not be listening or answering them. He has decreed disaster on Judah because of their worship of Baal (vv. 1-17). The people of Anathoth, Jeremiah's hometown, plotted to kill him if he didn't stop prophesying disaster in the name of Yahweh. Not only did the Lord protect him, but he also said that in the time of God's judgment, every single person including their families who plotted his death would not survive (vv. 18-23). *God told Jeremiah not to pray for Judah because judgment was inevitable (v. 14). Using the verses listed, what attitudes or actions can keep our prayers from being answered by God? Psalm 66:18, Isaiah 59:2, Proverbs 28:9, Isaiah 29:13, James 4:3, James 1:6, and I Peter 3:7.*

Jeremiah 12— Jeremiah is troubled with the prosperity of the wicked, wondering why they are not punished more quickly so that their wickedness can be brought out into the open, and the land can be released from the curse. God warned Jeremiah that he must toughen up and prepare himself for much more difficult times ahead when even his own siblings will be treacherous with him (vv. 1-6). The Lord has had to abandon the love of His life (Israel) to her enemies and to vicious wild animals because of her pride and wickedness. Then Yahweh addresses the neighboring nations who attacked Judah saying that they also will be uprooted from their land. If they learn His ways and call on His name, then they will return to their own land. If, however, they don't seek Him, it will mean total annihilation for them. *Can we complain to God when we have negative thoughts and feelings about circumstances God has allowed which we think are unfair? See Jeremiah 12:1, Psalm 13:1-2, and Psalm 73.*

Jeremiah 13— The Lord gave two living illustrations to Jeremiah to make clear to the people why He must send judgment upon them. The people of Judah were like a linen belt or undergarment of Jeremiah that was buried in a rocky crevice by the Euphrates River that became worthless. As this loincloth clings to a man's waist, God created Judah to cling to Him so that they might bring fame and glory to His name, but they would not obey. A second object lesson was that of jars (wineskins) full of wine. God will fill all the people of Judah with wine or drunkenness so that they would suffer from the staggering effects of His complete destruction (vv. 1-14). The prophet is asking Judah to stop their pride and give glory to God while it is still light. Soon it will become dark, and they will be taken captive. The king and queen mother have lost their crowns and the flock entrusted to them, and everyone of them has been taken into exile (vv. 15-20). God's awful judgment is coming on Judah because they put their trust in false gods and have committed detestable acts of spiritual adultery. Men can't change the color of their skin, leopard's spots cannot be removed, and the house of Judah is unable to do good since it has always been accustomed to practicing evil (vv. 15-27). *What were the three signs of pride in this chapter? See verse 10. How are these three signs of pride reflected in the lives of many Christians?*

Jeremiah 14— A severe drought sweeps across the land because of Judah's great guilt, rebellion, and sin. Then Jeremiah pleads and intercedes to Yahweh, the only Hope of Israel, not to abandon His people, but the Lord responds by highlighting their extreme wickedness. God commands Jeremiah not to pray for their well-being for they certainly will be consumed by sword, famine, or plague (vv. 1-12). Jeremiah said to the Lord that the false prophets are telling the people that they won't see death by sword or famine but will experience peace. God proclaimed that indeed these prophets who preach lies will themselves die by the sword and famine, and that the people's bodies will be thrown into the streets with no one to bury them (vv. 11-16). Once again Jeremiah mourns and weeps for the nation due to their great suffering and the terror that is befalling them. He acknowledged

Judah's great wickedness but pleaded that for the sake of the Lord's reputation and glorious throne, He would remember His covenant and rescue His people (vv. 17-22). *Just as in Jeremiah's day, there are false prophets today in the Christian church. What are some safeguards we need to put into place in order to protect ourselves and our churches from error? #14, p. 1008.*

Jeremiah 15— Jeremiah was earnestly interceding for his people, but the Lord said that He would not have compassion on Judah even if Moses and Samuel were interceding on their behalf. God destined the people to death, the sword, famine, or captivity because of the evil done by King Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, during his 55 year reign as king. Since they will not turn from their wicked ways, Yahweh will not have pity on them. He will cause wives to become widows and mothers to become childless (vv. 1-9). Although Jeremiah again complained about his calling from God to preach judgment which brought on him the wrath and curses of everyone, God assures him of His care and protection from the enemy. Jeremiah utters his disappointment with God for the disgraceful way he has been treated by the people and accuses God of not protecting him. God tells Jeremiah that if he repents He will restore him and make him like a fortified iron (bronze) wall. He promises His servant His presence and guarantees him that he will be delivered from the power of the enemy (vv. 10-21). *Of what did Jeremiah have to repent? See verses 10, and 15-18. #7, p.1109.*

Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups . c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV. 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion c.2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc. Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc. Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009, David C. Cook. 9. Halley's Bible Handbook, c. 2000, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Understanding the Bible c. 2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Homan Bible Handbook, c.1992, Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 13. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL 14. Life Essentials Study Bible, c. 2011, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN.