**BCM Bible Study – October 11/12, 2017**

**Jeremiah: God’s Judgement…For Our Good**

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?
  + Look back at **Jeremiah 1:10** and **Jeremiah 18:5-10**. Given these passages, what do we know about Judah’s actions?
  + Given the context of Jeremiah 24:4-7, what is the end purpose of God’s judgment?
    - Note: “*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 endure during these times? What mindset must we take?
  + 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?
    - Note: “*Judah’s life thus parallels that of Jesus, who died to rise again—and that of the church, which dies in him, in order to rise again…The pattern of judgment followed by salvation is thus deep in the biblical revelation of God’s ways with the world.”* (NBC)
    - **Read Romans 6:1-4, 9-11**. How do these verses illuminate the fulfillment of what God has promised to Judah during their time of great despair?
  + What is the essence of the new life promised by God in verse 7? **Read John 17:1-3**.
    - Note: “*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)
    - In which way are you more prone to define salvation: entirely in the future (going to heaven when you die) or both now and in the future (knowing Jesus)?
    - Why is the “future only” view problematic?
  + 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?
    - Note: “*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)
  + Note: We have already talked about this at length, but note again that this episode of judgment ought 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 36:20-21.**
  + Why was the exile the amount of time that it was? How does this expand the way that you think about the Sabbath?
  + Read: “*God's purpose for us on the Sabbath is that we experience the highest and most intense joy that can be experienced, namely, that we ‘take delight in the Lord.’ And yet what he finds again and again is professing Christians who prefer little human-sized pleasures from things that have no close relation to God at all.*” (John Piper)
    - How is this different from your previous understanding of the Sabbath?
    - In what way does this change the way that you see God’s commands?
* What is the silver lining or hope for Judah in this passage?
  + **Read Hebrews 6:17-20.** What words or phrasing in these verses remind you of the Israelites situation? What do these verses say about hope?
  + When you have “fled for refuge,” how do you maintain hope? What makes this difficult and how do you overcome this difficulty?

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? Does this bring to mind a New Testament image?
  + **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?

Conclusion

*In groups, consider these questions*:

* Do you think that you are experiencing the fullness of the life the God desires for you? Why or why not? Does something need to change?
* Can you identity a place where you may be resisting God’s formative efforts? What drives you to resist?