

The Story, chapter 17

(excerpts from 2 Chronicles 26; 2 Kings 21; Jeremiah 1; Lamentations 3; Ezekiel 36)

After good King Hezekiah, it was mostly downhill for the southern kingdom of Judah.

¹⁵ The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. (2 Chronicles 36:15-16)

¹⁰ The Lord said through his servants the prophets: ¹¹ "Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols. ¹² Therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. ¹³ I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. ¹⁴ I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and give them into the hands of enemies. They will be looted and plundered by all their enemies; ¹⁵ they have done evil in my eyes and have aroused my anger from the day their ancestors came out of Egypt until this day." (2 Kings 21:10-15)

One of these prophets was Jeremiah. Jeremiah loved the people of Judah and the city of Jerusalem. He did not want to be God's spokesman of doom. God said to Jeremiah, ² The word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, . . . when the people of Jerusalem went into exile.

[Jeremiah said]⁴ The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew^[a] you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

⁶ "Alas, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young."

⁷ But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

(Jeremiah 1:2-8)

The people did not want to hear Jeremiah's bad news – they punished and ignored him. In 586BC, God allowed the Babylonian army to conquer Judah, destroy the temple in Jerusalem, and deport the leaders and the youth into exile. Jeremiah became known as the "weeping prophet" because he mourned for Jerusalem and its fall. Yet he maintained his hope in the Lord, as he wrote in the book of Lamentations.

God sent the prophet Ezekiel to scold the Jewish people in exile, to offer them hope, and to renew his promise to all the people of the world: "I will show the holiness of my great

name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.” (Ezekiel 36:23)