

Fact Sheet for **“Good and Bad Figs”**
Jeremiah 24-25

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12/09/2018

Today we will be looking at the 12th and 13th messages in Jeremiah 2-25 to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. These are in chapters 24 and 25 respectively, but we will take them in reverse order... chapter 25-1st and chapter 24-2nd. The reason for this will become obvious.

What's up ahead for you? There is so much that can go wrong! There are so many things in life that can instill in us fear about what our future holds. We pray, but it often doesn't seem to turn out as we hoped it would. We try to be wise in our decisions but the outcome seems to be out of our control, and it's going the wrong direction. Where is God? Why doesn't he answer our call for help? Jeremiah's words to Judah in these two prophetic messages, chapters 24 and 25, can help answer our fears. But we need to begin with a very brief historical thumbnail. The last three Kings of Judah before Jerusalem was destroyed were Jehoiakim (who reigned 11 years), Jehoiachin (his son, who reigned only 3 months), and Zedekiah (who reigned 11 years)

ESV Jeremiah 25:1 ¶ **The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon),**

Now chapters 24 and 25 have a lot of connections with the book of Daniel. You can see some of these connections in the opening of the book of Daniel.

Read Daniel 1:1-7. By the way, the difference between “the fourth year of Jehoiakim” in Jeremiah and “the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim” in Daniel has to do with how the Jewish and the Babylonian calendars were reckoned. There is no error in the text.

Think about it. Even though Jehoiakim was king for 11 years in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem would not yet be destroyed, it was in the 3rd or 4th year of his reign that Nebuchadnezzar initially defeated him. Jehoiakim became a vassal to Nebuchadnezzar. **This was the beginning of the 70 year Babylonian Captivity.** Daniel and his three friends, among others, were taken to Babylon soon afterwards.

ESV Jeremiah 25:3 "For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, to this day, the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened.

I think all mothers have at one time or another taken the same tone toward their children. Now God took his children to the woodshed.

ESV Jeremiah 25:8-9 ¶ "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, ⁹ behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.

Nebuchadnezzar's forces would have come down into Judah from the north. Judah would not just be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, Judah and Jerusalem would eventually be destroyed by him. Even with this warning made clear by God through Jeremiah... Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin,

and Zedekiah would all continue to do evil in the sight of the LORD. Jerusalem would end up being destroyed some 19 years later, 19 years into the Babylonian Captivity. But God, in his great mercy, had a plan.

ESV Jeremiah 25:11-12 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹² Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.

This promise is repeated later in Jeremiah 29:10 along with the promise of return.

Daniel read these words from Jeremiah's prophecy, when he had lived some 66 years in that foreign country, and took them to heart (Daniel 9:1-2). This brought Daniel to confess the sins of the Jewish people, much like what was stated by God through Moses in Deuteronomy 30:1-3. Daniel was looking for the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem! That return would begin right on time in the book of Ezra.

I'm sure that many of God's righteous people prayed fervently for the safety of Jerusalem, but that was not to be. God had a different plan. He hadn't abandoned his people. He just had a plan for them that many of those who were righteous probably found hard to accept. Many would be taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. They would lose everything they had worked for. Jerusalem would be destroyed. And even Solomon's temple would be demolished. But God had a plan to bless those who were following him.

Now read chapter 24 and one of the most memorable illustrations from the book of Jeremiah. By the way, Jeconiah was also known as Jehoiachin.

The good figs should remind you of something God said earlier in this book.

ESV Jeremiah 21:9 He who stays in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, but he who goes out and surrenders to the Chaldeans who are besieging you shall live and shall have his life as a prize of war.

In these two chapters there is a loud and clear message of hope for us. Take a moment to think about what God's people, who were rightly following him, were experiencing. Their political leaders were corrupt. Idolatry was prevalent. Many were not following the God of scripture at all. Their country had been under attack. They had become servants of Babylon. Jeremiah was prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem. There was a lot to pray about, but God didn't seem to be bringing good change. In fact it was getting worse. But even in their situation God had a plan to bless those who were truly his. He would take care of them. But that plan would not be what they expected. He was answering their prayers, but not in a way they could anticipate. God would take care of them.

Here is a take-away for us. There are situations in life that can instill fear in us. Sometimes we pray and God answers marvelously. Other times we pray and the heavens seem that they are made out of brass. Our prayers seem ineffective. God has not become dull of hearing, or grown uninterested in our prayers, or abandoned us. In those times think about these chapters in Jeremiah. God took care of those who were truly his. And God will take care of you too, but maybe not in a way you expected. He works his plan in our lives also!

Trust him! Pray without ceasing! Keep your heart close to his. And look for his blessing.