

Reflection Wednesday 10th March

Jeremiah 3:11-18

Then the Lord said to me: Faithless Israel has shown herself less guilty than false Judah. Go, and proclaim these words towards the north, and say:

Return, faithless Israel,

says the Lord.

I will not look on you in anger,
for I am merciful,

says the Lord;

I will not be angry for ever.

Only acknowledge your guilt,
that you have rebelled against the Lord your God,
and scattered your favours among strangers under every green tree,
and have not obeyed my voice,

says the Lord.

Return, O faithless children,

says the Lord,

for I am your master;

I will take you, one from a city and two from a family,
and I will bring you to Zion.

I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the Lord, they shall no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord.' It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; nor shall another one be made. At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no longer stubbornly follow their own evil will. In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your ancestors for a heritage.

Jeremiah was prophesying to Judah, from 626-585BC. Israel, the Northern Kingdom, had fallen 100 years prior. The message of Jeremiah was about judgement upon the people if they failed to return to the way of their true God, yet it also had a message of hope if the people repented with sincerity such judgement could be postponed but not stopped forever. Jeremiah had a very high view of God; he saw God as the Supreme Being, Creator of all, all-powerful, ever-present. He saw him not only as Lord of Judah but over all nations. Jeremiah had an understanding of God similar to that of many today but different from the understanding of many who were before him.

The message was of delayed judgement not its ending. The nation would be taken into exile but there would be restoration. The unfaithfulness of the people under the long and evil kingship of Manasseh, only superficially affected by the reign of Josiah, deserved the indictment that Jeremiah was called to announce.

The judgement of God, though terrible, on his people was not to be his last work, the final work of God in history. Mercy and covenant faithfulness would triumph over wrath. After judgement would come restoration and renewal, Israel as a nation would be restored. The nations that crushed her would in turn be crushed. The old covenant with David and the Levites would be honoured and God would make a new covenant with his people, written upon their hearts (Ch. 31:31-34) consecrating his people once more to his service.

Jeremiah had a tough message to declare but it contained hope for after the 70 years of exile restoration would come about and the merciful acts of God, forgiveness and cleansing would be experienced once more. A new day was to come when the covenant promises would be fulfilled in a manner transcending all God merciful acts in the past.

For those of Christian faith the fulfilment of this is in Jesus when a new covenant was introduced and a new hope could be experienced in close relationship with God; our sins and wrongdoings forgiven through faith in Jesus as Saviour and redeemer. We must acknowledge our guilt, but we can trust in the mercy of our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus. Beyond all tough times is hope of a good tomorrow; Good Friday has to be before Easter Sunday Resurrection.