

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

**“Accommodation & Deportation”**

***Turning to other Gods results in Loss***

1 Samuel 8:1-21 (God accommodates the peoples’ request for a king like all other nations)

1 Kings 18:1-39 (The people accommodate themselves to the culture of Caananite worship)

Hosea 1:1-9, 2:1-8 (Example of prophecy in Israel)

Jeremiah 13:1-11 (Example of prophecy in the South)

Isaiah 5:1-7 (Example of prophecy in Judah)

Jeremiah 29:1-14 (Instructions for living in exile)

Isaiah 40:1-11 (In exile, the promise of return and restoration)

***Accommodation***

Living as we do in the number one tourist destination in the world, our first thought about the word “accommodation” might be something to do with rooms. However, in this case accommodation has to do with the less than faithful way the Israelites made “room” in their lives for false gods. Later in this study section we will consider the epic showdown between the prophet Elijah and the priests of Ba’al on the top of Mt. Carmel, when he, like Joshua before him, called on the people of Israel to choose between the LORD and the gods of the land. But the first accommodation is one that God makes for the people when they insist on having a king.

The time of the Tribal Confederacy came to a halt after Samuel unilaterally appointed his sons to be judges over Israel. They did not follow the ways of their father and actually perverted justice by taking bribes and seeking to use their positions for personal gain. The result was that the people demanded to have a king.

**Questions for reflection and discussion:**

- Read 1 Samuel 8 and make a list of the negative things that Samuel says a king will do. Then notice that the people disregard all of these things and in effect say that they know more about what they need than God does. Think about the times you have been so very sure about something you wanted or thought should happen, only to find out later that your idea wasn’t such a good one after all.
- Where is Ba’al represented in our culture today? Are we like the Israelites, guilty of trusting one “god” for day-to-day security and then turning to the LORD God only when things get frightening or turn for the worse?
- Who do we serve for financial security or prosperity today? Are we too often sitting on the fence?

## ***Deportation***

*“By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps.” (Psalm 137:1-2)*

Not since the days of Egypt so long ago had the people of Israel experienced such hopelessness. With Israel and Judah no longer recognizable as nations, with Samaria and now Jerusalem in ruins, and with the glorious Temple of Solomon ransacked and burned, Jacob’s children could find no voices to sing any songs of faith.

Nevertheless, as the exiles with Moses found meaning in the wilderness of Sinai, the exiles with a new leader, Ezra, found meaning under the willows of Babylon. Only a small remnant of Jews would eventually return from exile, and in fact, since that time there have always been more Jews living outside of Israel than in it. But the time of the deportation in Babylon would enable the leading Jewish citizens to re-examine their faith, renew their commitment to the Law of Moses, adapt to a new style of worship, and learn a new language, Aramaic.

It was the prophet Jeremiah who told them to accept God’s judgment and punishment.

### **Questions for reflection and discussion:**

- Read Jeremiah 29:1-14. This passage of scripture contains the content of a letter that the prophet wrote to the exiles. What does he tell them to do? How are they to act among their captors? What hope, if any, does he offer them?
- At first the Jews thought that they had lost everything that really mattered. But then they began to realize that this was a time of renewal and refocusing of their faith. Think about how you have dealt with times of “exile” and loss in your own life. Share with your group.
- Read (or skim) the book of Esther. Is there some “time” for which God has been preparing you, even if it has come in the time of “exile.” Reflect upon this and share with your group.
- What has this Exile (period of pandemic) yielded for you? What has this time yielded for us as a church?