

JUDAH SEEKS JEREMIAH'S PRAYERS

(Jer 21:1-14) 06/13/18

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I. COMMENCEMENT OF KING ZEDEKIAH (Jer 21:1-2)

A. King Zedekiah Sends Messengers (1)

1. King Zedekiah

- a. This is the first time Zedekiah is mentioned since the first chapter (Jer 1:3).
- b. He is mentioned in the book of Jeremiah more than any other king during Jeremiah's ministry (i.e. 48 times - Jer. 1:3 Jer. 21:1, 3, 7 Jer. 24:8 Jer. 27:1, 3, 12 Jer. 28:1 Jer. 29:3, 21f Jer. 32:1, 3ff Jer. 34:2, 4, 6, 8, 21 Jer. 36:12 Jer. 37:1, 3, 17f, 21 Jer. 38:5, 14ff, 19, 24 Jer. 39:1f, 4ff Jer. 44:30 Jer. 49:34 Jer. 51:59 Jer. 52:1, 3, 5, 8, 10f).
- c. The kings are not strictly mentioned in chronological order, but in thematic order. Chapters 21-23 could be called "Messages to the Kings."
- d. King Zedekiah's introduction is in regard to God's prophecy of judgment before its fulfillment. This section could fit into Jer 37-38.
- e. King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah (2Ki 24:17). We read in 2Ki 24:18-20 that Zedekiah began his reign at 21 years old (597 BC). Like his predecessor, Jehoiakim, he did evil in the sight of the Lord and reigned for eleven years (586 BC).

2. Pashhur the son of Malchijah

- a. This **Pashhur** was an influential high ranking official, **son of Malchijah**.
- b. He is not to be confused with Pashhur the priest, son of Immer (Jer 20:1-3).

3. Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah

- a. This was not Zephaniah the prophet, but Zephaniah the priest.
- b. He was the successor of Jehoiada the priest (Jer 29:25-26; 37:3; 52:24).

B. King Zedekiah Pleads for Help (2)

1. Zedekiah had set himself against Nebuchadnezzar, who was king of a great expanding empire. Zedekiah had made an alliance with Egypt whose power had decreased before Babylon.
2. Even though there was a time when Judah did not want to hear Jeremiah's prophecies or prayers, now they needed the Lord's help.
3. *He was under constant pressure from his advisors to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. On the other hand, Jeremiah consistently urged Zedekiah to surrender to Babylon. The king could not resist the pressure to seek an alliance with Egypt against Nebuchadnezzar. This political maneuvering led to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 b. (Smith, Survey of the OT).*
4. In the last chapter (20), the first identification was made of Judah's captor, the "king of Babylon." Now his name is revealed, "**Nebuchadnezzar**."
 - a. He will be mentioned some 37 times in the book of Jeremiah.
 - b. *Nebuchadnezzar...was the son of Nabopolassar, who put him in command of the forces against Egypt and Judah at Carchemish when he was crown prince. Upon his father's death, he returned to Babylon to succeed to the throne (EXP).*

II. CONSEQUENCES OF ZEDEKIAH (Jer 21:3-7)

A. The Lord will Turn Back Their Weapons (3-4)

1. The Lord had a specific message for Zedekiah, but also for the people (Jer 21:6) and the house of David (Jer 21:12). In most instances during Israel's history, God intervened at the prophet's intercession. However, God had made it clear that Jeremiah was not to pray for Judah (Jer 7:16; 11:14).
2. God would "**turn back the weapons**" which meant that God would not fight for Judah and that their weapons would fail them.
3. The **Chaldeans** (Babylonians) would come from outside the wall and would close Judah inside.
 - a. *The Babylonians (Chaldeans) were originally a seminomadic tribe living between northern Arabia and the Persian Gulf. EXP*

- b. *In the tenth century B.C., the Assyrians gave the name Kaldu to the area formerly known as the “Sea-Land” (so Harrison). Later, “Chaldea” was used to include Babylonia as a whole (cf. Ezek 23:23; Dan 3:8).* EXP
4. They would **besiege** the wall and set up a blockade so that there would be no escape. Furthermore, they closed in around Judah until the Babylonians were inside the city.
- B. The Lord Will War Against Judah (5)
1. Not only would the Lord turn Judah’s weapons around, but He would fight against Judah.
 2. Emphatically, the Lord declared, “I, Myself” would wage war against them.
 3. This is the judgment against sin that invokes the Lord’s righteous indignation (“**anger and wrath and great indignation**”).
- C. He Will Strike Against Man and Beast (6)
1. Both man and beast will be struck down. The inhabitants of the city would die of a **great pestilence**.
 2. Pestilence, a fatal epidemic of disease and the plague, usually accompanies war; especially for those who are on the losing side.
- D. He Will Strike Zedekiah (7)
1. Zedekiah himself will be given over to Nebuchadnezzar (586 BC). More detail will come later in Jeremiah concerning Zedekiah. Zedekiah was not killed but died in blindness, shame, without a throne, and in exile (Jer 34:4; 2Ki 25:6–7; Eze 12:13).
 2. But the Lord prophesied that their judgment will involve the **pestilence, sword, and famine**.
 3. It will also involve being given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar who is well-known to be without **pity or compassion**.
- III. CHOICE OF WAYS (Jer 21:8-10)
- A. Way of Life and Way of Death (8)
1. The Lord does hold out hope for Judah if they repent (cf. Jer 21:12), but it is not likely.
 2. They have two **ways** or choices, repentance which leads to **life** and deliverance for Judah or obstinate sin and destruction, death, and captivity.
- B. Those Within the City will Die (9)
1. The way and choice that leads to death is inevitable. If Judah fights they will be slaughtered. If Judah remains in the city, they will die of famine and pestilence.
 2. Judah’s slim hope is to surrender to a king who has no mercy. In the event that some surrender, they take only their lives with them (“**booty**”), nothing else.
- C. Set Against the City for Harm (10)
1. The Lord Himself (“**My face**”) is set against Judah. Though some could scarcely escape men, no one can escape the Lord or His judgment.
 2. The city will be **burned** and what doesn’t burn will be torn down.
- IV. CHOICE OF RESPONSES (Jer 21:11-14)
- A. Household of Judah Hear (11)
1. The Lord prophesied in the broad terms of the **house of David** (12), the lineage of the king, and the house of Judah.
 2. If there was hope, it must be immediate obedience to God’s Laws.
- B. Recipe for Repentance (12)
1. Under the Lord, His Law, and His prophet, the king was to institute obedience and justice.
 2. They were to administer justice every morning, not a one-time attempt to bargain with God. They were to be diligent and consistent.
 3. They were to not rob others by their decision but in fact not take advantage of the poor.
 4. This consistent obedience would bely God’s wrath and fire.
- C. Recipe for Disaster (13)
1. However, since they will not repent, He is against them all, from **valley dwellers** to those who dwell in **rocky plains**.
 2. Note the arrogance of the inhabitants, “Who will come down against us? Or who will enter into our habitations?”
- D. A Fire in the Forest (14)
1. A raging fire destroys everything in its path.
 2. God’s wrath will be greater than a raging fire in a forest.
- V. OBSERVATIONS AND APPLICATIONS
- A. Life or death for every man
1. Moses called for such a choice (Deu 30:19); Joshua called for such a choice (Jos 24:15).
 2. Joshua called for such a choice (Jos 24:15).

3. Jesus called for such a choice (Joh 3:36; Joh 14:6; 1Jo 5:12-13).