

Message #25

Jeremiah 21:1-14

As we come to verse 1 of chapter 21, we read these words “The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD.” We will not read those similar words again until verse 1 of chapter 25. In between these two chapters, God is going to denounce the political leaders of Judah, the false prophets and the people.

To start this off, God goes after political leaders and He drives home this point:

THE POLITICAL LEADERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR LEADING THE NATION INTO CHASTISING JUDGMENT FROM GOD SOCIALLY, ECONOMICALLY, PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY; AND WHEN THOSE LEADERS HAVE LED THE PEOPLE AWAY FROM GOD, NOT EVEN THE PRAYERS OF FAITHFUL, GODLY PEOPLE WILL PREVENT GOD’S CHASTISING JUDGMENT.

The real focus of this chapter and chapter 22 is on the last four kings of Judah. God gives messages to these kings that they are collectively responsible for leading the nation into the chastising judgments of God.

The actual chronological order of their reign was Jehoahaz (609 BC), Jehoiakim (609 BC-598 BC), Jehoiachin (598BC-597BC), and Zedekiah (597 BC-586 BC).

The order Jeremiah uses is he starts with Zedekiah, and then reverts back to the actual chronology.

- 1) Zedekiah (597BC-586BC) - Jeremiah 21:1-22:9
- 2) Jehoahaz (609 BC) - Jeremiah 22:10-12
- 3) Jehoiakim (609 BC-598 BC) - Jeremiah 22:13-19 - name changed to Eliakim
- 4) Jehoiachin (598 BC-597 BC) - Jeremiah 22:20-30 - name changed to Coniah/Jechoniah

All of these Kings of Judah were bad and led the people away from God right into His chastising judgment. These political leaders, as Dr. Wiersbe said, marched God’s people right into “shameful judgment” (*Be Decisive*, pp. 111-112).

Now the placement of Zedekiah as the first king on the list emphasizes the fact that these judgments are on the way and Zedekiah was a key part of the corrupt political leadership that was responsible. He is the final straw.

Zedekiah rebelled against the word of God and the will of God. He refused to submit to Nebuchadnezzar when God told him that is what he should do (II Chron. 36:13). He was a foolish leader who led the nation into abominable things.

According to **verses 1-2**, as Babylon was on the move and getting closer to Judah, Zedekiah sent Pashhur, an important court official, and Zephaniah the priest to go to Jeremiah to ask him to pray to God so that God would bless them. Actually Zedekiah reaches out to Jeremiah in **jams** multiple times (37:3-10; 37:17-21; 38:14-28).

What King Zedekiah was hoping is that God would cause Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon to just “withdraw from us.” He was hoping Jeremiah could talk to God and get Nebuchadnezzar to go away.

Now this Pashhur is the son of Malchijah (21:1). This is not the same Pashhur the son of Immer, who put Jeremiah in the stocks (20:1). The Zephaniah mentioned here was a priest the son of Maaseiah (21:1). This is not the prophet Zephaniah, who was the son of Cushi, who wrote a prophetic book of the Bible (Zeph. 1:1).

What is happening here is that Zedekiah decided to reach out to Jeremiah, hoping that he would pray to God for a miraculous deliverance. What he wanted was for God to lift the judgment of Babylon and start blessing them again. Zedekiah really believed that if Jeremiah prayed, God would answer and deliver.

But here is the problem.

WHEN GOD HAS DECIDED TO POUR OUT HIS CHASTISING JUDGMENT BECAUSE OF LEADERSHIP CORRUPTION, NOT EVEN THE PRAYERS OF GODLY, FAITHFUL, PRAYING PEOPLE WILL PREVENT IT.

As we have said multiple times, it appears as though God is not happy with this world and country. Many of God’s people have been praying that He would intervene and put a stop to the evil, but it almost does appear as if God is not answering many of the prayers. If this is true, we are in serious trouble because it appears as though God is beginning to turn this nation toward His judgment. However, there can be good news for individuals.

King Zedekiah wanted Pashhur and Zephaniah to go to Jeremiah and ask him to pray on their behalf. It is so interesting because Zedekiah realizes the false prophets cannot help. He is not asking them to pray. He knew that he needed a true prophet praying.

When people start experiencing negative things and scary things, it is not unusual to want to turn to God. Many turn to God in crisis moments. As F. B. Huey said, many turn to God “as a last resort” (*Jeremiah/Lamentations*, p. 199).

The irony of this is that had they turned to God in the first place, they would not be in this mess. But rather than turn to the true God of the Bible and seek to understand and obey the Word of God, they turned to evil stuff. When they found themselves in a real threat, they decided to consult a true man of God.

So the men went to Jeremiah and in **verse 3**, Jeremiah gave a series of messages from God that they were to take back to Zedekiah. These were not messages that these men nor Zedekiah wanted to hear:

Message #1 - God is going to remove all your weapons and freedom to use them. **21:4a**

The phrase “turn back the weapons of war” may mean that the enemy will take away their weapons and use them against them. It also may mean that the weapons you have will not bring victory, but in fact you will be defeated and your weapons won’t stop it. Either way this is not a popular message to get from God.

What people do not understand is that **when a government disarms God’s people, it is judgment of God**. We may recall that the Philistines did this very thing to Israel. They took the weapons away from the people and took the blacksmiths away who could make the weapons (I Samuel 13:15-22).

Message #2 - God will permit a foreign power to infiltrate and take over your city. **21:4b**

God says you are at war with the Babylonians and I am specifically going to bring the King of Babylon (Chaldeans) right into the center of this city. No one will be able to stop it. They will surround the city and come right into the center of it.

When God allows His people and property to be dominated by foreign, evil, godless forces, it is a direct judgment from Him.

Message #3 - God will war against His own people in might, anger, wrath and indignation. **21:5**

Look carefully at these words here. God will actually war against His own people. **God says your real enemy is not Babylon; it is Me. God says your real fight will not be with the Babylonians, your real fight is with Me.**

God was using Babylon to carry out His own judgment against His own people. **Normally, God protects His people and fights for His people. But if His people are unfaithful, He will fight against them.**

This describes God’s attitude against His own people. Three words describe His attitude toward His own people: 1) Anger; 2) Wrath; 3) Great indignation.

The word “anger” (aph) means God is so angry that His nostrils were flaring with heavy breathing (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 69).

The word “wrath” (chemah) means to have a very hot anger toward something (*Ibid.*, p. 286). This is anger at a boiling level.

The word “indignation” (qetseph) is a word that describes an anger that is indignant and is breaking out or exploding (*Ibid.*, p. 738). God says my indignation has reached a “great” or “mega” level.

Combined, these words reveal the fact that God is at an explosive level in his hot anger, and this is against His own people.

God’s people only have themselves to blame. They had “infuriated” God by their beliefs and behavior. Had they wanted to obey God and please God, God would have blessed them. He wanted to bless them. But they were not interested in reverencing God and His word and they pushed God to this level of anger.

Most people do not realize that they can push God to an angry point where not only is He not blessing His people, He is actually causing chastising things to hit and hurt His people. God is usually the protector of His people, but now He is their enemy.

Message #4 - God will cause His own people to die by various judgments. **21:6**

People just do not realize how sovereign and how powerful God actually is. When God reaches this level of anger, He will actually kill His own people and animals. God can pronounce a death penalty sentence on everything His people are and have and He has an arsenal at His disposal that He can use.

He can use pestilence and diseases; He can use war; He can use famine. He can slaughter animals and people. In fact, this is exactly what God did do. According to II Kings 25:1-11, Nebuchadnezzar came into Jerusalem, slaughtered the people and burned down the Temple, the king’s house and all the houses in Jerusalem.

Message #5 - God will give all the survivors of His people to Nebuchadnezzar. **21:7**

Verse 7 is the longest verse in the book of Jeremiah. The Hebrew text contains 42 words and 160 letters. Our NASV Bibles have 81 words. God says those who were not killed by pestilence or disease or war or starvation, I will cause to be taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon.

In other words, they would become prisoners. God specifically says He will cause Zedekiah to be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar. When they got to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar would show them no mercy.

Look at the two trilogies of predictions in this verse that God makes against His own people: 1) plague, 2) sword and 3) famine and 1) no mercy, 2) pity or 3) compassion.

This prediction was literally fulfilled in Zedekiah’s life in Jeremiah 39:5-8. He saw his sons killed and all the nobles killed and then he put out Zedekiah’s eyes

Most people don't have a clue as to what God will do to His own people if they refuse to turn away from evil. Sin is no light matter in the sight of God. God was a long-suffering, patient God and He waited for His people to turn from their evil and turn to Him and His word, but they would not do it. So God finally said I have had enough. God can do that to any nation, state, city, church or individual.

For a child of God to persist in evil sin is something that can and will anger God and if God's anger reaches a boiling point, not even prayer of faithful people will stop it.

Message #6 - God sets before His individual people a way of life and a way of death. **21:8-9**

As individuals, people have a choice even when the leadership is corrupt. God will give His people an opportunity to obey Him even when He is pouring out His angry chastising wrath. God gives His people in any dispensation a choice to obey Him or not. Those who choose to obey God will live; those who choose not to obey God will die. The choice was not one most would want; but it was a choice that would determine if they would live or die.

In this case, if a person decided to stay in the city, God will kill them. If a person decided to obey God and go out of the city, God will let them live. This must have seemed to be a radical option. This was not the answer to prayer for which they were looking.

If one obeys God on this and willingly goes with the Chaldeans, he will live. If one does not obey God, he will die. God says if you obey Me and accept My chastising judgment and surrender to it, you will live.

During the Tribulation, when the Antichrist sits in the Temple and demands to be worshipped as God, Jewish people will need to get out of Jerusalem as fast as they can. If they obey God and get out they will live, if they don't obey God and stay in Jerusalem, they will die.

God gives people opportunities in life to choose the way of death and the way of life. That choice is in a variety of contexts. One may choose to believe on Jesus Christ, which is the way of everlasting life, or one may choose to believe in something else, which is the way of eternal death. One may choose to walk on the path of wisdom, which is the way of life and blessings, or one may choose to walk on the path of a fool that is the way of death. As a believer, one may choose to obey the word of God, which is the way of life and blessing, or one may choose not to obey the word of God, which is the way of death and chastisement. We make the same kind of choices offered here. God says to His people here is My way, choose it or not; take it or leave it.

Message #7 - God has set His face against the city and will permit it to be burned down. **21:10**

God says I have set My face of blessing against this city of Jerusalem and I will cause the King of Babylon to burn it down. In 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar burned the city down. II Kings 25:9 says he burned down the Temple, the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem.

Message #8 - God gives a grace message of invitation hope to His people. **21:11-12**

In the midst of this very serious threat and warning, God amazingly seems to extend the possibility of gaining the favor of God. **Turning from sin and pursuing what is righteous will ALWAYS lead to favorable consequences and a better life.**

What we may observe here is even in the midst of God's anger, there were some things God's people could do that would help extinguish the hot anger of God. These were words given to Pashhur and Zephaniah to take back to Zedekiah and anyone who would listen.

(Action #1) - Hear the word of the LORD. **21:11**

It does not matter what God is doing in the world; it is always advantageous to hear the word of the LORD. Josiah was the last godly king who even cared about the word of God. It is so important for a political leader to point the constituency to the word of God.

(Action #2) - Administer justice every day. **21:12a**

Just because God was in the process of punishing His people did not mean they could stop doing what was right and just. One of the main responsibilities of government is to administer justice (Romans 13:1-7). God will always care for people who seek to do what is right even when the fate of the nation is under His judgment. We have the responsibility to do what is right and just every day.

(Action #3) - Deliver those who have been robbed by an oppressor. **21:12b**

God still wanted those in positions of authority to look out for orphans and widows and aliens. They should do what they can to see to it that they stand up for what is right and protect the rights of the people. God says do this so that His wrath may not go forth with full force with no chance of it ever letting up.

God's people, who want to please God, have the responsibility to obey the word of God no matter what God is doing. He takes notice of that and God always honors those who honor Him.

Message #9 - God is against Jerusalem and those in it. **21:13-14**

Just because the worst had not happened yet, they needed to realize truth. Jerusalem was surrounded by three valleys and was located on a rocky plain. When enemies came to attack Jerusalem, they typically came from the north. Apparently some who were living in various places were saying, we are invincible because we are out here in different locations.

In **verse 14**, God says no you aren't. God says your places of residency will also be burned down. God keeps track of what His people are doing and if His people push God to the angry level, nothing will stop His chastisement.