

September 8

Scriptures: Read Jeremiah 22 & 23

Key Verse: “He [Josiah] judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Was not this knowing Me? Says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 22:16)

Overview

Chapter 22 contains various messages that the Lord gave to Jeremiah concerning the last three kings of Judah. Jeremiah boldly spoke these words in the presence of Jehoiakim at the gate to his beautiful palace (22:2). Since Judah was a theocracy (governed by God), the king of the land was responsible to rule under God’s guidance and in accordance to the Law of God and His moral demands (to execute righteousness), which included justice for the poor and needy (22:3; Deut. 17:14-20). The reign of Jehoiakim’s father, Josiah, was a good example of this ideal, and therefore Josiah was blessed by the Lord (22:4, 15-16). The succeeding kings, however, did not rule according to the Lord’s demands. Therefore, even though the nation was precious to God, forsaking Him would cause the spiritual and physical downfall of the nation (22:5-9).

Jeremiah repeated here the prophecy he would have given to Shallum (or Jehoahaz), a prophecy which was accurately fulfilled by his captivity and exile in Egypt (22:10-12; cf. 2 Kings 24:31-34). With amazing boldness, Jeremiah also prophesied concerning Jehoiakim and spoke words of rebuke and condemnation right to his face — a very dangerous thing to do — but Jeremiah was obedient to God and had faith that God would protect him. He rebuked Jehoiakim for “shedding innocent blood” (likely infant sacrifice to Molech, like Manasseh; 22:17; 2 Kings 21:6; 24:3-5), and also for his greed, covetousness, oppression, and exploitation of the people (22:13-14, 17; cf. Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14-15). We do not have any record of the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning his death, possibly because it was too shameful to even write, yet we do read that he was carried away captive to Babylon. He may have died on the way and was cast aside to rot “like a donkey”, without being mourned (22:18-23; cf. 36:30; 2 Chron. 36:5-6).

The final message was about Jehoiakim’s son Coniah (also called Jeconiah or Jehoiachin). His type of death was not predicted, but Jeremiah did prophesy that he and his mother would be taken into exile and never return, which was fulfilled (cf. 2 Kings 24:10-15). Since none of his seven sons or any of his descendants would reign on the throne of David, he would be as though he were “childless” (22:30; 1 Chron. 3:17-18). Coniah, then, was the last kingly representative of the throne of David, for his successor, his uncle, Zedekiah, died before him (52:31; 2 Kings 25:27-30). The prophecy here says that none of his descendants would sit on the throne of David (22:30). But what about the prophecy of an enduring Davidic dynasty (cf. 2 Sam. 7:16)? Coniah (Jeconiah) was a descendant of David through Solomon, and although he is listed in the lineage of Jesus, it is through Joseph, who was not Jesus’ real father (Matt. 1:12). Jesus’ right to the throne of David came not through Joseph but through His mother Mary who came from the lineage of Nathan, another son of David. Therefore, both prophecies found fulfillment (22:30; cf. Luke 3:31).

After the messages against the wicked kings (chapter 22), there is a continuation in chapter 23 of the rebuke to them and the other so-called “shepherds” (leaders). Their responsibility was to

watch, guide, lead, protect, and care for the spiritual and physical needs of the people — but they failed. They were unfaithful and careless, and they sinned against the Lord; therefore they caused the people, God's flock, to also forsake Him and be led astray, which in turn lead to their scattering in the Captivity (cf. 50:6-7; Ezek. 34). For this sinful crime they are denounced and God's judgment is prophesied.

Unlike these false shepherds, Jesus Christ came as the true, good, and great Shepherd (Ps. 23; John 10:11, 14, 16, 27; Heb. 13:20-21) who cares for the flock (Ezek. 34:10-16) and will bring permanent peace and a truly righteous reign. He is the hope of the whole world. He is the glorious "Branch of righteousness", the shoot that sprouted up from the cut-down Davidic tree to reign supremely upon the throne of David (cf. Isa. 11:1-5; 4:2; Zech. 3:8; Heb. 1:3). He is called: "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS", for through Him alone, not the law, do we have imputed to us His righteousness. Jesus has become our righteousness (23:6b; cf. 1 Tim. 1:16; Phil. 3:9; 1 Cor. 1:30). The great event that will be remembered, even over the Exodus (Passover), will be Jesus Christ's second coming, when He will gather His redeemed and righteous remnant from all nations and bring them to their inheritance of the New Jerusalem (23:3, 7-8; cf. Isa. 11:10-16).

After this glorious picture of the future Great Shepherd, Jeremiah again returns to the reality of his day. He was sickened and broken-hearted because of the many false prophets who profaned the Name and word of the Lord, for they did not love or have communion with God. Rather than bringing people closer to God, as true prophets should, they drove the people away from God. Although professing to speak the words of God, they told only lies and deceptions and also worshipped idols ("adultery", 23:14). Nationalism and greed was their motivation. They had often persecuted Jeremiah, but this made him all the more zealous to speak forth the truth and all the more adamant in his denunciations of them (23:9-40; chapter 28; the law demanded their death, Deut. 18:20-22).

Prayer

I praise You, Lord Jesus, for You have become our righteousness, hope, and peace. Shepherd of our hearts, draw us ever closer to You.