

September 13

Scriptures: Read Jeremiah 33 & 34

Key Verse: “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” (Jeremiah 33:3)

Overview

Once again from the prison, the promise of God to restore His people was revealed to Jeremiah. The fulfillment of this was based upon His own unchanging attributes and majesty. He who formed the earth condescended to invite His faithful people to call upon Him, for He is pleased to “show great and mighty things” to them, which without Him cannot be known (33:2-3).

Jeremiah, being a true prophet, knew that Jerusalem’s resistance against the Chaldeans (Babylonians) was in vain. The soldiers of Zedekiah had torn down many homes and even palaces within the city so that they might refortify the walls which were presently being assaulted in the enemy siege. He expressed the futility of all their attempts, for God had turned His back on Jerusalem (33:4-5). Although he prophesied many times that the exiles would return, he foresaw yet a greater fulfillment of this promise and a greater hope revealed to him by God; it was a sure hope that the Lord would one day bring His people who had been “cleansed from all their iniquity” to a new, rebuilt, and prosperous Jerusalem which would now no longer be a byword of reproach but would find honour before all nations (33:9; cf. Is. 62:7).

Those whom the Lord will cause to dwell in her shall have an “abundance of peace and truth” and with great joy will praise the Lord and proclaim His goodness and mercy (33:6-11). All these blessing would be made possible because the Lord would fulfill His promise to Israel in sending “a Branch of righteousness”, the Messiah our Lord Jesus, so that anyone who has been cleansed by His blood would become a true citizen of Zion; this is the city of Jerusalem which, at that time (in the Millennium), will be called after His own name: “The Lord Our Righteousness” (33:16; cf. 23:6). Jesus is both the High Priest and King, after the order of Melchizedek (“King of righteousness”) who shall forever reign on the throne of David (33:cf. 2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:29; Heb. 7:11, 17, 24).

In a past time of despair, with the imminent loss of both the Davidic dynasty and Levitical services at the Temple, the Lord reaffirmed the surety of His Covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:8-16) and the priesthood — the “two families” chosen by God through whom the relationships of the people with God were to be maintained (33:20-26). Now, with the advent of Jesus and His final and complete sacrificial death, the Levitical priesthood and the offerings of animal sacrifices have passed away. Believers in Jesus, by virtue of their relationship to Him, have become the holy priesthood who are to continually offer up the spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving (1 Pet. 2:5, 9-10); they are also to offer the sacrifice of themselves, which alone is acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1).

In chapter 34, we read of the word of God that came to Jeremiah while Jerusalem was still under siege. It was a message to Zedekiah that he would be taken to Babylon but that he would die in peace; this must have been conditional on his surrender to the Babylonians, for Jeremiah had told

him that the Lord had purposed to defeat Jerusalem and burn it by the hands of the Babylonians (cf. 38:17-20). Zedekiah, however, did not heed the warnings of God, but rather held out in Jerusalem, putting his trust in the strength of Jerusalem's fortifications and in Egypt to come to their aid. He also attempted to appease God and gain His favour by enforcing the Law of liberty to all the Hebrew slaves (34:8-9; cf. Ex. 21:1ff; Lev. 25:39-41; Deut. 15:12-18); this law which had been previously been ignored like the law of the sabbatical year (2 Chron. 36:21).

In a solemn ceremony, all the slave-owners made a covenant to permanently set their slaves free. The sacrificial animal was cut in two, and then they walked in a figure eight around the pieces (34:18; cf. Gen. 15:9-17), which symbolized that if they broke the covenant they had made before God they would suffer the same fate as the animal. It is clear that they did not take this ceremony seriously, for though they did release their slaves, it was not for long. During that period, the Babylonians had lifted the siege when they were temporarily distracted by the approach of the Egyptian army (37:6-11). The people of Jerusalem then believed themselves to be safe and no longer needful of God. Therefore they broke the covenant, disobeyed the law, and forced their slaves to return (34:16). This wickedness brought about another proclamation of divine judgment. Zedekiah and the people would now surely meet with the same end as that sacrificial animal, namely death by the swords of the Babylonians (34:18-22).

Prayer

Oh righteous God and Father, enable us to understand the depth of Your love, so that we might praise and worship You in our good times as well as during our trials and tribulations.