

## A Scattered Flock

Jer. 50:17-20

### Introduction:

1. Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah kings of Judah (Jer. 1:1-3). 2 Kings 23-25 and 2 Chron. 34-36 describe this period.
2. Josiah instituted a variety of reforms.
  - a. His predecessors Manasseh and Amon had forsaken the Lord and served idols.
    - 1) 2 Kings 21:16 says, "Manasseh shed innocent blood and filled Jerusalem from one end to the other."
    - 2) Amon was no better. He was assassinated in his own house.
  - b. Josiah, however, made a covenant to walk with the Lord and to keep His commandments.
    - 1) The people promised loyalty to God under his leadership (2 Kings 23:1-3).
    - 2) The idols were torn down. The Passover was reinstated. The mediums, the spiritists and the teraphim were removed and the book of the law God was restored as the source of religious information.
    - 3) But it was too little, too late.
3. God would bring His wrath on Jerusalem after Josiah's death.
4. Jerusalem was controlled by outside nations.
  - a. The King of Egypt placed Jehoikim on throne.
  - b. The King of Babylon took control of him after 11 years and then placed Zedekiah on the throne. 2 Chron. 36:12-13 says he would not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet. He stiffened his neck against God and rebelled against the King of Babylon.
  - c. The King of Babylon besieged Jerusalem, slaughtered the king's sons before his eyes and then poked them out and carried him away in fetters to Babylon.
5. And so, God describes His people as a scattered flock.
6. Will we repeat her history? In the church? In our families? In our personal lives?

### Discussion:

- I. The lions scatter the flock of God's people (50:17).
  - A. In this context the lions are the kings of Assyria and Babylon.
    1. Assyria had captured the northern kingdom.
    2. Babylon would capture the southern kingdom.
  - B. Certainly these two foreign nations were responsible for their actions against God's flock and they would be punished for that, but the central problem lay at the feet of God's people themselves, and their leaders in particular.
    1. Their shepherds had led them astray (50:6-7).
    2. Manasseh and Amon and Zedekiah had led them astray.
    3. They had forsaken the Lord and served idols. They had shed innocent blood. They had lost the book of the law. Zedekiah would not humble himself before God's prophet, Jeremiah. They stiffened their neck against God.

4. Josiah's reforms are indicative of their rebellion against God.
  - a. He made a covenant to walk with the Lord and to keep His commandments.
  - b. The people promised loyalty to God under his leadership (2 Kings 23:1-3).
  - c. Idols were torn down. Cf. 2 Kings 23:15ff.
  - d. The Passover was reinstated. Cf. 2 Kings. 23:21ff.
  - e. The mediums, the spiritists and the teraphim were removed and the book of the law of God restored as the source of religious information. Cf. 2 Kings 23: 24ff.

- C. Let us understand the value of sound leadership in the church and in our homes.
  1. First, we need to understand the value of the word of God (Deut. 18:9-22). Cf. Gal. 1:1, 11-12. Leaders need to value the word of God.
  2. Second, we need to make a covenant to walk with the Lord and to keep His commandments.
  3. We need to lead others to do the same. Shepherds. Parents. Teachers.
  4. We need to humble ourselves before those who communicate the word of God (Heb. 13:17). Not because of who they are, but because they are communicating the word of God.
  5. Maybe we need to think of elders less as decision makers and more as shepherds/teachers (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2). Maybe we need to think of parenting less as "punitive discipline" and more as teaching (Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:11).
  6. Give attention to the development of teachers/leaders.

## II. The Lord of hosts punishes lions and restores His flock (50:18-19).

- A. The kings of Babylon and Assyria were punished (50:9-16).
- B. Those who take advantage of God's flock will be judged.
  1. God pays with affliction those who afflict His people (2 Thess. 1:6ff).
  2. Warnings about those who would take advantage (2 Pet. 2:1ff).
- C. It is interesting that those acting as agents of the devil are described as lions when he too is described as a lion seeking someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8).
- D. Leaders must be sensitive to such things, even among themselves (Acts 20:28-29). Cf. Ezek. 34:17-22.
- E. The Lord grants good things for His flock (v. 19; Ezek. 34:11-16, 23-31).

## III. The Lord pardons the sins of His people (50:20).

- A. This passage does not say how God is going to pardon His people, only that He is. It says that search will be made for their iniquities and there will be none because He has pardoned them.
- B. Our pardon comes, of course, as a result of what He has done to pay for our sins. Rom. 5:6 says, "Christ died for the ungodly."
- C. We need a pardon for our sin.
  1. That is what is provided by the Great Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11).
  2. He is the shepherd of Ezek 34:23-31.

3. He indeed leads us through the valley of the shadow of death but He comforts us with His rod and staff. Our cup overflows and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psa. 23).
- D. Pardon is conditioned on the appropriate response by the individual (Ezek. 16:60ff; 18:21-23, 30-32). The Kings of Babylon and the Kings of Judah received no pardon because they “stiffened their necks against God.”

Conclusion:

1. Although lions scatter the flock of God He will execute judgment against those lions and restore His flock.
2. Although His flock has sinned He will pardon their iniquities so that their sins cannot be found.
3. His relationship with us is purchased by the blood of His son. Let us be ashamed of our sin and come to Him for forgiveness.