

Jeremiah's Message to Zedekiah

Jer. 21:1-2

Introduction: 2 Kings 24:20c-25:3; 2 Chron. 36:11-20

1. The final days of Jerusalem preceding the Babylonian captivity were severe!
2. Zedekiah had rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. 2 Chron. 36:11ff notes that Zedekiah did evil in the sight of God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet who spoke for the Lord and he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear allegiance by God. "He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turn to the God of Israel."
3. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city of Jerusalem for 19 months.
4. The people inside were starving.
5. It was probably sometime during the development of these circumstances that Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to inquire for the Lord to deal with them kindly and cause the enemy to withdraw (Jer. 21:1-2).
6. God's message was not appealing to Zedekiah although it involved elements of both grace and judgment.
7. What was the message and how might it apply to our 21st century context?

Discussion:

- I. Desperate situations often drive us to inquire of the Lord.
 - A. Zedekiah had a history of rejecting the instruction of the Lord.
 1. He did evil like Jehoichim had done (2 Kings 23:37; 24:3-4).
 2. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah who spoke for the Lord (2 Chron. 36:12).
 3. He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the Lord (2 Chron. 36:13).
 - B. Some today are like Zedekiah.
 - C. When a desperate situation arises they ask for "wonderful acts" from the Lord (Jer. 21:2).
 1. Note that they recognize that the Lord is a God of "wonderful acts."
 2. They see Him as a deliverer from difficult circumstances.
 3. Perhaps because they have not seen themselves in need before they have paid little attention to Him.
 4. Now in desperation they come.
 - D. The Lord has acted wonderfully for you! Do you recognize this, but still respond inappropriately?
 1. Has the Lord given you children and yet you give little attention to bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?
 2. Has the Lord given you wealth and you have used it selfishly without much consideration to others?
 3. Has the Lord given you health and you have used it for your enjoyment without much attention to giving time to serving?
 4. Has He given you His son and you have not given your life to Him?

II. God's message to Zedekiah was that He was against him (Jer. 21:3-7).

- A. God would bring the Babylonians into the city.
- B. He would actually war against Jerusalem.
 - 1. He would strike down its inhabitants.
 - 2. Even those who survived would be given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 3. They would be struck down with the sword.
- C. Anger, wrath and indignation are manifestations of the justice of God against sin and rebellion.
- D. Zedekiah was 21 years old when he began reigning in Jerusalem. He had reigned 11 years before he found himself in the desperate situation he now faced. Sometimes we may go for extended periods without experiencing a desperate situation, and so our hearts are set within us to continue in our sin.
- E. Do not wait until you are face-to-face with death to seek the Lord.

III. Jeremiah's message to the people was to surrender and live (21:8-10).

- A. There was a way of life and a way of death set before the people.
 - 1. Stand, and die by the sword, famine or pestilence.
 - 2. Give up, to the Chaldeans (Babylonians) and live.
 - 3. Neither were pleasant choices.
- B. Giving up involved placing one's life in the hands of God. It meant to believe He would preserve your life even though you were in the hand of the enemy. This is what God's call is to us. Give up. Trust me. Even though you are in the hand of the enemy I will save your life.
- C. It is a way of life and death.
 - 1. Resist the Lord and die.
 - 2. Accept His word and live. It will not be easy. It is the way of faith.

Conclusion:

- 1. Seek the Lord while He may be found.
- 2. Do not wait until you are in a desperate situation. (You are in a desperate situation although you may not realize it.)
- 3. Trust in the Lord even when the way of life is difficult.
- 4. "Hear the word of the Lord. Administer justice every morning and deliver the person who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor" (Jer. 21:11-12).