



Sunday School- August 19, 2012

THE JUST LEADER

Unifying Topic: GOD PROMISED A RIGHTEOUS BRANCH

Lesson Text

I. The Plight Of Evil Shepherds (Jeremiah 23:1-4)

II. The Promise Of A Righteous King (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

III. The Perpetuation Of Royalty And Priesthood (Psalms 33:14-18)

The Main Thought: Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. (Jeremiah 23:5, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Leaders may betray the people whom they serve. Where do we find leaders whom we can trust? God promises to send leaders who will administer justice in God's name.

Lesson Aim: To hear God's condemnation on Judah's irresponsible shepherds/leaders as well as His promise to raise up a Shepherd who will rule with justice.

Life Aim: To teach students God detests misguided leadership, especially when it comes to the Body of Christ.

23:1 Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord.

23:2 Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord.

23:3 And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

23:4 And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord.

23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.

33:14 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

33:15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

33:16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.

33:17 For thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel;

33:18 Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.

HISTORY:

¹In **Jeremiah 20**, we were, historically speaking, in the fourth year of the reign of King Jehoiakim in Judah, when Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, for the first time brought his armies up against Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar made several expeditions against the city before it was finally overthrown and demolished, and its people led into captivity. In this first invasion Nebuchadnezzar took away into Babylon certain treasures from the temple at Jerusalem, and also certain young princes of Judah. Among them was a young man named Daniel, whose name you will recognize, and with him three of his friends: Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, who perhaps are better known to you by their Babylonian names -- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Jehoiakim was left in Jerusalem to be a vassal king, and he reigned seven more years. Then he rebelled against the government of Nebuchadnezzar, was deposed by another Babylonian invasion, and his son, Jehoiachin, also called Jeconiah, was put on the throne. He reigned for only three months, and then was taken as a captive to Babylon. His uncle, Zedekiah, one of the remaining sons of King Josiah, was put on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar to serve as a kind of caretaker king. Jeremiah was placed in prison by Pashur, the chief governor (20:7) after hearing Jeremiah's prophesy to the kings of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to bring evil because they had forsaken the Lord of hosts.

¹ <http://www.raystedman.org/old-testament/jeremiah/why-the-land-mourns>

That brings us to the **twenty-first chapter of Jeremiah**. So it is a number of years later, and Zedekiah, the weakest of all the kings of Judah and the last of the line, is now on the throne. Nebuchadnezzar is sending up another army against Jerusalem, the city is under siege, and King Zedekiah now sends a hasty word to Jeremiah the prophet, asking him to intercede to God on their behalf:

Verse 10 of **Chapter 21** summarizes the thrust of this chapter: "*For I have set my face against this city for evil and not for good,*" says the Lord: "*it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire*" Jeremiah 21:10 RSV.

So in **Chapter 22** God says to the prophet, "*I want you to go up and talk to the king himself, face to face.*" This is the first time Jeremiah is sent to deliver a message to the face of the king himself. The message goes forth to each king of Judah to hear the Word of the Lord:

- 1.) Message to the house of the king of Judah—David (Jer.21:11-14-22:1-10).
- 2.) Message to concerning Shallum (Jehoahaz), the son of Josiah, king of Judah (Jer.22:11-17); He reigned 3 months. And concerning Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah (Jer.22:18-23).
- 3.) Message to Coniah (Jeconiah) the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah (Jer.22:24-30). He reigned 3 months and 10 days.

LESSON:

Jeremiah 23:1-4 The Plight Of Evil Shepherds

23:1 Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. The Lord God speaks through Jeremiah a pronouncement of "*Woe*" upon Judah's pastors; some versions say shepherds. Jeremiah was an Old Testament prophet of doom and gloom. He was sent to prophesy God's judgment. This verse's declaration is because the pastors/shepherds have destroyed and scattered the sheep. They've done the exact opposite of the basic requirements for any shepherd. "*Woe*" means a judgment of deep despair and/or curse. ²Who are these shepherds? They are the kings of the nation; rulers and government leaders of God. ³The first two verses of this passage address Jehoiakim's and Zedekiah's failed leadership that led to exile. A shepherd's role was to gather the sheep together and protect them. The shepherds of Judah, however, made policy decisions that placed the people in peril and ultimately led to their exile. By right of their office, the kings of Judah had exerted a tremendous influence on the people, scattering them away from God. Remember the people are the sheep of His pasture. The sheep do not belong to the rulers but God is the true Shepherd.

23:2 Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord.

God makes it clearer and clearer to these pastors/shepherds of their error:

- they didn't feed God's people;
- they drove the people away;
- they didn't even visit the people.

Therefore, as they did not do what God required of them, God lets them know that they have not gotten away with their evil. God will pour out judgment upon them as they had done themselves.

23:3 And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. After telling the pastors/shepherds what they didn't do and what will happen to them, He turns around and tells them what He will do to fix this problem. The sheep were scattered by the false shepherds, but God also states here that He had also driven them. However, He will be the One who will re-gather and bring His remnant out of all those countries they were driven. The people would be brought back to the land after the Babylonian captivity. A remnant will return (those that have escaped destruction) and they will be fruitful and increase. The result is that "⁴*The failure of human leaders prepares us for the intervention of God.*" You take disappointment with leaders and frustration of things that we sometimes think we aren't supposed to feel as Christians, but then you realize how that disappointment opens you up to God's work. When people in our lives fail us, look for God to step in.

² <http://www.raystedman.org/old-testament/jeremiah/why-the-land-mourns>

³ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?lect_date=7/22/2012&tab=1

⁴ Discovery Publishing © 2009. www.pbc.org

23:4 And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord. Though the former pastors/shepherds didn't take care of the people, God will appoint and set-up responsible shepherds to care and feed His people. This Shepherd will not cause the people to fear, nor be dismayed, neither lacking nor none of them missing.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 The Promise Of A Righteous King

23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. Jeremiah raises this ray of hope. God will honor this Covenant with David (2Sam.7:1-25), a righteous branch shall reign as king. He would be a "branch" coming from David. Isaiah wrote, Is.11:1 (KJV) *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:* The term "branch" means ⁵"shoot" or "sprout", and signifies the new life that the Messiah was to bring to the Davidic monarchy, which was presumed dead. ⁶Christ is here spoken of as a branch from David, the man the branch (Zech. 3:8), his appearance mean, his beginnings small, like those of a bud or sprout, and his rise seemingly out of the earth.

23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness. During His (the Righteous King) reign "Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, *'the LORD our righteousness'* (vv. 5-6; cf. 3:17; 33:16; Ezekiel 48:35; 1 Corinthians 1:30). ⁷This title is a translation of "*Jehovah Tsidkenu.*" Interestingly, the term Tsidkenu is another form of the name Zedekiah. This was the name of the King who was ruling in Judah when Jeremiah made this prophecy. The name Zedekiah means "*The Lord is my Righteousness.*" But King Zedekiah was far from righteous in his own life! Jesus is OUR righteousness! He did all things justly! Therefore, out of the fallen dynasty of Israel, life would spring through an individual Messiah, upon whom the nation, as well as the world's hopes would rest.

Jeremiah 33:14-18 The Perpetuation Of Royalty And Priesthood

33:14 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. The days are surely coming, wait for it! Of the twenty Davidic kings who reigned over Judah from David to their captivity, most of them were evil and unworthy of the name of David. In chapters 22 and 23 Jeremiah had bitterly indicted the family line. The one great King would come and reign in righteousness to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. Jeremiah still prophesies that the days are coming; that good thing He had promised, He will perform.

33:15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. "*...to grow up unto David'*, means He, "*the Branch of righteousness,*" is said to come from the royal line of David at the appointed time; in the fullness of time. And in those days He, the Messiah will execute judgment and righteousness in the land—in enacting laws, waging wars, and giving judgment, to call attention to righteousness in vindicating those that suffer wrong and punishing those that do wrong.

33:16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness. In those days ⁸the nation of Israel was divided: Judah, the southern and Israel, the northern kingdom. In Genesis 49 (esp. verse 10) the Lord promised that the scepter would not depart from Judah. By Him (the Promised One; a righteous Branch to come) Judah shall be saved from wrath and the curse; and Jerusalem shall dwell safely, quiet from the fear of evil, and enjoying a holy security and serenity of mind. Judah

⁵ <http://www.studytoanswer.net/judaism/jahtsidqenu.html>

⁶ <http://biblebrowser.com/jeremiah/23-4.htm>

⁷ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/a-reason-to-rejoice-k-edward-skidmore-sermon-on-christmas-74664.asp?page=3>

⁸ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/our-lord-fulfills-his-gracious-promise-timm-meyer-sermon-on-fulfillment-131011.asp>

signifies one that confesses or praises the Lord; such shall be saved from sin. Jerusalem was the city that was considered the center of worship and the center of civilizations. And would be safe for the nation to come and worship. Jeremiah had already told us that His name is "*The Lord our righteousness*" (23:6), but now God reveals that "Her" (Jerusalem) shall bear the same name, "*The Lord our Righteousness*."

33:17 For thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; — Despite the judgment and exile, God's promise to David still stands. God is letting them and us know that He keeps His promises. The righteous Branch coming will fulfill God's promise to David (2Sam.7:16; 1Chron.17:11-12).

33:18 Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. The Messiah's coming will also mean that the Covenant with Levi (Mal.2:1-9) will be kept. The Messiah will be both King (2Sam.7:16) and Priest (Ps.110:4).

⁹Let's keep in mind the consummation has not arrived. Literally and locally Jerusalem has never been rebuilt as described by Jeremiah. Judah has never known these marvelous conditions. Israel has not yet dwelt in peace by the side of Judah, as said the prophet that she should. However, God is still moving with certainty, quietly, with focused determination toward His goal.

SUMMARY:

This chapter begins with woe to pastors/shepherds on account of their scattering, driving away, and not visiting the sheep of the Lord. God lets them know that He will visit them with evil, 23:1, 2. God then gives hope that His remnant will be brought back to the fold, be fruitful and increase. He goes further by saying that He will set up shepherds over them to properly care for them. They will no longer need to fear, be dismayed or have lack, 23:3, 4. They didn't feed; Look for the days to come, He says that a Righteous Branch shall rise up and a King shall reign and prosper. He will then execute judgment and justice in the land. Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will be safe, calling His name The Lord Our Righteousness, 23:5, 6.

God continues to give His promises (through Jeremiah) to the house of Israel and the house of Judah of the Messiah as a righteous Branch, executing judgment and righteousness in the land 33:14-15; Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will be safe, calling her "*The Lord our Righteousness*", 33:16; God assures that there will be a continuance of the kingly and priestly offices in Him, whereby the covenant of God with David and the Levites would not be broken, 33:17-18.

- **The Plight:** The dilemma of evil shepherds had posed a problem of the sheep to be scattered.
- **The Promise:** The assurance and pledge of a righteous Branch; a King will reign wisely whereby Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety.
- **The Perpetuation:** The upholding and continuance of God's promise that the throne of David will never fail to have a descendant sitting on the throne of Israel forever who will be King and priest forever.

APPLICATION:

When God speaks a promise, He is well able to perform it. Are there promises you're still waiting on? No matter how sinful the nation of Israel was, His judgment was sure and His promises were surer!

⁹ <http://www.abideinchrist.com/messages/jer23v5.html>