

Jer. 21:1 ¶ The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying,

Jer. 21:2 Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.

As is often the case with the prophets, the book does not necessarily flow chronologically; so we need to pay attention to the time markers. This message is being delivered when Zedekiah is king. The king has sent aides to Jeremiah to ask him to ask the LORD to intercede for them against King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I guess he was thinking that if He interceded for Hezekiah, He might do the same for him.

It's interesting to note that it was Nebuchadnezzar that placed Zedekiah in power, and they are under siege because Zedekiah had chosen to rebel against him. This is recorded in the book of 2Kings.

2 Kings 24:12–17 “And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king’s house....And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives....And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king’s mother, and the king’s wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon....And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father’s brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.”

Jeremiah had been prophesying since the days of King Josiah, and his prophecies are being proven true. The tone of the king's request is couched in words of humility before the LORD in hopes of getting a positive response. He seems to recognize that their only hope is in the miraculous intervention of God in light of the might of the Babylon military forces. The Hebrew for “wondrous works” includes a reference to miracles.

Jer. 21:3 Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah:

Jer. 21:4 Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that *are* in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and *against* the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city.

Jer. 21:5 And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath.

Jer. 21:6 And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence.

Jer. 21:7 And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into

the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

Jeremiah instructs the aides to tell King Zedekiah that He will not intervene for them; in fact, He is personally fighting against them. He will personally see to it that their own weapons are turned against them. He is angry with them and is going to see that they are made to understand just how angry He is. Everyone living in Jerusalem, man and animal, will die—if not at the hands of the enemy, because of plague and/or starvation. The Babylonians will show no mercy.

Jer. 21:8 ¶ And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

Jer. 21:9 He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

The prophet does establish criteria by which they can survive. Those who choose to surrender to the Chaldeans outside the city will live to be taken as captives to Babylon.

Jer. 21:10 For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

The prophet continues to emphasize that God has determined evil against Jerusalem; repentance is no longer an option for deferring judgment. He has determined to give it up to destruction by fire at the hands of the king of Babylon.

Jer. 21:11 And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

Jer. 21:12 O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver *him that is* spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings.

Now the prophet declares a special message for the king of Judah from the LORD. He urges him to administer justice to the people before the LORD. If he doesn't, things will get even worse.

Jer. 21:13 Behold, I *am* against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?

Jer. 21:14 But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

These verses again emphasize that the God of Israel is against His people because of their arrogance and pride. He is going to punish them in accordance

with their actions. Though Jerusalem was positioned on a hill that provided a good position for defense, that location would pose no problem to the enemy. The LORD will personally set the fire that will result in the complete destruction of the city.