

GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON THE LAST FOUR KINGS OF JUDAH

TEXT: JEREMIAH 22:1-30

INTRODUCTION:

1. In Jeremiah 21, the prophet Jeremiah was approached by two emissaries from King Zedekiah (21:1, 2).
2. Jeremiah was then given a message from the LORD for King Zedekiah. It was a strong message of judgment (21:3-7).
3. The theme is similar here in chapter 22. However, chapter 22 contains not only a message for King Zedekiah, but for his three predecessors.
4. When Jeremiah began his ministry, King Josiah was on the throne (Jer. 1:1, 2). King Josiah reigned for 31 years.
5. Josiah was the last good king of Judah. He tried to lead the people of Judah back to God. There were times of refreshing (some Bible teachers say it was more of a reformation than a genuine revival), but nevertheless the country was on the road to judgment because of the sins of King Manasseh, King Josiah's grandfather (cf. Jer. 15:1-4).
6. In many ways, America is in the same dangerous position today.
7. The four kings who followed King Josiah were all bad. Three of them were his sons, and one of them, Jehoiachin was his grandson.
8. King Josiah's son Zedekiah was the last king. There has not been a king on the throne of David since King Zedekiah.
9. Here in Jeremiah 22, we see God's judgment upon the last four kings of Judah.

I. KING ZEDEKIAH (22:1-10)

1. Zedekiah was the last of the kings of Judah. He was placed on the throne by King Nebuchadnezzar, and Nebuchadnezzar changed his name from Mattaniah to Zedekiah.
2. In chapter 22, Jeremiah repeats what he said in chapter 21 (22:1-3; cf. 21:12).
3. "The throne of David" (22:4) was supposed to represent judgment (justice) and righteousness (22:3), but this was no longer the case.
4. Jeremiah 22:4 says that if God's requirements were met, then blessings would follow -- for the king, and his servants, and his people.
5. However, if they would not obey, the house of David "shall become a desolation" (22:5-7). That is precisely what happened. King Zedekiah was the last king to sit on the throne of David.
6. The word "house" refers both to the beautiful royal palace where King Zedekiah lived, and to the "house (kingly line) of Judah" (22:5, 6).

7. The royal palace would be cut down and burnt to the ground by the fierce Babylonian army (22:5-7).
8. And there would be no more kings on the throne of David until King Jesus returns (cf. Isaiah 9:6, 7; Luke 1:31-33).
9. Heathen would pass by Jerusalem and ask, "Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?" (22:8).
10. And the answer would be, "Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them" (22:9; cf. 19:4, 5).
11. "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him" (22:10) refers to good King Josiah, the father of King Zedekiah. Before King Josiah died, the LORD told him of the coming judgment upon Jerusalem, and then said, "Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place" (II Kings 22:20).
12. King Josiah died and went to heaven, and the LORD said, "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country" (Jer. 22:10).

II. KING JEHOAHAZ (22:11, 12)

1. This brings us to "Shallum, the son of Josiah king of Judah" (22:11), also known as King Jehoahaz. Little is known of King Jehoahaz.
2. King Jehoahaz succeeded his father Josiah. He was twenty three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for only three months (II Chron. 36:2).
3. King Jehoahaz was carried off into Egypt by Pharaoh Necho, never to see his native land again. "But weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country" (Jer. 22:10; cf. II Kings 23:31-34).
4. This is repeated for emphasis (Jeremiah 22:11, 12).
5. Instead of trusting in a weak, and wicked deposed leader, the people should have been looking to the Lord for help.
6. H.A. Ironside said, "This crying sin of Jeremiah's age is being multiplied a thousand-fold in these last days."

III. KING JEHOIAKIM (22:13-23)

1. Jehoiakim, also known as Eliakim, was the older brother of Jehoahaz.
2. Second Kings 23:34 says, "And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim."

3. Jehoiakim was a very wicked king. In Jeremiah 36 we read that he took out a penknife and cut up the Word of God and threw it into the fireplace.
4. Some of the princes tried to stop King Jehoiakim but he would not listen to them (Jer. 36:22-25).
5. King Jehoiakim wanted Jeremiah and his friend Baruch arrested, but verse Jeremiah 36:26 tells us that "the LORD hid them."
6. King Jehoiakim came to his end in a violent manner. His body was thrown over the wall and he was not given a proper burial (cf. Jer. 22:18, 19; 36:30).
7. Jeremiah the prophet pronounced woe upon King Jehoiakim for building his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong (22:13; cf. 17:11).
8. King Jehoiakim hired men to build his palace but refused to pay them (22:13b). Jeremiah uses different pronouns -- him, thou, and he -- throughout this passage, but he refers to Jehoiakim by name in verse 18.
9. King Jehoiakim had said, "I will build me a wide house and large chambers" (22:14a). He "cutteth him out windows; and it is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion" (22:14b).
10. "Vermillion" (22:14) is a bright red color.
11. Jeremiah confronted King Jehoiakim -- "Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father (good King Josiah) eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD" (22:15, 16).
12. "Was not this to know me?" means King Josiah's righteousness was evidence that he knew the LORD, whereas King Jehoiakim's unrighteousness -- he was covetous; he shed innocent blood; he oppressed others; and his reign was marked by violence (22:17).
13. Merrill Unger says, "The prophet sternly contrasted the wicked, unprincipled son with his father, King Josiah, who practiced justice and righteousness (II Kings 23:25) and prospered" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
14. God pronounced judgment upon wicked King Jehoiakim. He would die and "they shall not lament for him" (22:18).
15. "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (22:19). His dead body would be cast out into the garbage dump like the carcass of a dead donkey. Unger says, "Evidence points to the fact that he was slain by

Nebuchadnezzar outside the walls of Jerusalem, where his body was left unburied" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).

16. Verses 20-23 refer to Judah's wicked kings -- "pastors" (shepherds -- 22:22). The book of Jeremiah is the only book in the Old Testament that uses the word, and it is found seven times in Jeremiah (cf. 2:8; 3:15; 10:21; 12:10; 22:22; 23:1, 2).
17. It is only found once in the New Testament, in Ephesians 4:11, in reference to the preachers in charge of local congregations, also known as bishops or elders.
18. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."
19. Referring to Judah's heathen allies as "lovers" (22:20, 22) is in line with the frequent admonitions against spiritual adultery. Instead of trusting in God, they were trusting in Egypt and other heathen nations.
20. Judah was rebellious, and disobedient, and stubborn, and defiantly said to God, "I will not hear" (22:21).
21. God's judgment would come like a strong wind (22:22).
22. The imagery of a woman with birth pangs (22:23) is found all throughout the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

IV. KING JEHOIACHIN (22:24-30)

1. After the death of King Jehoiakim, his son Jehoiachin (also referred to as Jeconiah or Coniah -- Jer. 22:24; 28:4) was put on the throne by King Nebuchadnezzar.
2. Second Chronicles 36:9 and 10 says, "Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD. And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem."
3. The LORD said to Jehoiachin, that even if he "were the signet (ring)" upon His right hand," yet He would still pluck him hence" (22:24).
4. King Jehoiachin was "plucked" (pulled off the throne), taken to Babylon and put in prison. He spent 37 years in a Babylonian prison before "Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison" (II Kings 25:27-30).

5. During the reign of King Jehoiachin, the Babylonians besieged and captured Jerusalem, and took King Jehoiachin and his mother and "his seed" (Jer. 22:26, 28).
6. The final judgment pronounced upon King Jehoiachin in Jeremiah 22 declares that he is "a despised broken idol" and "a vessel wherein is no pleasure" (22:28).
7. "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (22:30).
8. King Jehoiachin had seven sons, and one of them is in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:12).
9. What this means is that no son of Jehoiachin would ever sit upon the throne of David. Matthew mentions Jehoiachin in the genealogy of Jesus, but Joseph was not our Lord's real father (cf. Matthew 1:11).
10. Matthew 1:16 says, "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."
11. Joseph was the legal father of Jesus, but not His real father. Had Joseph been His true father, the record would say, "And Jacob begat Joseph; and Joseph begat Jesus."

CONCLUSION:

1. One of the interesting we see in the Bible is that good kings often had bad sons, and bad kings often had good sons.
2. For example, King Josiah was a good king but his sons were all bad.
3. King Jehoiachin (Coniah) was so bad that God said to him, "though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence" (Jer. 22:24).
4. King Jehoiachin had a godly grandson named Zerubbabel, who was one of the leaders who rebuilt Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity.
5. In Haggai 2:23, we read this, "In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts."

