A Sermon To Godless Kings
Jeremiah 22:1-30

Introduction

We continue Jeremiah’s ninth sermon. In chapter 21 the armies of Babylon surround the city of Jerusalem. Zedekiah asks Jeremiah to pray for the nation and the city. Jeremiah refuses and issues a warning to the king and to the people. Repeated disobedience has brought God’s judgment. Jeremiah encourages the people to chose between life and death (22:8-10). To stay in Jerusalem means death (21:8-10). To surrender to Nebuchadnezzar means life (21:9).

Jeremiah like Nathan the Prophet was sent to deal directly with the Kings of Judah. Unlike David the Kings refused to repent.

The messages are short but powerful. The message to King Zedekiah--you cannot escape judgment. The message to King Shallum or Jehoahaz; you are condemned to die in exile; utter hopelessness (22:10-12). The message to King Jehoiakim; you are condemned because of persistent evil; but certainly because of greed (vv.13-23). And the message to Jehoiachin or Coniah; you are rejected by God (22:21-30).

Jehoiakim Judah’s 18th King (vv.1-9; 13-23)

Jeremiah 22:1 Thus says the Lord: “Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word,

Jeremiah 22:2 and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates!

Jeremiah 22:3 Thus says the Lord: “Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

Judah is ruled by a king. It was the king’s responsibility to execute judgment and righteousness. It was the king’s job to establish justice and enforce the moral law of God.

Jeremiah 22:4 For if you indeed do this thing, then shall enter the gates of this house, riding on horses and in chariots, accompanied by servants and people, kings who sit on the throne of David.

Jeremiah 22:5 But if you will not hear these words, I swear by Myself,” says the Lord, “that this house shall become a desolation.”

What does it mean for God to swear by Himself? R.K. Harrison; “He is maintaining His rights as the initiator of the covenant relationship” (Jeremiah and Lamentations; p.117).
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Jeremiah 22:6 For thus says the Lord to the house of the king of Judah: “You are Gilead to Me, The head of Lebanon; Yet I surely will make you a wilderness, Cities which are not inhabited.

Jeremiah 22:7 I will prepare destroyers against you, Everyone with his weapons; They shall cut down your choice cedars And cast them into the fire.

Jeremiah 22:8 And many nations will pass by this city; and everyone will say to his neighbor, ‘Why has the Lord done so to this great city?’

Jeremiah 22:9 Then they will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshiped other gods and served them.’”

Shallum or Jehoahaz; Judah’s 17th King (vv.10-12)

Jeremiah 22:10 Weep not for the dead, nor bemoan him; Weep bitterly for him who goes away, For he shall return no more, Nor see his native country.

Jeremiah speaks to Shallum or Jehoahaz (1 Chron.3:15); who succeeded his father Josiah—when Josiah was killed at Megiddo. Shalum reigns for about three months; and was carried off to Egypt. He is instructed not to mourn for his father--but rather to bemoan his own circumstances; Jeremiah predicts the king will never return to Judah.

Jeremiah 22:11 For thus says the Lord concerning Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, who went from this place: “He shall not return here anymore,

Jeremiah 22:12 but he shall die in the place where they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.

Shallum becomes the first leader of Judah to die in exile.

Pharaoh Necho appointed Shallum or Jehoahaz and also removed him and carried him away captive to Egypt. Egypt not God made him king.

What are the consequences of persistent rebellion? Exile. They would never again return to the promised land. The followers of Jehoahaz would live in permanent exile from the promised land, enslaved, hopeless.

Hopelessness is one of the consequences of willful persistent sin. Why would you want to reject and disobey the Lord? Willful, persistent rejection for the unbeliever results in eternal separation from God.
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For the unbeliever and the make-believer our sin and rebellion against God carries with it a spiritual sentence--eternal separation from God and condemnation by God.

Jehoiakim: Nine Charges (vv.13-23)

Jeremiah 22:13 “Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness And his chambers by injustice, Who uses his neighbor’s service without wages And gives him nothing for his work,

Now the Prophet reminds the wicked, oppressive, covetous, idolater Jehoiakim of his future.

The king built his palace with forced labor and heavy taxes (see 2 Kings 23:35).

Jehoiakim was the son of a godly king. Yet Jehoiakim was corrupt and wholly given over to evil. He was cruel; dictatorial--and bitterly opposed Jeremiah. The nine charges contained in this section reveals the depth of his depravity.

Jeremiah 22:14 Who says, ‘I will build myself a wide house with spacious chambers, And cut out windows for it, Paneling it with cedar And painting it with vermillion.’

Jeremiah 22:15 “Shall you reign because you enclose yourself in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink, And do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him.

The Prophet Jeremiah contrasts the reign of Jehoiakim with his father Josiah.

The King lived in a lavish mansion decorated with the cedars of Lebanon to the humble reign of his father Josiah.

Jeremiah 22:16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy; Then it was well. Was not this knowing Me?” says the Lord.

Jeremiah 22:17 “Yet your eyes and your heart are for nothing but your covetousness, For shedding innocent blood, And practicing oppression and violence.”

What are the charges?

1. The king used forced labor to build his palace.
2. The king was unjust, dishonest, refusing to pay wages to the people who worked for him (v. 13).
3. The king was covetous, greedy (v.14). He desired a palace with large spacious rooms and huge windows, made from the finest materials and expensive cedar wood paneling and gorgeous decorations. The idea is that he desired a personal dwelling place more lavish, more
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plush, more luxurious than any of the previous kings of Judah. He was looking to build the most beautiful palace ever built.

4. He was self-serving and vain, totally different from his godly father Josiah. Josiah lived a life of righteousness and justice; and these were the characteristics of great leadership.

5. He failed to defend or protect the poor like his father (v.16a).

6. He did not know the Lord; and failed to commit himself and obey the Lord and God’s Holy Word (v.16b). One of the consequences of living a life of obedience to God and to God’s Word is living righteously. This would mean—meeting the needs of the poor and needy as well as the noble and the wealthy.

7. He failed to control the ever growing lust in his own heart; lust drove him to want more and more; even if that meant that he had to stoop to under handed tactics and obtain things dishonestly (v.17).

8. The wicked king was guilty of murder, of shedding innocent blood; which is the very height of injustice (17b). Few things can be said to exceed the wicked behavior of people who kill the innocent. An example of his brutality and injustice is seen in his execution of a prophet named Uriah (see chapter 26:20-23).

9. The wicked king was guilty of oppression and extortion (v.17c).

Jeremiah 22:18 Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: “They shall not lament for him, Saying, ‘Alas, my brother!’ or ‘Alas, my sister!’ They shall not lament for him, Saying, ‘Alas, master!’ or ‘Alas, his glory!’

Jeremiah 22:19 He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey, Dragged and cast out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

King Jehoiakim would be denied a royal funeral (2 Kings 24:6). The King’s body would be thrown on the garbage heap—the burial of a donkey. When donkey’s died, their dead carcass was dragged outside the city and left to rot on the garbage heap!

The horrible, wicked and corrupt king stood condemned. No one would mourn him or care when he died (v.18). He would be abandoned by his friends and allies; and would be crushed by Babylon (see v. 20).

Jeremiah 22:20 “Go up to Lebanon, and cry out, And lift up your voice in Bashan; Cry from Abarim, For all your lovers are destroyed.
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Time and time again Jeremiah warned the King; trust the Lord. But the King turned to his neighbors for help and comfort. The King chose to disobey God and ignore and reject God’s Word. The king would be ashamed and confounded when he lost his friends and allies.

*Jeremiah 22:21* I spoke to you in your prosperity, But you said, ‘I will not hear.’ This has been your manner from your youth, That you did not obey My voice.

*Jeremiah 22:22* The wind shall eat up all your rulers, And your lovers shall go into captivity; Surely then you will be ashamed and humiliated For all your wickedness.

*Jeremiah 22:23* O inhabitant of Lebanon, Making your nest in the cedars, How gracious will you be when pangs come upon you, Like the pain of a woman in labor?

The king would cry and groan like a woman in labor. He would suffer God’s judgment because with greed and selfishness he indulged his flesh. He coveted the cedar buildings and neglected the poor.

Greed is a horrible sin. It consumes hearts. As a matter fact the Scriptures equate greed with idolatry. The fundamental meaning of idolatry is when we set our hearts, our affections, our resources, on things other than God. Covetous behavior is accumulating, collecting, hoarding stuff that you don’t really need or want. The mark of greatness is not in the accumulation of stuff but rather character and service. God warns against greed.

What is the powerful alternative to greed? Gratitude and gratefulness.

What do you have to be grateful for? How will you celebrate thanksgiving?

Are you grateful for answered prayers? For the favor of God who blesses; for material blessings, for spiritual blessings, for special help, for God’s goodness, for God’s faithful love, for victory through Christ, for God’s faithfulness, for God’s immeasurable love, for God’s amazing grace, for our great salvation, for Jesus Christ, for God’s redemptive plan, for fellow believers! For suffering servants; for the knowledge and growth and maturity that comes from recognizing failures and mistakes, for God’s commitment to cultivate godly character and for God’s willingness to use us in any way He sees fit!

**Jehoiachin or Coniah; Judah’s 19th King (vv.24-30)**

Jeremiah issues a twofold prophecy directed at this evil ruler; about him and his mother (vv. 24-28); and about his sons (vv.29-30).
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Jeremiah 22:24 “As I live,” says the Lord, “though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off;

Coniah is Jehoiachin here and in 37:1. He is also called Jeconiah in 24:1; 27:20 (see also 2 Kings 24:8-16; 25:27-30).

Signet rings were symbols of power and authority and were highly prized; and were of immense value (see Song of Solomon 8:6; Haggai 2:23). In taking off this ring—the Lord God Jehovah rejects this man’s leadership. The Lord God cannot remain in fellowship with a rebellious sinner; since implicit obedience to Him is absolutely necessary for fellowship (see Hebrews 10:36).

Jeremiah 22:25 and I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life, and into the hand of those whose face you fear—the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of the Chaldeans.
Jeremiah 22:26 So I will cast you out, and your mother who bore you, into another country where you were not born; and there you shall die.

The puppet king will be exiled to Babylon along with his mother. Her name was Nehoshta (see 2 Kings 24:6, 8,15).

Jeremiah 22:27 But to the land to which they desire to return, there they shall not return.
Jeremiah 22:28 “Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol— A vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, And cast into a land which they do not know?
Jeremiah 22:29 O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the Lord!

Jeremiah 22:30 Thus says the Lord: ‘Write this man down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah.’ ”

The prophecy does not mean the king will have no children. It means his offspring are forbidden to sit on the throne of David. We know he had seven sons (see 1 Chronicles 3:17-18). By divine decree he will have no dynastic rights.

The descendants of Coniah are forbidden to sit on the throne of David.

He would be the last Judean King. Nebuchadnezzar would place Zedekiah (king 20) Jehoiachin’s uncle upon the throne. But no king from the line of David would sit on the throne again until the coming of the Messiah Himself; the Lord Jesus Christ; who is “the Son of David”.

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The prophecy will have Messianic implications.

The right of Jesus to the throne of David came through his foster father Joseph; who was a direct descendant of Jeconiah (see Matthew 1:12; 16). The physical descent of Jesus came through Mary--whose genealogy is traced through Nathan--rather than Solomon, to David (cf. Matt. 1:17; Luke 3:31).

If Joseph had been the biological father of Jesus; the Lord would not be able to occupy David’s throne; and Luke 1:32-33 would contradict this prophecy.

Who has the right to rule on David’s throne?

Conclusion

In the last days of Human History--Jesus will return to establish God’s kingdom on earth. In that day Jerusalem will be the Holy City, the capitol and seat of God’s government on the earth.

When anyone--kings--leaders--turn away from the Lord; forsake the Lord; forsake His commandments; God must separate Himself from that person. God does not forsake the sinner--the sinner forsakes God.

What does the truth reveal in your heart and in your life?

Did you really think people can turn from the Lord, forsake the Lord and live sinful lives--and there not be consequences?