



Lesson 11 May 15th, 2021

Jeremiah: The Suffering Preacher of Doom

Study Scripture – Jeremiah 38:14-23

Background Scripture – Jeremiah 38:14-23

Key Verse:

Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?

Jeremiah 38:15

INTRODUCTION

This Study today analyses the personality of several important persons with different levels of authority and responsibility. The King of Judah who had responsibility for managing the affairs of the nation was quite incompetent. James 1:6-8 as it discusses faith, the need for wisdom and patience, and the very liberal attitude that God has to those who ask Him for anything states and warns:

“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord: he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”.

This Study highlights a particularly troubling matter for the statement condemns the King of Judah named Zedekiah for it was his job as king to represent God Most High as His steward on Earth. He and the rulers had therefore a great responsibility for it was their job to oppose people with really bad ideas about what supposedly needed to be done. They were to protect people and not abuse them or to use them for their own self-gratification.

The King and rulers represent God and God puts them in power to ensure that God's will is done for the benefit of people. In this case the King should have protected the prophet Jeremiah from evil men who were bent on doing evil to him.

The Study therefore points us to a common theme in Scripture where we see a pattern in the world of people who are supposed to be protectors of the people failing in their responsibility. The people with the most power often fail to protect us. So we are enraged at the sex abuse scandals in the Catholic Church and many other churches where the priests, pastors, elders, deacons, and deaconesses who are supposed to protect people in fact abuse them for their own self-gratification. We see parents who were supposed to protect their children and make sure that they are healthy fail at this task. We see teachers, mentors, employers, friends, spouses unfortunately are inept just like King Hezekiah was.

So this is a very serious matter for you will see in the early verses of the Chapter four powerful, political people whose job was to protect the people of Israel do the exact opposite and even accused the prophet Jeremiah with discouraging the people and not having the interest of the

people in mind when they are the ones that aren't interested in the people but interested in their own power and position. They completely disregarded the instructions given by God. So as we weep when looking at this Lesson, we can ask the question as to why we get dumped on for doing the right thing, just as happened to the prophet Jeremiah when he did the right thing.

As individuals we relate to this story about Jeremiah. We see Jeremiah struggling, we see how much it cost Jeremiah to be faithful to God's calling and be faithful to God despite being knocked down and being made to suffer and punished, placed in a position where he would surely die. We therefore understand the words of Jesus which says that if the world hated Jesus, abused, and killed Him, we should expect nothing different to happen to us.

Many countries have political leaders, religious leaders and powerful people who do not protect the people and are not faithful to God's commandments. Their end will be the same. There will be doom. We as individuals will face the same doom if we as individuals are not faithful to God and fail in our responsibility to be protectors of those over which we are have a charge.

But the warning has to be that we should not become cynical when betrayal comes, and we should never become cynical and hide ourselves in a place where we never trust anyone. Do not therefore be surprised but expect to be betrayed and expect people to protect themselves instead of protecting you. And like Jeremiah we can get very upset at these difficulties, but we should keep at it, stay engaged with people and stay engaged with God. Like Jeremiah we should not be surprised at betrayal. And like Jeremiah we should keep on loving our people and trying to save them at every turn.

Besides this analysis of several personalities, dealing with an unstable King, evil princes, and all the evil members of the elite who made foolish and poor judgments when faced with the devastating consequences for their nation, we have to learn to face the truth.

Leadership is extremely important but personal interests are so powerful leaders do what about they think is reasonable to protect their position and the benefits that they get.

One writer explains why we should be careful and how we should face the truth and pay attention to how the system of the world operates. He states in a discussion of Jeremiah 38:1-6 **"We start out with four guys who have been listening to Jeremiah's message. From what we know, it seems like these were powerful political people. They are part of the ruling authority and power in Jerusalem, but Jeremiah wasn't. The prophets in ancient Israel were never part of the ruling establishment. The priests had power-- they ran the religious life of the nation. The king had power-- he ran the political life of the nation. But the prophets didn't have power because they were on the outside. They had to be. Because if you have power, then your tendency is always going to be to try to protect your power, therefore, the prophets always spoke as outsiders.**

This was important because the prophets often delivered a message that challenged those in power. And they could do without because they were outsiders. That's what Jeremiah is doing. He predicts that Babylon will destroy Jerusalem and that's bad news. But it's especially bad news if you are one of Jerusalem's insiders and are powerful. This is because you have more to lose than an average person. You have your position to lose, your authority, and your power. That's why these four men aren't please with Jeremiah. That's why they want to kill him because his message threatens their power.



People in power tend to act to preserve their power. We see this in our world everywhere; from CEOs and corporate executives to political leaders, parents, and priests. When people in power are backed up against a wall and confronted with something that challenged their power, they will usually act to protect themselves rather than protecting the people they are meant to protect.

And in our more honest moments, we recognize the same thing about ourselves. When we are challenged, our tendency is to get defensive and protect ourselves rather than dealing with challenging truth”.

This Study therefore does not really make pleasant reading for we see the fact of, and the reality of human nature and we see our innermost selves spread out in front of us.

We see the effect of choices. Choices will determine our destiny. Our choices will lead to eternal life or it will lead to our doom.

We also see the foolishness of the fears that humans have despite a comforting and encouraging word from God Himself. The King had been given a comforting but difficult message from God, but his fears let him make foolish decisions.

It is important that we look at the reason for his fears and try to see if we are prompted to being fearful for those similar things. We should admit to ourselves that we are fearful of particular and specific things which maybe nobody else knows about. These fears might be so powerful that we might ignore even the word of God to us and so we are led to our doom.

So our advice to you is to talk to God honestly for He knows everything about you and ask Him to help you in particular with your particular fears. As James said in 1:5, He will deal with you liberally and without reproach.

Remember also as we study that what the rulers of Judah felt that the prophesy from God demoralized the people. God however intended it to be humbling. Humility is what is prized by God and sometimes God has to take us through difficult situations which seem devastating to us. Remember however that our God is acting with the best of intentions and we will come out of our troubles smelling like roses.

But never underestimate your human weaknesses. Run down to the shelter of God's arms for help in every situation, whether it seems little or whether it seems a lot. Remember the Father is always watching you and nothing is hidden from Him.

Remember also that truth telling can land you in the Pit. There are dangers in speaking truthfully. But remember also that faithful testimony should not change in the face of powerful pressure.

THE TEXT

First, we will have to look at the Context to remind ourselves of what was happening. Jeremiah had been prophesying, urging the people and leaders to change from their disobedient ways and follow God. Chapter 36 tells us that the prophet Jeremiah had written in a book everything that he had been saying according to the instructions of God. When he was a prisoner, he has sent his scribe to read this in the Temple on the day of fasting so that they would hopefully repent and turn and God would restore the nation. One of the princes heard his reading, told other princes what they had heard and sent for the scribe named Baruch to repeat the words of the book to them. When he read it to them, they trembled in fear and reported it to the King



who at the time was Jehoiakim. In a most destructive destruction of Scripture this king brazenly cut up the book of prophecy with a pen knife and threw the pages one by one as they were read into the fire so that the scroll was totally consumed. This was total contempt for God and defiance against God, but God responded and told Jeremiah:

“Take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah had burned.” And you shall say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, “Thus says the LORD. “You have burned this scroll, saying, ‘Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and cause man and beast to cease from here?’”

Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah. “You shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night.

“I will punish him, his family, and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring on them, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the men of Judah all the doom that I have pronounced against them; but they did not heed”.

Judgment came on this cursed King and he was destroyed as God had decreed because of his brazen and defiant behaviour. The Babylonians installed Zedekiah as king. When the Babylonians withdrew from a siege of Jerusalem to face the army of Pharaoh, the rulers of Judah rejoiced even though Jeremiah warned them that the armies of Babylon would be back at Jerusalem after wiping out the armies of Pharaoh.

Jeremiah had to again prophesy directly to this king who had taken Jeremiah out of prison secretly to speak to him that God would deliver the nation of Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon.

Of course we knew that Zedekiah well knew of this prophecy of Jeremiah's for he was among the rulers of the land.

Now the Babylonians were back, the land was destroyed, and the city of Jerusalem was surrounded. Some of the people who listened to Jeremiah's warnings had deserted and surrendered to the king of Babylon as Jeremiah had advised. Their lives were spared. The nation was in severe distress and it was clear to everyone who knew the truth that Judah would not survive the Babylonian attack. The army had been depleted by death and desertion and starvation was affecting all the people in the land. Even cannibalism was practiced. Mothers ate their children.

The powerful people accused Jeremiah of making prophecies which discouraged the people from fighting. They did not want to obey what God had advised through the prophet Jeremiah. They were desperate but they were foolish. Their choices would lead to the destruction of Judah, the Temple, and the city. One wonders why leaders could be that foolish. But unfortunately, we see this reckless and foolish behaviour by leaders in our modern world all the time.

They requested approval from the King Zedekiah to put Jeremiah to death for they said that Jeremiah's prophecies were making the few soldiers left and the people afraid and their fighting spirit was dead. They rejected the direct word of God and accused Jeremiah of not seeking the welfare of the people but their harm. This was incredible foolishness. They had seen what happened to the Northern kingdom because of their disobedience to God and still this did not matter.



Can leaders be so blind? And can people still follow leaders blindly? This could only lead to a bitter end for Judah. It provides a stern lesson of warning to us.

Verse 14. History is seen repeating itself as Zedekiah had a similar private conversation with Jeremiah in chapter 37. Once again Zedekiah calls on the prophet for a private conversation even though before his princes wanted to kill Jeremiah. Zedekiah, though he was in charge of the nation and had probably appointed some of their leadership as well as knowing that the Babylonians could change these political figures whenever they wanted, absolved himself of Jeremiah's fate as he left the princes to deal with him. We know that these four political leaders who made the appeal to King Zedekiah to have Jeremiah executed had heard Jeremiah's message of judgment and punishment unless the people repented. They also had heard that God had graciously and mercifully allowed the people of Jerusalem to surrender to Babylon so that they would not be killed.

God had given them some options and none of them they considered to be pleasant. They would have to give up their positions and power, they would have to surrender to the king of Babylon, but they would be allowed to keep their lives. The king of Babylon would not kill them and their families. Even better yet the king of Babylon would not at their surrender destroy the city of Jerusalem, destroy the Temple of the Lord God Yahweh, and destroy all their beautiful houses. Personal greed and love of their obviously short-term selfish interests blinded their eyes.

We can imagine as we think about it that this was an unbelievably Great offer from God given their unceasing disobedience to the word of God. God was being incredibly merciful to them. It is unbelievable how Yahweh can be so generous to His people.

From that situation we might be able to infer that Zedekiah was stuck in a state of confusion in terms of following the Word of God or alternately leading the kingdom based on his own wisdom. But we must recall that Zedekiah was the King, and he had a responsibility to his people and his nation. He was King and his job was to protect the people. Jeremiah's prophecies did not change his role. He must have known that Jeremiah's future was not going to be good, and it could very well lead to the prophet's death. But notwithstanding that he was prepared to give Jeremiah over to the prophet's enemies.

Before any judgments are placed on Zedekiah it would be best to continue to look at the events to transpire so that we might be able to compare and contrast his actions with ours, as Christians.

But Zedekiah went along with the request of the princes and put Jeremiah under their control. Instead of getting Jeremiah murdered immediately they put him in this cistern in the court of the guard letting him down with ropes. We are told that there was no water in the cistern, but it was full with mire and Jeremiah sunk into the slimy mire. They fully intended that this cistern would be Jeremiah tomb.

It stresses logic to think that King Zedekiah did not know that in this cistern Jeremiah would die of hunger and would probably be attacked by all kinds of creatures. There was no food or water and no clothing, and he was covered with mire and left to die because of these heartless men and this heartless king who would keep on pretending that he did not know the truth.

He knew that this prophet of God was accused by persons with the opposite of the truth. He was therefore complicit in murder and his actions did not matter if he could not find the



courage to stand up to the princes of Judah. This was an instance where a legal will and action will allow evil because a person is not strong enough to handle the bad people around them. One writer states that Zedekiah was a King that had a wish-bone instead of a back-bone. Jeremiah was left in that horrible situation for many days. One writer states: **“The king's capitulation to his princes was perhaps the most abject surrender in biblical history until the moment when Pilate washed his hands before the multitude”**. (Kidner).

Another writer states: **“If we would judge him, we may be judging ourselves, for his weakness might never have revealed itself had he not been thrust into a position that was far beyond him”**. (Kidner).

Clearly then we must be careful when we elect leaders in the church. The qualifications and experience needed for leaders are clearly stated in the Word of God. When we ignore these, we are heading for trouble. History has proved these qualifications noted in Scripture to be perfectly good and right and appropriate for the body of Christ.

So you should ask yourself the question at this stage,

Are you prepared to stand up for the truth?

Is there any place for truth in your heart and in your life?

Are you prepared to have those around you do whatever they want irrespective of the level of iniquity that they want to perpetrate?

But God provided for the prophet. There was a man named Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian or Cushite who was not even a Jew (this was not a real name, but it simply meant a servant of the king) that provided tender and compassionate care for the prophet. He asks King Zedekiah to allow him to take Jeremiah out of the cistern.

God was now going to take the innocent faithful and righteous Jeremiah out of this tomb of death. King Zedekiah was well aware that Jeremiah was a true man of God and so this weak and vacillating king again wanted to hear what the prophet had to say.

It is amazing to read that Zedekiah then wanted a meeting with Jeremiah after Ebed-melech the Ethiopian came to the King to let him know about Jeremiah's situation and his position in the mire of the dungeon. Under instruction from the king Ebed-melech the Ethiopian was to get Jeremiah and keep him in a more amicable place, the court of the prison.

After this Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah to meet with him privately into the third entry that was in the house of the LORD. Clearly, Zedekiah wanted to show some honour and respect to Jeremiah, which shows an amazing level of double mindedness concerning Jeremiah as he had earlier left Jeremiah to the fate of his enemies, the princes of Judah. However, in this moment he was concerned with showing him honour. This third entry is thought to be one of the principal but secondary entries that adjoins to the house of the Lord. In appointing this place of interview with the prophet perhaps he intended to show a respect and reverence for the house of God, which was proper enough now that he was desiring to hear the word of God. But Zedekiah wanted privacy.

Zedekiah spoke with Jeremiah saying that he would ask him a thing, a word of prophecy; or whether there was a word of prophecy from the Lord, concerning him, his people, and city, and what it was; and what would be the result of the present siege, whether it would issue well or ill. Scripture makes clear in the foregoing chapter Zedekiah had been told the very same thing that Jeremiah would soon repeat to him. He at this moment believes The Almighty God, is someone who is as him, a man of many minds, but God is He who is of one mind, but still



Zedekiah asks the question of Jeremiah with hopes of getting a more pleasing response. He asks Jeremiah not to hide anything from him, to give him the plain truth.

Verse 15. Jeremiah knowing the King did not like the truth and set some conditions upon the King based on past experiences so that he would not be put to death or given into the hands of others to follow through with such a task. It should be clearly stated that Jeremiah was not afraid to die or was deterred through fear of death from delivering the word of the Lord, and doing his work, but he thought it proper to make use of prudent means to preserve his life. It is clear Jeremiah was going to respond to the king even if assurances were not given, (that is a personal opinion). However, considering the character of Jeremiah, and what it would mean for Judah if the King would listen to the words that God had previously given, Jeremiah would have told the King once again the words of God. Jeremiah would do all that he could to help the King toward the resolution that God wanted, and so would repeat the words that God gave him in the past as God is of one mind, and He has given His word on this matter. Jeremiah acted in a wise and prudent manner. He used lawful means for his preservation.

This instruction is important for Christians to pay attention to. We should not shy away from delivering the word of God to individuals even if it is unpleasant, or even if it may lead to our deaths. We trust in God and this is our duty and should be our honour. God instructs us that we should be wise in how we deal with men and individuals in authority in this world. Jeremiah therefore requested that the King deal faithfully with him.

Jeremiah is willing to give him the advice or repeat the words that God gave to him as nothing has changed from that perspective. The prophet as seen in this passage did not hold any ill will toward the King for the past actions nor act with any ill manner or intent to the King but continued on the path that God had set him on.

Here is another lesson for Christians today and we should adopt it for tomorrow, that is, we must with meekness instruct even those that oppose themselves and render good for evil. Zedekiah was desirous that he should hear counsel and receive instruction. He might not act in the way of the counsel and instruction, but this is a start, and perhaps it might lead to redemption; as history details not for him, but for others. Jeremiah indicated to Zedekiah that he is not confident that he would listen to the good counsel that is being provided. Zedekiah does not respond and doesn't promise to hearken to Jeremiah's advice though he desires to know the mind of God! Zedekiah it seems would reserve his liberty when he does know the truth, to do as he thinks fit; as if it were the prerogative of a prince not to have his ruin prevented by good counsel.

Verse 16. As to the prophet's safety, Zedekiah promises upon the word of a King and confirms his promise with an oath, that, whatever Jeremiah should say to him, no advantage should be taken against him for it. This oath was made secretly, both for the honour of the King, he swearing to a subject. However the King did not want it to be known by the princes as it appears the King feared them. The King most likely thought this a great favour to Jeremiah, yet we should remember that Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, when Daniel read their doom, not only protected him, but preferred and rewarded him (Dan. 2:48; v. 29). These men knew of the God of the Jews but served other gods. This king of Judah was to serve the True and Living God, but turned away, but in dealing with God's people only those kings of the other gods had more honour in dealing with God's people.



Zedekiah's oath on this occasion is solemn. It is clear he is aware that God is the Father of spirits; souls are His workmanship, and they are more fearfully and wonderfully made than bodies are. God is the maker of the souls of princes and poorest of prisoners.

With respect to this oath of Zedekiah one writer states:

“This is the last conversation we have recorded of this king. And the words coming out of his mouth seemed to be rather sober. He speaks of the Lord who created the life or soul of each individual. He is speaking this just maybe months or even weeks before his kingdom crashes down around him. Has this double minded man finally turned to the Lord with his whole heart”?

We note that there is much disagreement on this position.

In all our appeals to God, and in all our dealings with ourselves and others, we ought to consider this, that the living God made us souls that must answer to Him.

Verse 17. The good advice that Jeremiah gave him, also included a good reason why he should take it, and that being it came from the Lord God, the God of Host and God of Israel. As a prophet, he advises Zedekiah by all means to surrender himself and his city to the king of Babylon's princes. This is the very same advice given in previous chapters and verses, namely, to submit to divine judgments, and not think of contending with them.

All of God's creation and especially His people should know that in dealing with God, that which is good counsel to the lowest is also good counsel to the greatest, for there is no respect of persons with God. Jeremiah sets before the king, good and evil, life and death to persuade him to take the counsel given to him by God. If Zedekiah yields, he will save his children from the sword, Jerusalem from the flames, and more importantly, he will be acknowledging God's justice. With that, God's mercy will be sure to follow.

Verse 18. The Babylonians were God's instrument of judgment against Judah and therefore resistance against them was foolish and futile. It was better to surrender to them and to God's will.

One historian mentions this comment:

Jerusalem's suicidal stand had not even a tactical value, now that the whole country was overrun and the Egyptian thrust had failed. Only obstinacy, at whatever cost in lives, could prolong the agony; and it was obstinacy not only against the enemy but against the Lord. (Kidner)

Jeremiah gave the rewards from following the counsel of the Lord to Zedekiah. Nothing was changed that was said from the previous times, only the plea began more urgent from Jeremiah to Zedekiah. But now Jeremiah once again stresses to Zedekiah the judgment That will come to the king and to Judah if he doesn't heed the voice of God and submit to correction, for when God judges He will overcome.

This fact should be stressed to all sinners which also include those of us who are Christians, as we should constantly remind each other that we should always humbly submit to His grace and government in order to live. For the Christian we have that direct communication to God available and the blood of Jesus Christ to cover us.

In this case if Zedekiah takes hold of the strength and assurances offered by God, he and his family and Judah will be able to live in peace and walk a road where they will be able to make peace with God, but if they harden their hearts against His proposals, it will certainly be to their destruction.



Zedekiah could not prevent the conquest of Judah by his repentance, but he could make what flowed from that conquest much less severe even now, at this late hour.

Verse 19. If Zedekiah trusted God, trusted the words that the prophet spoke and surrendered to the Chaldean armies, then he, his family and Judah would survive. Surrender to the Chaldean army, a simple act of contrition would have saved the city. If Zedekiah surrendered to the right princes, Judah would be saved, conquered but not destroyed and burned with fire, and so the fate of the city rested with one man's repentance and trust in the Lord.

As with all of us, Zedekiah thought up reasons why obedience to God wasn't such a good idea. He thought that those who had already defected to the Chaldeans might abuse him in some way.

Once again Zedekiah's weakness of character shows up. There was a course of action to be followed which he knew to be right, but he lacked the courage to take it. (Thompson)

Zedekiah applies human wisdom in this case which is folly when it contradicts the divine counsel.

Jeremiah spoke to him by prophecy, in the name of God, and therefore if he had had due regard to the divine authority, wisdom, and goodness, as soon as he understood what the mind of God was, he should immediately have acquiesced in it and resolved to observe it, without disputing.

Zedekiah's excuse was just that, an excuse. He feared where no fear was. He didn't stand up to the princes when they asked to deal with Jeremiah and put him into the mire in the dungeon. Now He claims to fear reprisals from the Jews who had surrendered to the Chaldeans, whom he had cruelly used, or severely threatened. The Babylonians set him and the princes in charge of Judah after they had already conquered it. Now they have returned and looked to see whether Judah is loyal to the Chaldean kingdom. There was no evidence that the Chaldeans would deliver Zedekiah into the hands of the Jews, to be jeered and scoffed at by the deserters for doing the same thing he had forbidden them on the severest penalty. Even so, there is no evidence on Zedekiah's part that even going out to the Chaldean overlords as the deserters had done that they would treat him in a scornful and cruel a manner, for he was their prince, and partner with them in their captivity.

Verses 20 & 21. The time for excuses are over. The prophet assures the king that the Chaldeans would never deliver him into the hands of the Jews. Jeremiah again reminds Zedekiah that the counsel given to him to surrender to the Chaldeans, was not from himself, but from the Lord. Therefore Zedekiah could be at ease knowing that he would fall under the divine protection, should he act according to what was spoken to him. It would be not only better with him than he feared, compared with what it would be with him should he obstinately stand out to the last. He would obtain more respect and honour from the king of Babylon for this action to surrender and preserve his life, and perhaps continue to enjoy the comforts that he had been enjoying, particularly the sight of his eyes, which he lost when taken into captivity.

Jeremiah begs the king after all the foolish games he has played to listen to the reason that has been told to him, to do well for himself in this manner.

Jeremiah says if he does not obey and surrender, that he would fall into the hands of the Chaldeans who are known to be implacable enemies, but now might make friends of them by



throwing himself into their hands. If he does not yield to the word of prophecy which he desired to know, then doom will follow due to his continued impenitent, obstinate, and disobedient actions.

Verse 22. In this verse and the next, Jeremiah stresses that if Zedekiah does not listen to the word of the Lord, then he would be chargeable with the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah. He had pretended he was concerned for their preservation.

These are lessons for Christians to learn, that subjects often suffer for the pride and willfulness of their rulers, who should be their protectors, but prove their destroyers. This is why we must constantly not do iniquity and bring on us the wrath of an Almighty, Holy and Just God.

Zedekiah causelessly feared an unjust reproach for surrendering. He more likely would fall under a just reproach for resisting the Chaldeans. He would be reproached and mocked by the women of the court for his bad decision to fight the Babylonians. Jeremiah says that they would be brought before the king of Babylon's princes and they shall decide to use them as they see fit and dispose of them at pleasure.

In the Second part of the verse, Jeremiah somewhat chastises Zedekiah for listening to the false prophets and the princes that offered promises and flattered him with notions of peace and prosperity, but instead in their hearts lay deceit before Zedekiah, as they encouraged him to hold out against the Chaldeans, and not believe the Prophet Jeremiah. They prevailed with him to do so, though it was against himself, and his own interest.

It was made clear that some of the court ladies or concubines left from when Jehoiakim and Jeconiah were carried away will now at length fall into the hands of the enemy. Jeremiah says that the princes of Judah encouraged Zedekiah to follow a path of foolishness, they all the while pretending to be friends. Now Zedekiah would be able to see that they were in fact his enemies and had always been an enemy of the Almighty God. Zedekiah is left in a tricky position now as the ruler of Judah. The Bible doesn't mention the princes to any great degree, but it stands to reason they would share the same fate as Zedekiah when the Chaldeans captured him and the others in the court.

Scripture records that when the walls of the city were breached Zedekiah tried to flee Jerusalem and escape the Chaldeans, but some writers suppose that when he did so, he was stuck in a similar situation to Jeremiah, a mire that hampered his escape. Either way, the Text indicates that his princes left him and there was none to help him, since he had chosen to ignore the word of the Lord, and Jeremiah. There was no one to help the king.

Verse 23. Zedekiah had his mind made up, even if he did not tell Jeremiah. God knows the heart of man and has laid out the future for Zedekiah so that he can possibly change his fate if he chose to listen to God, but he did not. There would be a blessing for obedience. From the time we read that king Zedekiah ordered Jeremiah to be silent about their private conversation we know in our hearts that Zedekiah had made up his mind not to obey God.

At the end therefore some of the Chaldean army entered the city to bring out the people while other clearly tracked down the rulers, to deliver them to judgment. God told Zedekiah what would happen if he did not yield, and we can see that Bible indicates that it is moving in that direction.

The lesson learned from Zedekiah and also from Jeremiah, is that what we seek to avoid by sin will be justly brought upon us by the righteousness of God. Also, those that decline the way of



duty for fear of reproach will certainly meet with much greater reproach in the way of disobedience.

Verse 24. Zedekiah met with Jeremiah privately. Some fear was involved, from the princes, from the staff, but in either case this fear wasn't warranted because he was King. He said to Jeremiah to let no man know the counsel that he has sought from the Lord, he charged him in this manner, instructing him words to respond to other if so asked.

With the counsel given, Zedekiah doesn't indicate that he will take it to heart at all. Zedekiah demonstrates that he is obstinate to the calls of God, and so willful in the ways of sin, that though he has good counsel given to him, he seems content to walk in his own counsel. He knows he cannot object to the advice of Jeremiah and does not. He was willing to fear men rather than fear God.

Jeremiah followed through with what God desired. His intent was to help the people of God. Rulers need to accept the counsel of God's servants as God's servants must be willing to depart such counsel.

CONCLUSION

Doom is sure when we disobey. When we obey, we will be surprised from where and how our salvation will come. A nation must never forget that and forget that **the** judgment of God will come One writer stated:

"No nation has the right to continue to exist as a nation when it continually violates these requirements of God's justice. Therefore the hand of doom rests upon any nation that deliberately refuses to hear and heed the will of God for ultimately, judgment will come. No political manipulation will avert it. No partial compromise will delay, no defiance will evade what God has said. It will come at last-- some 11th year, ninth months, and fourth day, when a breach is made in the walls of the city, and judgment and destruction can no longer be averted".

There is only one attitude that will change the coming judgment of God and that is repentance, acknowledgment of guilt, deep humiliation before God, and commitment to change".

Many nations have gone down into the dust of history. Hundreds of nations and kingdoms have perished. Many individuals have perished. But we know that no matter what people do they cannot succeed in overriding the message of God. Catastrophe cannot be averted by political maneuvering and manipulation.

We have a weakness for we think that we can compromise and in outward ways show that we are in submission to God. We can be overtly religious and practice a religion of some sort without our heart remaining unchanged.

So what does God require of us?

Jeremiah knew that salvation would come to him and his nation from God and so he did not give up hope because he was dumped on for doing the right thing. But nevertheless he wept a lot.

So note therefore that even when you think that God is demanding more from you than you can give Him, remember that He has given you the Holy Spirit and He will enable you to do more than you can ever imagine. When you are faithful you will be able to endure things, you never thought you would be able to endure.



Remember there is a place for truth. That truth must be your watchword.

It is astonishing what God will do in your life. We can hardly believe His goodness. Just remember that there will be an end to the age, an end of history, and God will then complete His work of redemption. Your life will be brighter and better than any of us can dream.

