

(Through the Bible) Jeremiah 21-22

by Chuck Smith

God's message to Zedekiah and the people of Judah is one of judgment and destruction due to their disobedience and breaking of the covenant.

Duration: 38:49

Scripture: Jeremiah 22:10-30

Topics: "Social Justice", "Gods Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher, Jack Conaya, delivers a message from the book of Jeremiah. He emphasizes that God had been speaking to the people for a long time, but they refused to listen. The main cry of God was the lack of justice in the land, particularly the oppression of the poor, orphan, and widows. God's judgment could have been forestalled if the people had executed justice and righteousness and delivered those who were oppressed. However, because of their disobedience and worship of other gods, the city would be laid waste and become desolate.

Transcript

Jeremiah chapter 21. Now, the book of Jeremiah is not written in a consecutive kind of an order. This particular prophecy, Jeremiah dates.

They're, they're just the prophecies of Jeremiah at particular times, in particular situations. But they don't necessarily follow in a sequential order or in a chronological order. So, this particular prophecy in chapter 21 to King Zedekiah actually takes place about six years after the prophecy of chapter 24.

So, you see, they're not in a chronological order. They are just his prophecies at the various times, and they're just thrown in, not in a chronological order, but just thrown in. Now, I don't know what the order is, or if there is any, or if there's any reason for there not being in a chronological order, but he is careful to date for us the particular times of the prophecies.

So, he dates chapter 21, this particular prophecy to Zedekiah, the word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent unto him Pasher, the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Masih, the priest, saying, inquire I pray thee of the Lord for us. Now, Pasher, last week, was the priest that when Jeremiah was prophesying, put him in stocks, arrested him, and put him in stocks, and all. And, of course, it brought great discouragement to Jeremiah, where he decided to quit his prophetic ministry until God's word like a fire burned in him, and he could not hold back from speaking forth God's truth.

And this same Pasher now is sent by King Zedekiah to find out what's going to happen, because Babylon is marching. The armies of Nebuchadnezzar are there. What's going to happen to us? And so, they're sending to Jeremiah now to find the word of the Lord concerning their present dilemma.

Inquire, I pray thee, to the Lord for us. For Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, is making war against us. See if it will so be that the Lord will deal with us according to all of his wondrous works, that Nebuchadnezzar may go up from us.

And so, he is asking Jeremiah to inquire the Lord concerning what is going to be happening. Will the Lord turn back Nebuchadnezzar according to God's marvelous works and so forth? Jeremiah does not have a good message for Zedekiah. Then said Jeremiah unto them, thus shall ye say to Zedekiah, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, behold I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith you fight against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans which besiege you without the walls.

They're already outside besieging them. I will assemble them in the midst of this city. They're outside of the walls now, but they're going to be assembling right in the middle of town.

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. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast, and they shall die of a great pestilence. And afterwards, saith the Lord, I will deliver Zedekiah the king of Judah and his servants and the people and such are as left in the city from the pestilence and from the sword and from the famine into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon and under 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 and he shall not spare them, neither have pity nor have mercy. So the message that he has for Zedekiah is not at all a comforting message. Not only is God going to allow the Babylonian troops to assemble right here in the middle of the city, but God himself is going to turn his hand against Israel, against Zedekiah and against the armies.

And God is going to destroy them and there will not be a sparing of them, pity nor mercy. And unto this people, now that was the message to Zedekiah. Now to the people, Jeremiah declares, thus saith the Lord, behold I set before you the way of life and the way of death.

Isn't this true always? That God sets before man the way of life and the way of death. When God placed Adam in the garden of Eden, God set before him the way of life and the way of death. There were two special trees in the garden.

There was the tree of life. There was also the tree of the knowledge and good of evil, which also was the tree of death. For God said thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.

So it was the tree of death. Now I always marvel to myself that Adam would have eaten of the tree of death before he ate of the tree of life. But after he had eaten of the tree of death and the Lord drove him from the garden, you remember that the Lord put an angel there to guard the way into the garden, lest he would come back and eat of the tree of life and live forever in that degenerated spiritual state.

Now that always amazes and surprises me, that God gives to man a way of life, a way of death, and man so foolishly oftentimes takes the way of death. Now it is true of every one of us tonight. God has laid before each of us tonight the way of life, the way of death, the Bible says the mind of the flesh is death, the mind of the Spirit is life and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost.

You have your choice. You can live after your flesh, that's the way of death. You can live after the Spirit, that is the way of life.

So don't blame Adam for making a foolish choice, because so many people today are making the same foolish choices, because God has laid before each man the way of life and the way of death. This is the perpetual story of God. I've laid before you the way of life and the way of death.

And now you must exercise your own capacity of choice to choose either life or death. He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

The wrath of God is abiding upon him. God has given you the way of life, the way of death. So in this particular case, he said, if you abide or stay in the city, you will surely die by the sword or the famine or the pestilence.

But if you go out and surrender to the Chaldeans that are besieging you, you will live and your life will be for him a prey, unto him for a prey. So he is saying, now look, if you'll just go out and surrender, they'll spare your life. If you stay in here, you're going to be slain in one of three ways, either by the pestilence that God will bring against it, the famine, or the sword of the Babylonians.

Now you can see how that this kind of a message would be interpreted as a treasonable statement. And so Jeremiah was accused of treason and thrown into the dungeon because of this particular prophecy, because he is encouraging them to capitulate, to surrender to the enemy. And so he's accused of being a traitor and placed into prison when this message was delivered to the people, because he's encouraging them to surrender.

But it's God saying, hey, you have the way of life, the way of death. If you want to live, go out and surrender to them. If you want to die, just stay here in the city and you're going to die either by the sword, the pestilence, or famine.

For the Lord said, I have set my face against this city for evil, not for good, and it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire. This city is going to be destroyed, burned with fire. And touching the house of the king of Judas, say, and so this is the third part of the message.

This is now to the house of Zedekiah. Hear ye the word of the Lord, 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 a fire and burn, that none can quench it because of the evil of your doings. Behold, I am against thee, O inhabit 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. But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doing, saith the Lord, and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all of the things round about it.

And so the message to Zedekiah in response to his request to find out how things are gonna go. Not so good, buddy. It's looking tough, you know.

You're in bad shape. Now the Lord commanded Jeremiah to go down to the king's house and speak there at the king's house this word. This, the other, he was a message sent back to the king.

Now go on down to his house and speak this further word. Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, you that are sitting upon the throne of David, you and your servants and your people that enter in by these gates. Thus saith the Lord, execute ye judgment and righteousness and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor.

And do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor to the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if you do this thing indeed, then there shall enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and horses, he and his servants and his people. But if you will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith Jehovah, that this house shall become a desolation.

Now here even at this late date, God is still holding out to the king the offer of deliverance. As God said, I've set before you life and death. And though they are really on the gallows and they're waiting for the handle to be pulled to drop the trap door, the rope in this sense is around their neck.

I mean, they're, they're as close to being gone as you can get. But even now the Lord is saying, look, if you'll just do what's right, if you'll only have righteous judgments and seek to deliver the fatherless, the widow, the poor from the oppressions. If you'll only do that which is right, then I will continue this dynasty, this kingdom.

And there will be kings that will be able to go in and out and sit upon the throne. And they'll ride in and out of these gates and their chariots and all. All you have to do is, is turn around even now.

And so God is giving them really one final chance. But it seems that many times the evil and the corruption is so deeply embedded. The greed has gone so far that you just can't turn.

Now it is interesting to me that the main cry of God was the lack of real justice that was coming forth in the land. The poor, the orphan, the widows were being oppressed. It is interesting to me how that God so often takes up the cause of the poor or of the orphan or of the widow who cry upon him and cry unto him.

And here God's judgment would be forestalled if only they would be righteous, that they would execute judgment and righteousness and delivered those who had been spoiled out of the hands of those that were oppressing them. Do no violence to the stranger or to the fatherless or to the widow. If you do this thing indeed, you can remain.

Kings will go in and out. But if you don't, God declares, I swear by myself. Now, in Hebrews, it says that the Lord can't swear by any higher, so he swears by himself.

But when God takes an oath to swear by himself, you can be sure that he's going to do it. Now, the oath is always to confirm the word. And when a person makes an oath, you swear by something that is higher than you.

Now, Jesus, in a sense, tells us that we should not swear. I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is God's footstool. But when you say yes, just let it be yes.

When you say no, let it be no. Just be a person of your word. Don't have to be a person that takes an oath, you know, to prove, oh, I'm telling the truth, you know, by my mother's name, you know, or by heaven or whatever that a person may take an oath by.

The Lord says you shouldn't have to do that to affirm the truth. Just speak the truth. Let your yes be a yes, let your no be a no, rather than having to swear by something other than yourself, something higher than yourself.

But God, when he desired to make a firm commitment, because he could swear by no higher, he swore by himself. And that is, of course, you can't get anything more sure than that when God says, I swear by myself that I will do it. Man, there's nothing in the world more sure than that.

You say, well, we're sure the sun will come up tomorrow morning. No, you're not. But if God declares it, then you can be sure.

And if God swears by himself that it will, then you can know. There is no question, there is no doubt. And so God really is laying it on just as heavy.

This is it. This is your final. I swear by myself, I will just make this place a desolation.

I, for thus saith the Lord unto the king's house of Judah, thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon. Yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and the cities which are not inhabited. Gilead and Lebanon, beautiful areas, forested and all.

That's what you are to me, but surely I'm going to make you just a desolate wilderness. I will prepare the destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons, and they shall cut down your choice cedars and cast them into the fire. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say, every man to his neighbor, why has the Lord done this unto this great city? Then they shall answer, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshipped other gods and served them.

So this place that was once so glorious and so beautiful, really the pride of the earth for glory and beauty, it's going to be laid waste and desolate and become as a wilderness. And people will pass by and they say, why in the world did God do this to this area, to this place? Why is this desolation? And the answer will come back, because they have forsaken the covenant of God and worshipped other gods. Now God had made a covenant with the nation Israel, a covenant whereby they would be his people and he would be their God.

There were several factors to this covenant that God had made. Several special aspects to the covenant. One of them was the Sabbath day.

That was a special covenant between God and Israel forever, their observance of the Sabbath day. Another aspect to the covenant was the circumcision of the males. Another aspect of the covenant was that their approach to God was to be through the sacrifice of animals.

For sinful man cannot approach a holy God. And God had said in his covenant, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sins. And so God established in his covenant with them the various sacrifices that they would offer unto the Lord.

The sin offerings, the peace offerings, the whole burnt offerings, the meal offerings. Now God said, you've broken the covenant. It is interesting to me today that they are still not keeping the whole covenant with God.

Though they observe the Sabbath and though they will not eat meat with dairy products and though they still follow circumcision, yet they have tried to circumvent that portion of the covenant whereby God made provision for their covering of their sins. And they offer no sacrifice. There is no shedding of blood, without which God said there is no remission.

But they now through some strange quirk seek to approach God on the basis of their own works and their own goodness. Now where did this come from? Surely not from God or God's Word. This was one of man's substitutes that was introduced by man and picked up by the people and now followed by them religiously.

So that on that great day of the year, Yom Kippur, when the priest was to go in and offer the atonement for the nation and for the sins of the nation. That day, the greatest day of the year really for them when the high priest that one day would enter into the presence of God within the Holy of Holies and there offer the sacrifice unto the Lord for the atonement of the sin of the nation. That day is now devoted to meditation upon your good works and upon your good deeds.

And upon your evil works. And hopefully balancing out with a little bit on the good works side so that your good works over balance your evil works. And this is my acceptance before you God.

And yet right here in the prophecy of Jeremiah, he declares your works are as filthy rags in the eyes of God. What a tragedy here they are trying to offer filthy rags to God for the atonement of their sins. Can't be done.

And so God said you've broken the covenant. They continue to break the covenant to the present day. But of course, Jesus said when he took the cup, this is a new covenant.

My blood which is shed for the remission of sins. You see, they could come to God now by the new covenant, but somehow in their minds they feel that if they come to God by the new covenant, they will no longer be Jews. And this is a very weird perversion of the truth because they are not really keeping the true covenant of God, the shedding of blood for the remission of sins.

But what they don't realize they don't have to keep that part. What they have offered instead is their own works. But Paul, the apostle writing to the Ephesians said, it's not our works, lest any man should boast.

By grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourself. It's a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. And yet they are seeking to be accepted by God for their works that they do.

But God will not accept any man's works as an atoning factor for that man. You cannot work your way into God's grace or into God's favor or into heaven. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.

Without the remission of sin, there is no fellowship with God. If you are to have fellowship with God, there has to be the righteous basis for fellowship. And right now, God has established a new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ.

This cup is my blood, a new covenant in my blood which is shed for the remission of sins. So why did the Lord do this? Why is this once glorious city such a desolation? Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord, their God. They've worshiped other gods and served them.

Weep not for the dead. Neither bemoan him, but weep for him that is carried away. Those that are died, don't weep for them.

They're out of it. They're out of their miseries. But weep for those that are being taken captive to Babylon, for they will never return again, nor see their native country.

Of course, in a couple of chapters, we're going to find out that their captivity is going to last for 70 years. So there were a very, very few who did return, who can remember the former temple that they used to see when they were children. Old men now, probably in their 80s, who were just children when they were taken captive.

Now returning to Jerusalem after the captivity. And as they lay the foundation for the rebuilding of the temple, and everybody's worshiping and excited, oh glory, glory. These men are weeping because this is such a pitiful looking thing in remembrance of the glorious temple that was once there.

So he is saying, don't weep for those that are slain. They are well off. Those that are being taken away to Babylon, they're the ones that are going to have continual suffering.

Weep sore for those. For thus saith the Lord, touching Shalem, and this is Jehoiahaz, who was taken down to Egypt by the Pharaoh. He was the king of Israel for a period of time, but he was taken as a captive to Egypt.

Thus saith the Lord concerning Shalem, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah's father, which went forth out of this place. He's never going to come back again. But he shall die in the place where they have led him captive, and he will never see this land again.

Jehoiahaz is going to die in Egypt. He'll never come back. Woe unto him that builds his house by unrighteousness.

Now he's laying it on the king Zedekiah again, who built his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong, that used his neighbor's service without wages. Because he was the king, he refused to pay those that worked upon his house. God's always for the laboring man.

God's always for the underdog. God doesn't want you to rip anybody off, and especially those that can't afford it, but just nobody really. God wants righteousness.

Who used his neighbor's service without wages and gives him nothing for his work, that says, I will build me a wide house and large chambers. And he cuts out windows, and it's sealed with cedar and painted with vermilion. That must have been quite a house.

Vermilion walls and cedar ceilings. Shalt thou reign because you closed yourself in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor, the needy, then it was well with him. Was not this to know me, saith the Lord? But your eyes and your heart are not but for your own covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence to do it.

Talking about his father, of course, going back to Josiah, and how that in his reign he was righteous before God and God blessed him. He judged the cause of the poor, and it went well with him. But this king was covetousness.

He was taking advantage of the people. Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, my brother, or, Oh, sister. They shall not lament for him, saying, Oh, Lord, or, Ah, his glory.

But he will be buried with the burial of an ass that is drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. So the fearsome judgment against Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah. He, go up to Lebanon and cry, lift up your voice in bastion and cry from the passages, for all of the lovers are destroyed.

All of your lovers. I speak unto thee in thy prosperity, but you said, I'll not listen. This has been your manner from your youth.

You just haven't obeyed my voice. How many people in their prosperity have turned their heart from God? And God speaks to them, but they just won't hearken. They won't listen.

But God said, this has been your case from the beginning. You just won't obey my voice. God help us that this not be the case of our own selves.

As God has spoken to us over and over in his word, as God has declared in his word how we are to walk and how we are to live after the spirit and not after the flesh. And when God has given us so many warnings of the perils of the flesh dominated life, God help us if we don't obey him. But if we become covetous, if we become greedy, if we begin to take advantage of other people because of our own position.

Jesus said to his disciples, the heathen love to exercise lordship over others, but it shall not be so among you. And he said to his disciples, for whosoever would be the chief among you, let him be the servant of all. Now that's what it's to be like in the kingdom, not to be taking advantage of your position.

If you have a position of leadership or authority over others, not to be using it for your own personal advantage, not to be using it to build your own house as the king did. Not to be not to take unfair advantage of other people. If they work for you, pay them.

And if you're going to be the chief, then learn to be the servant of all rather than taking give and use your position to help and to give to those that are with that are lacking. And thus shall you truly be the servant of the Lord. God help us.

God said, Hey, I spoke to you in your prosperity. You wouldn't listen. And that's been the case for the week.

You just haven't listened. You haven't obeyed my voice from the beginning. The wind shall eat up all of your pastors and all of your lovers.

So go into captivity. Surely then thou shall be ashamed and confounded for all of your wickedness. Oh, inhabitant of Lebanon that makes thy nest in the cedars.

How gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail. As I live, saith the Lord, though Conaya, the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee fence. Conaya, of course, is Jeconaya who reigned just a short period and was cut off three months is all that he reigned.

And God said, though he were the signet on my ring, on my right hand, yet I would pluck thee hence for I will give thee into the hand of them that seek your life and into the hand of them whose face you fear, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will cast thee out and thy mother that bear thee into another country where ye were not born and there shall ye die. But to the land where into they desire to return thither, so they not return.

You'll never come back again. You're going to die in captivity. Is this man, Jeconaya, a despised, broken idol? Is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? Wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.

You see, God had been speaking to men for a long time. God said, you're not listening. I spoke to you in a time of your prosperity.

You wouldn't listen to me. And so finally Jeremiah saw and said to her, he's given this message to these people. They're not listening.

So he turns and he says, O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. They won't listen. Earth, you listen.

You ever had the problem of talking in a group of people and you look up and no one's listening? You know, you're telling something very interesting. A lot of times I turn and talk to my menu. No one else is listening, you know.

O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. 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 on the throne of David and ruling anymore in Judah. This is the end of the line.

Zedekiah is it. The dynasty is cut off with him. No one's going to arise of his seed to reign on the throne in Judah.

That is a fact. It has happened. That was the end of the road for that dynasty.

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