



2 Chronicles 36

Tape #7144
II Chronicles 36
By Chuck Smith

Let's take a look at II Chronicles. We're in chapter thirty-six, as we finish II Chronicles. Josiah was a good king. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. During the years of his reign, the hand of God was again upon the nation of Judah, and they prospered. However, because of the awful abominations of Manasseh, God has pronounced the judgement that must come upon Judah. People had gone too far, under Manasseh, in their rebellion against the Lord. So through the prophetess Huldah, God declared that judgement would come. However, because of Josiah seeking the Lord, it would not come during his lifetime. But now, with the death of Josiah, the last of the good kings, we see that there is an immediate plunge of the nation, right down, and out.

Now it is interesting to me, though Josiah was a good king, did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, there did sit upon the throne of Judah, three of Josiah's sons. They were all bad! It is interesting that a good, godly man, could have three ungodly sons. Surely it does indicate to us that God has no grandchildren. That you cannot ride on your parent's faith, and that it is incumbent upon us, as parents, to pass on to our children the knowledge and the understanding of God. A tremendous responsibility as a parent, to inculcate into the mind of my children, the things of the Lord. As long as I am alive, one of my great burdens and desires, is to bring to my grandchildren now, that same kind of trust in the Lord. I am thankful that all four of my children are walking with the Lord, are committed to Jesus Christ.

Now the desire of my heart, is to see it pass on to my grandchildren. The time that I spend with them, I like to share with them, the things of the Lord. I was driving with my thirteen year old granddaughter, and she says, "Grandpa, let's talk about God. I just love to talk about God!" Oh what a time we had! I pray that God, by His Spirit, will just fill her heart with the knowledge and the understanding of God's love, and God's ways. To pass on, that which was passed on to me, from my parents. Of a life of commitment to Jesus Christ, and the joy and the blessing of such a life.

But somehow, Josiah, as good as he was, failed in his obligation to his children. Somehow there was not communicated to them the importance of serving God. So, we read in chapter thirty six, at the death of Josiah.

Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's place in Jerusalem. And Jehoahaz was twenty three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for only three months in Jerusalem. [A very short reign.] And the king of Egypt [Pharaohnechoh] put him down at Jerusalem, [and condemned him in the land] and he condemned the land in a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. And the king of Egypt [Pharaohnechoh] made Eliakim his brother the king over Judah at Jerusalem, and he changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt (36:1-4).

Now it was Pharaohnechoh that had killed their father Josiah, in the battle of Megiddo. The battle Josiah had no business getting involved in, and yet he insisted on going to war. He lost his life. Now Pharaohnechoh came to Jerusalem, his son only had a chance to reign for three months. Pharaohnechoh captured him, took him to Egypt, and he placed a tribute upon Judah, that they were to pay unto Egypt. The hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.

Now the king has been established there by Pharaohnechoh. It is the brother, his name was Eliakim, but Pharaohnechoh changed his name to Jehoiakim.

Jehoiakim was twenty five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God. And so against him came up Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. And Nebuchadnezzar also carried the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon (36:5-6).

Now at this particular period of history, the Assyrians had been pretty well conquered by Babylon, leaving two major powers, Babylon and Egypt. So Jerusalem, being between Babylon and Egypt, whenever the Pharaohs would make an excursion against Babylon, they had to pass through the land, and whenever Babylon would attack Egypt, they had to pass through the land. Later on, you had the same thing with Syria and Egypt, under the Ptolemies, and the Selucids, the Grecian rulers. So here was sort of a common type of a battle ground. So first of all Egypt conquered, and now under the reign of Jehoiakim, Babylon comes with their troops, and conquers the city, and takes away captives.

It was during this period that Daniel was carried away captive. In the first part of Daniel, he speaks of, in the third year I think it was of Jehoiakim, that he was carried away as a captive unto Babylon. So you're in that period of history now, of Daniel. One of the first to be carried away as a captive, with the princes, to Babylon. You're in the period of Ezekiel, who was also one of the first in captivity to Babylon, and Ezekiel wrote most of his prophecies in Babylon. But the interesting thing, the Lord would bring him, by the Spirit back to the, back to Jerusalem, to see what was going on in Jerusalem, and he made interesting predictions and prophecies, though he was in Babylon.

Remaining in Jerusalem was Jeremiah. Jeremiah found favor in the eyes of the Babylonians, because Jeremiah was predicting that Babylon was gonna take Judah. Jeremiah was counseling them, and urging them not to try to defend themselves, to submit to Babylon, and save their lives. Because, he said, "Babylon is gonna take this place. Therefore you'd be much better off just to submit to them, to become their servants, and thus you can stay in the land, and thus you will live. But if you rebel, and if you try to fight, they're gonna take you and it's gonna be much harder on you." As things were getting worse, under the reign of Zedekiah, he called Jeremiah in privately, and he says, "Now look, tell me the truth before the Lord what's gonna happen Jeremiah". And he said, "What shall I do?", and Jeremiah said, "Look if I told you the truth, told you what to do, you're not gonna do it anyhow. You'll just put me to death!". And he said, "No I swear before the Lord, I'll not put you to death, nor will I let the other princes do it". But he said, "What's going on?", and Jeremiah said, "Look, I've told you. The Babylonians are gonna come and they're gonna take this place. You're better to surrender". He said, "I'm afraid of the Jews. If I go to surrender they'll kill me!", and all. So he told Jeremiah, "Now don't tell anybody about this little conversation of ours and you'll be okay".

Jeremiah remained there in the land, under the reigns of these kings. He was there as a prophet. Later on, according to one of the books of the apocrypha, Jeremiah took the ark of the covenant and hid it, over on mount Nebo. According to another tradition, Jeremiah took one of the princes of Judah, and fled to Egypt, after the final chaos that took place in the land. So we, we really need to study the book of Jeremiah, in conjunction with this last chapter. You'll find it extremely fascinating. He dates the entire prophecies with the reigns of Josiah, the reigns of Jehoiakim, and of the reigns of Zedekiah. So all of his prophecies came in this period of time.

Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim [verse eight] and his abominations which he did, that which was found in him, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. Jehoiachin was [and it says] eight [But the king says, "eighteen", and so um, it, it is probably eight.] years old when he began to reign, but he reigned only for three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil (36:9).

That's pretty tough for an eight year old kid. Reigning over, only for three months, doing that which was evil. Of course, he was only a puppet king, and the hearts of the people at this time are pretty well turned, the princes of the land, pretty well turned against the Lord. Thus, he was reigned only for three months.

When the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the Lord, and he made Zedekiah his brother [Really his uncle. Zedekiah was the son of Josiah.] king over Judah and Jerusalem (36:10).

Now first of all the Pharaohnechoh had established the king, but now they've come under the control of the Babylonians, and he has set Zedekiah as king.

Zedekiah was twenty one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord (36:11-12).

Jeremiah warned him, over and over Jeremiah was warning the people, but Zedekiah would not listen to the warnings of God.

He also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him to swear by God: [His allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar and to Babylon. He swore before God, to be faithful, and to be a servant to Nebuchadnezzar.] but he stiffened his neck, hardened his heart from turning unto Yahweh the God of Israel (36:13).

He was just set in his path of sin. He was warned, he would not change. He hardened his heart against God, against the word of God.

Moreover [Not only his sin, but,] the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all of the abominations of the heathen (36:14);

In the eighth chapter, of the book of Ezekiel, and if you'd just mark in your bible there, Ezekiel eight, and then tonight when you get home, read Ezekiel eight. You'll find that Ezekiel was taken by the Spirit, back to Jerusalem. The Lord took him into the temple itself. He saw the priests, there in the inner court of the temple. But, rather than worshiping the Lord, they were facing towards the east, and they were worshiping the sun. God said to Ezekiel you know, "See what they're doing!", you know and God spoke of the judgement that had to come upon them, because, here even the priests of God, were committing an abomination, right within the precincts of the temple!

A corrupted priesthood means a corrupted people. In Peter, it says, "The time has come when judgement must begin in the house of the Lord. If judgement begins here, where will the ungodly appear?" We make a mistake in thinking that because a man is a minister, preaching the gospel, that he is some kind of a super saint, or he is immune from temptation.

However, Those who are ministers of the gospel, and stand before people as representatives of Jesus Christ, do have a solemn responsibility and an obligation, to live a life of holiness, and purity. "Not all who say, 'Lord, Lord!', are gonna enter the kingdom of heaven." Not all who call themselves, "reverend", or "ministers", are really godly, righteous men! It is important that you not get your eyes upon men. It's important that you keep your eyes upon Jesus Christ. The arm of flesh will fail you. You trust in man, put your trust in a man, he's gonna fail you. You've gotta put your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ.

Now that's not excusing the ministry. There is no excuse. If we are proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the power of the gospel, then we should be living in accordance thereto. A life of holiness, and a life of purity before the Lord. James said, "Be not many masters, knowing that you will receive the greater condemnation". It's an awesome responsibility to say, "I represent the Lord", to you. "I stand here as a representative of Jesus Christ. I stand here as a representative of God." That is what I do. But that is a heavy, awesome responsibility. I must confess, I don't always represent Jesus Christ, as I should. Yesterday, I blew my cool. Trying to get ready for the vacation, my wife needed the little frame fixed on her glasses. So, I was planning to get everything packed and set, so instead she said, "Well I've got to have my glasses you know, and the little thing is broken on the frame".

So I went to where we bought the glasses. I got there at 2:15 and the sign said they closed at 2:00 on Saturday. So I went over to another place and showed them the frames, and no they didn't have it. I ended up going to five different optometrists to try and find a frame or something, someone that could fix it. There was no one that could, and of course you know, it had to happen on Saturday before you leave early Monday morning. Just one of those things.

Well, I knew that there were a couple of optometrists at South Coast Plaza, and so I was pulling in, and I hate that place like the plague. And, parking is always a chore, but as I was pulling in, here was a car that I saw them starting to get out. Well, where I was, if I parked there, I would've been in the way of people trying to get into the main garage area. So I pulled up, and pulled around, and waited for the fellow to back out. While I was sitting there waiting, some lady came up from the other side, and she signaled, "I'm going in there", and I said, "No you're not! I was there first!" You know, I was sitting there waiting, and so this car backed out, and I could've gone on in, but I thought, "Well, I'll be the gentleman, surely she knows good and well that I've been waiting here", but she just pulled in there and parked, just as quickly as she could! I pulled up beside her, and put down my window, and said, "Lady I can't believe you! That has to be the

rudest thing I've ever seen! It's quite obvious I was parked there waiting for that parking place, long before you ever came around!" I said, "I can't believe you lady!" Oh man was I upset! I wasn't ready to turn the other cheek. I won't tell you everything in my mind that I wanted to do. But had I done what I wanted to do, she wouldn't have recognized her car when she came back. Oh that made me upset. I mean I was angry. I confess, I was angry. Had she been a man, you probably would've read in the paper where, "Pastor is arrested for Assault".

Fortunately there was a convenient place in the garage there, so I fought that mess in South Coast Plaza. Oh my! It took me awhile to get over that. Took me awhile. Of course, you know you end up saying, "Lord I'm sorry. Yelling at that lady, and it isn't right". A representative of Jesus Christ. I said, "Lord what would you have done? Come on, be honest!", you know. I was like James and John, I was ready to call down fire from heaven. "Consume the pagan!"

Those servants of God are not perfect, and it is good that they're not. Because it causes us to realize that God, you don't have to be perfect for God to use you. The servants of God have never been perfect. But they have been men who recognized their mistakes, their sins, and who confessed their sins, and repented of their sins. David was even called a man after God's own heart, in spite of his sin. But it was because, when David was faced with his sin, he acknowledged, he repented, and he sought God's forgiveness. God did forgive him. But it is important that we live a representative kind of life, as we represent Jesus Christ.

Zedekiah, under his reign, the priesthood became corrupted. "The chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after the abominations of the heathen;"

they polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, who rose up early, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place (36:14-15):

God loved these people. He loved the temple, the dwelling place there. Thus God sent his messengers. Twice Jeremiah speaks about his rising up early to bring them the message of God. Ezekiel was prophesying to them as were others of the minor prophets, Amos and some of the others, who were warning them of the impending judgements that were coming. God continued to deal with them, because God loved them. "I have loved thee", the Lord said, "with an everlasting love. Therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee". But they would not come. They would hear nothing of it.

They mocked the messengers of God, and they despised his words, [How many times today when you share Christ with people, will they mock? They despise the word of God, especially if you say, "Look you know, what you're doing is wrong. The scriptures speak against this kind of thing". And they despise the word of God, they don't want to hear it.] they misused the prophets [they abused the prophets actually. They threw Jeremiah in prison. They gave him such a bad time, that Jeremiah finally came to the place, he said, "That's it. I've had it! Lord, I'm not gonna speak in your name again. They're not listening, they just abuse me, they mistreat me because I'm speaking in your name, and I'm just tired of all of the abuse that I'm getting. I'm through! I'm not gonna speak anymore in your name. That's it". Jeremiah said, "But the word of God was like a fire in my bones, and it was just consuming me, and I, and I had to speak", and so he got into further trouble. But they continued in their path downward,] until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy (36:16).

Proverbs twenty nine, one, "He, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy". They came to the place of no return. They've gone too far. They came to the place where God said, "That's it". In Genesis, the time of Noah, we read that God said, "My Spirit will not always strive with man".

Now let me say that it is a blessing that God's Spirit does strive with man. How I thank God the way His Spirit strives with man. I'm amazed with what patience and longsuffering the Spirit strives with men! There are people that I have given up on, long before God gave up on them. God's Spirit continued to strive with them, long after I wrote them off! I've seen them come to Jesus Christ, when I thought, "There's no way. God's surely given them over to their reprobate minds, and ways". But yet God saved them. Oh the patience and the longsuffering of God that He strives with men!

But, there is a warning, He won't always strive. There can come a time, there can come a time in your

life where God says, "Alright that's it. There's no remedy". There's a time when God gives up on a man. Paul, the apostle in Romans, chapter one, says, "Therefore God gave them up". "Alright, that's it." To Jeremiah, at this period of time, God said to Jeremiah, "Jeremiah I don't want you to pray anymore for their good. For if you pray, I will not listen". A person can go so far, that God says, "Look, don't even pray for them anymore!"

How tragic when God's Spirit ceases to strive with a man. When God says, "No remedy". When a man crosses that line, where God says, "That's all". In John twelve, thirty eight I believe it is, speaking of the Pharisees, it says, "Therefore they could not believe". It wasn't they would not anymore. They had gone beyond that. They came to the place where they could not believe.

Let me say to you tonight, if you've been hardening your heart against the things of God, if you haven't been listening to the voice of the Lord, as He's talking to you, if you've continued in your path after God has dealt with you, if God's Spirit is striving with you tonight, be thankful. I would surely take advantage of it by yielding myself to God. If He's still striving there's hope. If you can just look at the cross of Jesus Christ, if you can just look at the Bible, and shrug and say, "Ah, you know, doesn't touch me, doesn't move me. Don't feel a thing". Then you're in a dangerous position if God's Spirit isn't striving with you. God said, "No remedy".

Therefore God brought the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, [They had, of course, fled to the temple. It was one of the strongest buildings in the city, when they took the temple, they killed the young men with a sword. There, in the very house of God.] he had no compassion upon the young fellows or the young girls, [I mean, it didn't, he didn't care. He slew both the children, boys and girls.] also the old man or those that were stooped for age: he gave them all into the hand. [Of the king of Babylon.] And all of the vessels of the house of God, great and small, all the treasures of the house of the Lord, the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all of these he brought to Babylon (36:17-18).

It was totally sacked. The city was left desolate and in ruins. It was just shambles. Today, you can see those houses that, for years were covered with rubble, that have been recently excavated. You can see the shambles that they had made of those houses, and of the walls, and of the palaces. You can see the ashes where he burned the city, as you hike down the side of the hill of Ophel there.

He burnt the house of God, he broke down the wall of Jerusalem, he burn all of the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all of the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; where they became slaves to him and his sons until the reign of the [king of Persia, or the,] kingdom of Persia. In order that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept her sabbath, to fulfill this seventy years (36:19-21).

An interesting prophecy concerning Zedekiah, is that number one, it was prophesied that his sons would be slain before his eyes. Number two, is that he would be carried away as a captive of Babylon, but he would not see Babylon. People saw sort of a contradiction in the prophecies. "You're gonna be carried away as a captive to Babylon", and yet he had the promise, "you won't see Babylon". The promise, "you won't see Babylon", caused him to feel that he wouldn't be carried away captive. When the Babylonians had surrounded the city of Jerusalem, and it was evident the city of Jerusalem was gonna fall, Zedekiah and some of his men, at night, escaped out of Jerusalem.

Now according to one story, that shaft, or that large cave under the city of Jerusalem, known as Solomon's quarries, there are some reports that Solomon's quarries, which are under the old city of Jerusalem, which you can go in today, that they continue clear on to the outside of Jerusalem. They go way on out, and that you can follow these caves way on out, and you can actually get outside of Jerusalem.

There are some stories that he escaped through these Solomon quarries, and came on out and was fleeing down towards Jericho. Word came to Nebuchadnezzar, that Zedekiah had fled, and they sent out the troops after him, and they caught him, and they brought him to Nebuchadnezzar, who killed his sons. The sons of Zedekiah were killed, as he watched. He watched them kill his sons, and then having killed his sons before his eyes, they put his eyes out. They led him as a captive, to Babylon.

So the prophecies were fulfilled. He did go as a captive to Babylon, but he didn't see Babylon. His eyes had been gouged out by the Babylonians, and thus he didn't see it. Thus God's word all came together, and were fulfilled, though the prophecies did seem to be inconsistent, as it finally worked out, they were all literally fulfilled.

Jeremiah had predicted that their Babylonian captivity would last for seventy years. It had been four hundred and ninety years since Joshua led the people into the land. The period of history that they lived within the land was four hundred and ninety years, during the period of Joshua, the Judges, and the Kings.

God had, in the law stated, that when they came into the land that God had promised unto Abraham, they were to farm the land for six years, but every seventh year, they were to give the land rest. They weren't to plant or cultivate the land in the seventh year, but were to give the land a sabbath, or a rest. God gave the ordinances of how that in the sixth year, He would give them enough, that they could just take a year off, and just eat of the old store, and have sufficient that they could let the land rest every seven years.

In the four hundred and ninety years that they had occupied the land, they had not obeyed the commandment of the Lord. This is one of those commandments that they had ignored, even through the kings, David and all of them, had ignored this commandment of God. They never did give the land its sabbath rest. So the Lord said through Jeremiah, "Because you have not given the land its sabbaths, I will give the land its sabbaths, and thus you will be captives in Babylon for seventy years. Until the land has had her sabbaths". So the captivity of seventy years in Babylon. One year for every seven that they had been in the land. In order that the land lie fallow for seventy years, unplanted as God gave to the land the sabbaths that He had ordered.

God exacts His requirements. If we won't give it to God, He'll take it, one way or another. So He did. So, "The word was fulfilled through the mouth of Jeremiah until the Lord had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept the sabbaths, to fulfill the seventy years."

Now between verse twenty one and twenty two, well actually, it comes in verse twenty I suppose. "They were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia." So, right there you've got a seventy year span of time. So now in verse twenty two, seventy years later...

In the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia, the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus the king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all of his kingdom, and he put it in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus the king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up (36:22-23).

So the decree from Cyrus to go back and to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Now the last verses of II Chronicles are identical to the first verses of Ezra. So Ezra takes up right at this point. In fact these last three verses, or two verses, are the first three verses in the book of Ezra. They're divided a little differently in Ezra, but you'll find they are similar. The proclamation of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple, and Ezra leading back the first group of people to begin again the occupation of the land that God had promised, unto Abraham, their father.

So next week, we will move on into Ezra, and in the second chapter, you're gonna get bogged down with the names of the families, who came with Ezra, back to Jerusalem. So, skip em. Because we're gonna be skipping several verses of just names, we will take three chapters in Ezra, for our next assignment, as we continue our study.

Now we're moving into this post-exilic period, in which they are returning under the commandment of God, and we'll look at some extremely fascinating prophecies, and we will see how that God has kept His word. We will look at prophecies of what God had promised for the nation of Israel in the future. Beyond this period, and how God has kept His promises there. So some exciting things, as we move on into the last two books of history. Ezra, and Nehemiah, bring us on up to the end of the history of the Jews, outside of the Apocrypha, where you get into the Maccabees and all. This is the end of the old testament canon of scriptures. It has to do now, with the prophecies of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. So for extra credit, read these three prophets. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, because they fit in, at this period of history that we'll

be covering in the books of Ezra, and Nehemiah.

Our Father, again, as we have looked at history, and we see the patterns of a nation. A nation that was begun by putting their trust in God. A nation that looked to God for her strength, and as the result was strong. A nation that forgot God. A nation that ruled God out of its national life, became sick. Allowed sickly things, until it died. Until there was no remedy, until it was destroyed. God we look at our nation. We also began trusting in God, depending upon God for our strength, and You made us strong. Lord we see the same symptoms of the same illness that destroyed Judah, as they are afflicting our nation today. Lord we realize that unless we accept your cure, there's no other remedy. Our nation too, shall go into captivity to her enemies. God help us, we pray, that we, as your people, would humble ourselves in praying and intercede. Lord at the time of the fall of Judah, You said You looked for a man, who would stand in the gap, and fill in the hedge. That You would not have to destroy those people. But You found none, and thus judgement was forthcoming. Lord, we realize today, that You're looking for men, and women, who will stand in the hedge, who will fill in the gap, who will intercede, in order Lord, that You might show Your mercy unto this nation. Help us Lord, to be faithful intercessors, as we hold before You a national sickness Lord, that is threatening our destruction. God we pray, turn things around for Jesus' sake. Amen.