



Jeremiah 22

JEREMIAH 22

This chapter might be entitled the tale of three kings because Jeremiah is going to prophecy concerning three of the kings of the last kings of Judah. To give you just a little bit of a historic background to help you understand a little bit of what Jeremiah is prophesying here. There was a king in Judah who's name was Josiah. A very good king who instituted many spiritual reforms and got the nation back worshipping God again. Jeremiah began his prophesying during the reign of king Josiah. Josiah was strong. He rebuilt the temple and the nation became strong under his reign as was always the case for righteousness exalts a nation and sin is a reproach to any people.

While he was king the Pharaoh of Egypt was engaged in warfare against the Babylonians. And the Pharaoh Neco had brought his troops up to fight against the Babylonians. To do so they had to pass through a part of the land. They came up what was known as the Biyamares. And the Biyamares passed by the area of Megiddo. So Josiah hearing that the Egyptian army was going up to fight the Babylonians decided that he would take his troops over to Megiddo and meet the Pharaoh and his troops in battle. The Pharaoh sent him a note and said to stay out of this. My problem is not with you it is with Babylon. God is sent me on this mission to fight against Babylon and don't meddle around with God. Because you can only get hurt by doing so.

But Josiah would not listen and he was insistent on his desire to get in and mix it up a bit. And so he came to Megiddo where he disguised himself as just a regular army personal. He went into battle himself. He was hit by an arrow and he ordered his men to get him out of there and he died before he got back to Jerusalem. His son, Jehoahaz, also known as Shallum, was twenty-three years old when his father was killed in the battle. And he began to reign in Jerusalem in his fathers stead. Shallum is the first of the three kings that we will be looking at tonight.

Shallum only reigned for only three months. But in that three months he did one hundred eighty from his father. Where his father was a good king and had rebuilt the temple and had led the people in the reestablishing of the worship of God, he turned completely. He reestablished the idol worship centers that his father had destroyed. In three months he did a lot of damage.

But Pharaoh who had defeated his father in as much as Judah had come to fight against him came to Jerusalem, he took the city, took a lot of the gold and he took Jehoahaz or Shallum as a captive to Egypt. He put his older brother on the throne who was Jehoiakim, the second of the three kings. And so Jehoiakim became a tributary of Egypt and he began to pay taxes that were demanded by the Pharaoh or tribute to Egypt. He reigned for eleven years.

Upon the death of Jehoiakim, his son who is called Jechoniah, or in the chapter tonight, Coniah, began to reign. He reigned for only three months. He also was evil. His father Jehoiakim was evil. So you have three, the tale of three kings who were evil kings.

Coniah only reigned for three months. Actually Jehoiakim, his father, was slain in the battle against Babylon. His son began to reign. He reigned for only three months, was evil, and he was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, and taken as a captive with his family and his mother to Babylon where he died.

Those are the three kings that we will be dealing with tonight. The two sons of Josiah. And then the grandson of Josiah, Coniah, the third of these three kings.

Thus saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,

Again we have the LORD speaking directly to Jeremiah and it is interesting how the word of the LORD would come to Jeremiah and how precise, and how explicit were the commands of the LORD to Jeremiah. It would be great, it would be wonderful if we had that kind of a communication where God could speak as clearly to us. Where we could understand the voice of God speaking to us as did Jeremiah. I have often wondered just how did God speak to Jeremiah. Was it an audible voice that he heard? Just how is it that when the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, or in this case, thus saith the LORD, how did the LORD say it?

Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word.

We are coming to a passage of Scripture, a little bit further on in Jeremiah, where we will discover how God spoke to Jeremiah. I think that you will find it quite interesting. But, the question was in my mind for so long. It seems that the LORD spoke in such a clear, precise way. And I become jealous of Jeremiah. I wish the LORD would speak to me like that. And so he is to say;

And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates:

So, he is commanding the kings, his counsel, the people that are there to hear the word of the LORD. Now, the fact of the matter is that they did not listen. They had closed their ear to the word of the LORD. So at the end of the chapter we find Jeremiah saying, "Oh earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD." No one will listen so he cries to the earth to hear the word of the LORD. But here the command is to the king and to his servants to hear the word of the LORD.

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 the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

As I read that I don't think that God's demand is harsh or difficult. What God is saying is to be fair. The judicial system had become corrupted. There was not any real true execution of justice. The evil people were getting by with their evil. The court system had become so corrupted that the evil was not being punished. The honest people were getting really a bad deal. It is sort of like the judicial systems of the land today. I mean, there are attorneys that are advertising, "Have you been under stress at work? Do they put you under pressure? Have you suffered mental anguish because of something that was said? Call us, we are on your side." And we become so litigious in our land today. My, you hate to even have a fender bender because you will be slapped with a suit for mental anguish and whiplashes and everything else because you scratched their bumper.

That was the case of Judah at the time. The judicial system had really become corrupted. The people were being oppressed by the law rather than delivered from the law. The LORD said not to do any wrong or any violence. And to take care of the orphans and the widows and do not shed innocent blood in this place. Now, the demand of God is not that difficult or strenuous or erroneous. I can't see that people would say, "Oh my, how could God tell us to be good. Not to be violent, not to shed innocent blood, to have concern for the fatherless." God is so fair! And He wants us to be fair. God is so just and He wants us to be just. God is concerned with the underdog and he wants us to be concerned with the underdog. The underprivileged, and that is all that God is asking. And the LORD is saying;

For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon

the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.

If you will just be fair, have a honest government, do what is right, take care of the weak, and the widows, then you will be able to ride on your chariots and you will be able to maintain the nation. The kingdom will go on. You will be preserved.

But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become desolation.

God is not laying a heavy thing on them. He is very fair and the rewards of doing it are great. You will be able to maintain your position as king. But if you don't though God says that He will swear by Myself. Now, in those days people were prone to take oaths. And in taking an oath you would swear by something that was higher than you. You would never swear by anything that is lower than you. But you would always swear by something higher. You don't say, "I swear by my dog that I will do it." But you say, "I swear on my mother's honor, I will do it." So they would take oaths to confirm their sincerity in the statements that they were making, or their honesty.

They would swear by the temple, they would swear by God, they would swear by different things. They would take their oaths. Now in our courts we used to swear by the Bible. Swear by God that you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help you God. And you would swear by God to tell the truth. That is probably why the court system is in such a mess. You don't have to swear by God. Well, what other standard is there?

When God wants to take an oath to confirm that what He says is true. Who can He swear by? There is no one higher than God. So God when He took an oath would swear by Himself. "I swear by Myself," God said. There is nothing else higher to swear by Himself. But when God takes an oath to affirm a truth that you can know for sure that that is going to happen. And it indeed did happen.

The corruption continued. They did nothing to correct the corruption and thus the kingdom fell. Now God promised that if they would just correct the corruption that He would prolong them, that He would take care of them.

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 cities which are not inhabited.

Gilead was over on the far side of the Jordan River by the Jabok River that comes into the Jordan. It was a beautiful wooded area. And of course Lebanon was famed for the cedars, the beautiful forests of Lebanon. So God said, "You are like Lebanon to Me." A beautiful forest, the wooded areas of Gilead,

yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?

Jerusalem, that great city, the palace of the king made of cedars, going to be burned to the ground. And when people see the ruins of it as they walked by it they will say, "Why did God do this to 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.

The desolation is going to come. When it does and people question why it happened, the answer will be; because they have forsaken the covenant of God and they have begun to worship and to serve other gods.

Weep ye not for the dead,

Now Josiah was a good king, he was a popular king. When he died there was great mourning for him among the people. So they were perhaps still mourning for him at this time. And the LORD said,

Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away:

That is his son Shallum that is taken his throne.

for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. For thus saith the LORD touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place; He shall not return thither any more.

The Pharaoh came and took him as a captive unto Egypt and he is not going to come back. So, Jeremiah said not to weep for his father, he is dead, but weep for his son he is going to be in a living hell there in Egypt. He is going to be taken captive, he will not come back. He is being carried away as a captive.

But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.

When he died his brother was made king by the Pharaoh, his older brother Jehoiakim, who was two years older. But Jehoiakim was evil, and he immediately decided to build this beautiful palace for himself. But it was a time of economic woe in Judah. The people were already pressed with taxes in order to pay the Pharaoh the tribute. But in a time of economic woe, like the Senate, he voted himself a raise in salary when every one is having a hard time, making ends meet, paying their taxes, he votes himself this beautiful palace. But he is corrupt in that he brings these guys to work on it but he does not pay them. And so he is taking advantage of the people forcing them to build them this beautiful house and yet not even paying them wages for doing so. So in verse 13 the prophet addresses himself to this situation, the second king Jehoiakim.

Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is sealed with cedar, and painted with vermillion.

It must have been quite an elaborate looking place. But he says,

Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?

His father was Josiah. As we said Josiah was a good king. He turned the hearts of the people back to the LORD. He refurbished the temple, he remodeled the temple and he was a good king. And the LORD reminds him of his father. Your father was a good man. He did judgment, and he was just and it was well with him.

He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.

He knew the LORD and he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and he was blessed upon the throne. But He said,

But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.

The indictments of God against this wicked king Jehoiakim. He was taking advantage of people. He was covetousness, he was out for himself, he was not out for the people. He was ruling for his own. He was taking advantage of his position in enriching himself. And one of those evil rulers was only out to rip the people off, not to really minister to the people and to rule over them in righteousness.

Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory!

In other words when he dies people are not going to be sad. He is a wicked man. He has oppressed the people. He has been a bad leader and thus upon his death there is not going to be any mourning. Now, when Herod the Great was king, he also was a very king. He also oppressed the people. He also ruled in such a way as to enrich himself. He left many great monuments of which the ruins of many of them still stand to the present day. He had thousands upon thousands of slaves enforced labor to build these huge monuments that he left there in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel. The Herodian, the Alexandrian, the ruins of Caesarea and these great works of Herod the Great. But because of his cruel reign everybody hated him. And he figured that when he died that they were going to have big parties and that just got to him. He knew that his was a wicked man, he knew that people hated him. So he knew that when he died there would probably be just great rejoicing and big parties.

So he ordered that several of these very popular men who were loved by the people be executed when he died. Because he wanted people to be mourning when he died. So he ordered the execution of these popular men in Jerusalem. So when Herod the Great died, they went to execute these fellows and then they said, "Wait a minute, he is dead, why should we follow his orders?" So they did not execute them and thus there was great parties upon his death.

But this fellow Jehoiakim who oppressed the people and so the prophet declares that there will be no real lamenting for him at his death. People are not going to be sad or weeping or mourning as they did for his father Josiah.

He shall be buried with the burial on an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

I mean, he won't have any royal kind of a burial. In other words his body will just lie out in the field to rot like a donkey when it dies. Jehoiakim went out to battle against the armies of Babylon and he fell in battle against Babylon and his body was left in the fields to rot. He was not brought back to the city to be buried but like a donkey his body rotted in the fields as the prophet declared it would be.

Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear.

It is interesting that many times in a period of prosperity people turn their hearts from the LORD. They do not listen to God. They do not feel a need of God. They have come now to trust in their riches.

I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.

So Jehoiakim from the time that he was a young fellow was going his own way. He did not take consideration of God or make a place for God in his life, he would not obey the voice of God.

The wind shall eat up all thy pastors (or leaders, those who were reigning or ruling with him. The pastors were the men who were watching over the people like shepherds over the flock. They were the rulers over the land), and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness. O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars,

His palace was lined with these cedars and so it is a reference to this beautiful palace that he had built there in Jerusalem. You make your nest in the cedars, cedars from Lebanon.

how gracious halt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail!

You are going to face a horrible death. Living now in luxury not listening to the voice of God. Not really concerned with the things of God but as sure as a woman who is going to have a baby is in travail, in pain so shall you be when you are facing death.

As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence;

We get into the third king in verse 24. The son of Jehoiakim that took over when his father was killed in battle and this son, Coniah, followed in the steps of his father. He was just eighteen years old when he began to reign. And again, like his uncle, he reigned for only three months. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD. Now, the LORD said concerning him, though he were the signet on My right hand, or the signet ring.

The kings wore this ring with a large jewel on their right hand and it was a signet ring. Whenever there were any official documents this king would put the wax on the document and the king would take his ring and he would press it into the wax. And that was the seal. So the signet ring. It was always something that the king wore as a sign of his position and power and it was a beautiful gem stone in that ring. So the LORD is saying that even if you were like this signet ring on My right hand yet I would pluck you from there. God has set Himself against this king Coniah or Jechoniah.

And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

The Babylonians had already come. They were besieging the city of Jerusalem. His father had gone out from the city to face them in battle. His father was killed in the battle. He took over in Jerusalem but the conditions are bad. The siege is still on. And naturally there was fear in his heart concerning the Babylonians. And the LORD is declaring that He is going to turn him over to the Babylonians.

And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.

The prophecy is that he is going to be captured by the Babylonians and carried away by them to another country where he will die in this other country. It is true that he reigned for three months and the Babylonian army came and they captured him and they took the city of Jerusalem and much spoil with them

and many captives. He was carried as a captive to Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah to reign on the throne in his stead. So, the prophecy against Coniah was fulfilled. He and his mother Nehushta were taken to Babylon where they died.

But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

The Jew always longed to return to Jerusalem but He said that you are not going to.

Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure?

His life was not pleasing unto God. He did those things that were evil in the sight of God. We have been created by God for God's good pleasure. That is a basic fact of life that you cannot escape. You exist for the sole purpose of bringing pleasure to God. Now many people rebel against that truth. There are many people who really say that they don't think that is fair that God would create me for His pleasure. Well, like Paul said, you are like a lump of clay and God is like the potter and what right has the clay to say to the potter, "Hey, what are you doing, why are you making me like this?" And Paul is showing that you have really no right to challenge God or to question God. He made you for His good pleasure, like it or not.

You can fight against. God has given you the choice which allows you to fight against that. And you can say, "I don't want to bring God pleasure. I don't care what God thinks. I am going to live for myself. I am going to do my own thing. I am going to find pleasure for myself." And you might live to please yourself and it should be noted that the majority of people do. Today we are living in a nation in which there is a pleasure mania. The things that are designed are all promoted with the idea of bringing you pleasure. And the amount of money that is spent yearly on things that are designed for pleasure as people are seeking to please themselves. But that is not you are here. That is not why you were created. God created you for His pleasure.

And because that is the basic reason why you exist, your life cannot be fulfilling until you are bringing pleasure to God. Your life will never be fulfilling while you are trying to live to please yourself. No matter how much you amass as far as possessions and wealth. Or understanding or education. These things will not bring fulfillment and satisfaction but will leave you empty.

King Solomon is the classic example of the man who had everything. I mean everything. He had so much that you could not really ask for any more that what he had. He testified of his own self that he did not withhold from himself anything that his heart desired. He had the money to buy it. He had the wherewithal to do. He is the classic example of the man who was searching for meaning in life and fulfillment in life in doing different things. And so he thought that all lies in education. It is understanding and knowing that will bring a person satisfaction and happiness. And so he became the wisest man. He wrote books on zoology and botany and other scientific subjects. People would come from all over the world to hear him talk about the bugs and trees and things of that nature. He was a verbal encyclopedia.

And having all of this vast knowledge, one day he realized that, "I am smart, but I am not smart enough to keep living. I am going to die just like a fool. Fools die and I am going to die. So what good is all my wisdom?" And he saw that it was just folly. It could not keep him alive. So he gave himself over to building huge monuments. The temple in Jerusalem. His own palace. And all of these marvelous monuments. And one day he looked at all of the building projects and all these monument that he had left and he said, "I felt so empty, unfulfilled."

So he thought that is lied in riches. And so he amassed a greater treasure than any man had ever know. Until silver was as common as rocks in Jerusalem. And then he looked at all of his wealth and he

said, "That did not satisfy me either."

We know that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. I was not quite up to Wilt Chamberlain. He found that the answer did not lie in sex either. And after doing all these things, amassing all of this wealth, gaining all of this knowledge, he said, "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Or emptiness, emptiness, everything is empty and frustrating. And he found that life under the sun was just empty because he was seeking to please himself. He had no thought of pleasing God.

Now the man who lives to please God will never end up with a cry like Solomon. If you devote your life to pleasing God you will find that your life will be rich and fulfilling. The words of Jim Elliot are really classic. Jim Elliot was a tremendous inspiration to me in that we were more or less contemporaries. And he chose to go down to South America and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the savage Auca Indians. No white man would dare go into the territory of the Aucas because they were known to be killers. But Jim and these other fellows, Nate Saint and all, felt that these men needed Jesus Christ and they had a burden to share Jesus Christ with them. So they took and began to prepare extensive preparations to reach these people, to share the gospel with them. Began dropping gifts to them. Flying over with loud speakers and they learned a few Alca words from a girl that had escaped out of the Alca tribe and taught them a little of the Alca language. And they were calling to them and trying to befriend them.

Some of Jim's friends in the States heard that he had this dream to go to the Aucas and they wrote to him and they said, "Jim, you are crazy." He had won the National A.A.U. wrestling championship, he had gotten his doctorate in philosophy. He was offered a professorship at the University of Washington. But he turned that all aside to follow what he felt was the Lord's will to take the gospel to the Aucas. And his friend said that he was crazy. They said that he would probably lose his life in this crazy adventure. They are savages. You have got too much to just give your life there in the jungles of Ecuador.

Jim wrote his friend back and he said, "No man is a fool who gives up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose." He did die on the banks of the Arunka River, speared by the Alca Indians in the abortive attempt to share the gospel with them. But Jim's dad went down. He was a big huge guy, 230 pounds, 6'5". And he was determined to find those Indians who killed his son. And he went in and when he got hold of the man that killed his son he threw his arms around him and he said, "Jesus loves you and He gave His son for you and I love you. I gave my son in order that you might know the love of Jesus." Many of the Aucas have received Jesus Christ. It is no longer a savage group of people.

But that whole philosophy that no man is a fool to give up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose. Here was king Shallum, he was not willing to give up anything. He was living for himself, for his own pleasure. And God declares of him that he is a vessel in whom there is no pleasure. God was not pleased. He was not fulfilling the purpose of his existence. And so God pronounces that he is going to be cast out, he and his descendants. They are going to be cast into a land that they do not even know, the land of Babylon.

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 upon the throne of David, and ruling any more In Judah.

You are the end. None of your descendants will sit on the throne or rule in Judah. And so God pronounced the end of Jechoniah's prosperity as far as ruling over the nation. Now as we pointed out this morning, when you come to the New Testament it is interesting that Matthew's gospel gives to us the genealogy of Joseph, the husband of Mary. And we find that Joseph is a descendant of Coniah called Jechoniah's. And he is a descendant of Coniah. Now, if Jesus were the son of Joseph he could not lay claim

to the throne of David. It would be because of the curse upon the house of Jechoniah that none of his seed shall reign on the throne.

Luke's gospel chapter 3 gives us the genealogy of Mary. She also is a descendant of David but not through Solomon and Jechoniah. She is a descendant of David through another son of David whose name is Nathan. So Jesus can sit upon the throne of David being the son of Mary and the Son of God. He can sit on the throne of David and thus God's promise to David will be kept that God will establish the throne of David forever. And that there shall not cease to be one of David's seed sitting upon the throne. Thus the promise can be fulfilled because Mary is a descendant of David also as is noted in Luke's genealogy.

So we have the curse upon Jechoniah and his seed not to sit upon the throne forever. Zedekiah, his brother, was made king in his stead by Nebuchadnezzar and Jechoniah died as a captive in Babylon. The tale of three kings.

They were kings who went their own ways and perished in their own ways. Kings who did not surrender their will or their lives to the living God. We can learn much from their mistakes and God help us that we might learn the lessons.

Father, we thank You tonight for Your record that You have left for us for our instruction. And Lord, we do not want it to be said by You that we are vessels in which there is no pleasure. But we want our lives to be pleasing to You. So help us Lord, to do those things always that are pleasing in Your sight. And may that be the criteria by which we judge our activities, whether or not it is pleasing unto You. And may we be conscious of You and sensitive that we might do those things always that You desire, that You want, things that will please You and bring glory to You. And so may we live our lives not for our glory, but for Your glory. And as David said, Not unto us O Lord, not unto us but unto Thy Name bring glory and praise and unto Jesus Christ our Lord be the glory both now and forever, Amen.

May we live our lives this week as to bring glory unto our Lord Jesus Christ doing those things that please Him. May the Lord be with you, watch over you and keep you in His love and bless you in your walk with Him in Jesus' name. God Bless You!