

## **Sermon 30: Judah's Destruction and God's Grace: 2 Chronicles 36:11-23**

**Text: 2 Chronicles 36:11-23** "Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and 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, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus 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 an 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..."

**Summary:** 425 years of history ends in misery but not without hope.

### **Part 1: Background:**

- Judah's history from David to Zedekiah is about 425 years.
- During this period, the nation experienced the rise and fall of around 20 different kings.

- Four of these kings were instrumental in spiritual reforms.
  - David though deeply flawed, was Judah's most faithful King.
  - Solomon led the Kingdom through its greatest period of peace, prosperity, and geopolitical influence.
    - Asa removed idols and renewed the covenant.
    - Jehoshaphat sent teams of teachers to instruct the people.
    - Hezekiah reopened the temple, destroyed the high-places, and sought the LORD through the Assyrian siege.
    - Josiah led the most comprehensive reform in the nation's history.
  - Three other Kings were known for following the LORD with some qualifications: Joash, Amaziah, and Uzziah
- **Summary:**
  - **Israel failed to do what God had appointed them to do: Exodus 19:5-8** "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do..."
  - **Her Kings failed to do what God had appointed them to do: Deuteronomy 17:14-18** "When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me...it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom..."
  - **God would remain faithful despite their unfaithfulness; Jeremiah 31:31-34** "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake...After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in

their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more..."

**Part 2: Judah's demise: 36:11-17** "Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and 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, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand..."

- **Judah experienced around 150 years of intense geopolitical tension:**

- There were constant power struggles between Egypt, Assyria, and later Babylon.
- Assyria fell to Babylon in a relatively short time in the mid to early 600's.
- The last 22 years of Judean kings was a time of national weakness, political chaos, and moral decadence.
  - Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin only reigned three months each.
  - Jehoiakim and Zedekiah reigned 11 years each, but they were essentially vassal kings.
  - Jehoiakim was a vassal king to both Egypt and then Babylon.
  - Zedekiah was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar but was crushed when he attempted to shift allegiance to Egypt.

- **Zedekiah's Legacy:**

- **He was arrogant before God: 36:12** "He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD.

- **He was arrogant before men: 36:13** "He also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel..."
- **His people were arrogant toward the sacred: 36:14** "Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem..."
- **God's character:**
  - **God's patience and mercy: 36:15** "And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place..."
  - **God's righteousness: 36:16** "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy..."
    - **"They constantly mocked...despised...and misused God's prophets.**
    - **"Till there was no remedy..."**
  - **God's justice: 36:17-20** "Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand...And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. <sup>20</sup> And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia..."
  - **God's grace: 36:22-23** "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus 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 an 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..."

### **Part 3: Learning from History:**

- **Events do not happen in a vacuum:**

- There were explainable reasons for Judah's instability, weakness, and ultimate demise.
- Her weakness was not the result of her enemies' strength, but rather her rejection of God and His ways.
- God gave her many opportunities to correct course, and they mocked all of them.
- God's purposes continue despite constant human turmoil.
- **People can reach a point of no return.**
- **God offers grace even when people are at the their lowest point: Lamentation 3:22-26** "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD..."
  - **1-2 Kings** documented a justifiable case for God's harsh treatment of the nation.
  - **1-2 Chronicles** documented God's continued faithfulness to His promises and resolve to work through them for His glory.
  - **God raised up a mighty King who treated the nation with kindness and initiated the rebuilding of their society from the ground up.**
- **He remains faithful even when people are not.**
  - The gospel is the greatest testimony to this truth.
  - He made promises and kept them despite many obstacles.
  - He worked through people despite their motives and characters.
  - He dealt with our sin in a way that did not compromise His justice.
  - Let's never get over the blessings we have in Him.