

Lessons From Zedekiah For A Snowy Day

Last Sunday we talked about lessons from Ahaziah. This Sunday I want to share some lessons from King Zedekiah. Turn with me to **Jeremiah 37**. Assyria had conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel about 100 years before Jeremiah. The Babylonians had conquered the Assyrians and now King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army had come to conquer the southern kingdom of Judah and to take the city of Jerusalem. God told Jeremiah to warn the king and the people that judgment was coming because of their sin and their idolatry and they would be defeated by the Babylonians. They were trusting in a pact they had made years before with Egypt and believed that when the Egyptians showed up the Babylonians would withdraw and they would be saved. Jeremiah told them not to rely upon the Egyptians because this was God's judgment against their sin. Let's read Jeremiah 37:1-17 and then I want to point out some things I felt the Lord pointed out to me this week.

1. You can't ignore God's word forever. Notice verse 2. The king and the people ignored God's word. We live in a similar culture where people ignore God's word. They consider it to be irrelevant to their world, their life and lifestyle. It's just an ancient book. It's full of myths and hard to pronounce names. It's just another religious book. Why should anyone trust another old book? But we know the truth. This book is alive! It is life changing. It is powerful, like a two edged sword. We see it's prophecies and its promises fulfilled every day. And we know you can't ignore God's word forever. Sooner or later the truth of God's word will confront you and ultimately, some day you will stand before God, just as his word declares, and you will give an account and you won't be able to ignore God's word then. Don't allow foolishness or pride to keep you from listening to and obeying God's word. It will keep you from sin and death.

2. The wicked won't prevail forever but God and His word will! As I read this story I was reminded that the wicked will not prevail. They may have their triumphs. It may look like justice is thwarted and cheated by the wicked, it may look like they are getting ahead and the righteous are falling behind, but the wicked will not prevail. Their place will not last or endure.

Assyria was such a military powerhouse. They thought no one could defeat them. But the Babylonians conquered them. And Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians were convinced no one could defeat them, but they were conquered by the Medes and Persians. Zedekiah thought

no one could conquer Judah and that surely God would not allow anyone to destroy Jerusalem, but God will not allow the wicked and their sinfulness to prevail forever. Because of their sin, Jerusalem fell. By the time of Jesus, the Jews thought the same thing about Jerusalem and Herod's temple. It couldn't be destroyed but by 70 AD the Romans destroyed it all.

Leaders come and go. Powerful dictators rise up and then are brought to defeat and humiliation, but the Bible declares, **“Forever O Lord thy word is settled in heaven.” Psalm 119:89.** Write it down. God and his word and his purposes and his promises will prevail and the wicked will perish and be no more. Look at **Psalm 9:5-10, 15-20.**

3. God is Sovereign over nations and peoples, times and seasons. Zedekiah should have paid attention to this. He should have listened to Jeremiah and the word of the Lord. So many have made the mistake of thinking they have the power and they are in control when in fact it is God that orchestrates and arranges.

Nebuchadnezzar was convinced he was all powerful, that he could not be defeated, that he had built the great city of Babylon, one of the wonders of the ancient world, but God humbled him. Look at Daniel 4:17. This is what Nebuchadnezzar heard in a dream: **“...the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.” Daniel 4:17.** In fact, Nebuchadnezzar thought he had conquered Jerusalem on his own, but look at what one of his own men told Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 40:1-4**).

Look at **Psalm 33:10-11.** Look at **Acts 17:26-31.**

No doubt you've been watching the news concerning the revolution occurring in Egypt. We are watching history in the making. Prophetic history in fact as changes are coming again to the Middle East. Shifts in power are occurring. Hosni Mubarak has been an ally to the USA, he has kept the peace with Israel, he has helped to counter Hamas in Gaza. No doubt the people have legitimate complaints against him and his regime in terms of human rights violations and the lack of personal freedom. He and his government have been repressive, but I'm afraid we may see the radicalization of Egypt by Islamic extremists. The government that replaces him may be worse than what they have now. While common folks may have started this protest movement, radicals will take advantage of the situation as opportunity presents itself.

We've already seen the increasing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. They

have presented themselves as moderates and have supposedly renounced violence, however, their stated goals have always been Shariah law and a global Islamic state. According to one source I read, Hamas in Gaza is an off shoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Their motto has been “Jihad is our path, martyrdom is our aspiration.” That doesn’t sound moderate or non-violent to me.

According to one source, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in September 2010 was quoted as saying, “The improvement and change the muslim nation seeks can only be attained through jihad and sacrifice and by raising a jihadi generation that pursues death just as the enemies pursue life.”

These guys are wolves in sheep’s clothing and our government seems to be open to their involvement in a changing Egypt. The administration said there was a need for “non-secular” groups to be part of the transition in Egypt. I doubt that the Christians in Egypt would be included in that “non-secular” group. This could be a very dangerous situation in Egypt.

Things are happening in Jordan and Syria, and in Lebanon as well. Egypt and Jordan are the only two Arab nations with full diplomatic relations with Israel and the changes occurring could be serious for Israel. They may find themselves surrounded by Islamic extremists. Iran is likely playing a behind the scenes role trying to influence things in Egypt. These rulers and leaders think they have their hand on the controls, but we know God is sovereign and He controls the nations and the times.

These Islamic extremists with their hatred of Israel believe they are in the drivers seat and they will prevail. But take a moment to look at **Zechariah 12:1-9**. God is Sovereign and he will reign forever and ever.

4. As we read this story in Jeremiah, we see that **Judgment is coming**. Judah and Jerusalem couldn’t believe it or accept it. Zedekiah and his advisors couldn’t believe it. “God won’t bring judgment on his city, on his people.” The world today can’t believe that God will judge the world for its wickedness and sin. They don’t believe they will stand before God on judgment day. The church no longer preaches it and Christians question whether God will really judge them at some appointed time and place. We’ve become like Judah. We can’t believe judgment is coming. America can’t believe God is judging us for our sins. But whether we believe it or not doesn’t change the facts. Judgment is coming, for the nations, for the individuals, for the

wicked and for the righteous. There is a reckoning day coming.

The bible speaks of the Great White Throne judgment in **Revelation 20:11**. This is the judgement of the wicked. If their name is not written in the book of life, they are sent to eternal punishment.

But the bible also speaks of the Judgment Seat of Christ in **2 Corinthians 5:10**. The righteous, those who have been saved through faith in Christ, our sins have already been judged. We have inherited eternal life and our eternal destiny is already set. We don't fear judgment in the sense of wondering if we will be saved or not. The bible tells us there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Our sins have been judged and we have been forgiven and made righteous in Christ. However, we too will be judged. **1 Corinthians 3:10-15** explains that our works will be tried by fire. Rewards are given.

Knowing that there is a day of judgment awaiting all of us, what kind of person should we be? What kind of life should we live? The God of the whole earth will judge the living and the dead, the wicked and the righteous. Judgment is coming.

5. In spite of all we see in Jeremiah 37, one thing remains for us: **God will never forsake his own**. In spite of his judgment against Judah for their sins, God had a remnant of faithful servants. God took care of the prophet Jeremiah (40:11-12). A remnant remained in Judah. The lord will judge, but he will also pardon and forgive. He will discipline, but he will also build up and restore. He wasn't finished with his people.

Consider Jeremiah 33:7-11, 14-16. There is a righteous Branch and Jesus is that one and he will rule and reign forever.

The king asked, "is there any word from the Lord?" Yes. It is a word of hope and redemption. God is sovereign and He rules and reigns so don't be afraid. Don't give up or despair. He controls the nations, the times and the seasons. When you see all these signs coming to pass, Jesus said, don't be afraid. Instead, "Stand up, lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Luke 21:28

Jeremiah saw all the judgment. He knew of the sins of the people and wept because of their rebellion, their wickedness, their refusal to listen to his words. But he knew God would not forsake his people. Remember the words he wrote in **Lamentations 3:19-25, 31-33, 40**.