

THE CATASTROPHE OF KING ZEDIKIAH

Text: Ezekiel 12:1-13

Our text tells the sad, heartbreaking story of King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah before the destruction of the kingdom and the beginning of 70 years of captivity. Ezekiel writes these words to the captives in Babylon to remind them why they are there. Please observe:

1. A Prophet Shut Up

Jeremiah 32:1-3

When God's man speaks on behalf of God, people do one of two things. They believe and bend to God's Word or they rebel and are broken by God's Word. Jeremiah 38:20, 21. The good news for those on God's side is that there will always be the Ebed-melechs to pull you out of the mud. Jeremiah 38:6-13.

2. A Warning Given

Jeremiah 32:4; 38:17

The Lord is so very merciful and long-suffering. II Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

3. A Hopeless Fight

Jeremiah 32:5; II Chronicles 36:15, 16; Proverbs 29:1: "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." To go against God, His will and His plans is to most assuredly fight a losing battle. Even God's choicest kings and prophets found this truth to be real.

A. Uzziah found this to be true: II Chronicles 26:16-21.

B. Josiah found this to be true: II Chronicles 36:19-24. This is a commentary of Proverbs 26:17: "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." Even one of the godliest kings of all Jewish history could not do wrong and get away with it.

C. Moses found this to be true: Numbers 20:7-12. God's great prophet and friend was not exempt. Exodus 33:11a: "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Deuteronomy 34:10; 34:1, 5-7.

4. When leadership fails

II Chronicles 36:17-20; Exodus 20:5

When leadership fails, the trickle-down effect comes into play. Someone is always affected by the actions we take. Sometimes when God's wrath begins to fall, it is not merely a trickle down stream; it becomes a mighty torrent, as the prophet tells us in Amos 5:24, "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

5. The Principle of Pay-Day Someday

II Chronicles 36:21; Leviticus 26:32-43

Galatians 6:7 tells us, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Hosea 8:7a, "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind..."

The Principle of "Pay-Day Someday" is embedded throughout history. I had the privilege of hearing Dr. Robert G. Lee preach his most famous sermon bearing this title. He said, "Pay-day someday is written in the constitution of God's universe. The retributive providence of God is a reality as certainly as the laws of gravitation are a reality. Even though the mill of God grinds slowly, it grinds to powder. Yes, the judgments of God often have heels and travel slowly. But they always have iron hands and crush completely."

6. The loss of vision and children

II Kings 25:6, 7; Jeremiah 1-7; Ezekiel 12:1-6, 12, 23; II Chronicles 36:17-20

This has to be one of the saddest and most catastrophic stories of the Bible. In my yearly devotional readings when I come to this story, I cringe. I hate to re-read this event. The walls about the city of those days were built to protect the inhabitants against the enemies. Zedikiah, with his accomplices, dug through the very wall built for a bulwark in a vain attempt to escape impending judgment. He was captured and his sons slaughtered before his eyes. His eyes were put out and then he was taken on a 500-mile trip to Babylon where he eventually died in captivity. How sad! The last thing he saw were his sons killed. Oh, the dark days of memories, remembering that he could have repented and his sons could have lived!

Some years later Ezekiel uses this story to remind the people of God what we lose when we are warned to get right with God, but refuse. "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18). I Samuel 3:1 says, "And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision." We oftentimes don't miss the vision until it's gone. And when vision is gone, so also go the children. Judges 2:10 is another verse that illustrates this pitiful truth: "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." Moses, Joshua and their contemporaries were dead. They saw the parting of the Red Seas, the great defeat of Jericho, but the kids never saw these things. The result? Judges 17:6 tells us, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." So these proverbially blind children were brailing through their lives, unable to make the right decisions. No matter how many judges God sent to Israel, without the vision of God, i.e., a clear understanding of God's Word, they were helpless to stand against their enemies and do the right thing.

Conclusion:

In this election year the Christian influence has been pale to say the least. In many instances our faith has ben maligned and mocked. It seems our country is losing her children and her vision. I think often of the vision of the Pilgrims and many of our presidents adhering to the belief that this republic is, "...A city that is set on an hill..." based on the words of our Lord Jesus found in Matthew 5:14: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." Today, as never before America is in danger of losing her children and losing her vision. Jesus said in Matthew 6:22 and 23, " The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" If our focus is Christ and His righteousness we have light. If we focus on sinful cravings and ignore righteousness we can only agree with our Lord Who said, "...how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23b). For those who say we cannot expect this of our nation, I say, why not? God's Word says in Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." Robert Kennedy made famous a quote by George Bernard Shaw, "You see things and say 'Why?' I dream of things that never were and say, 'Why not?'" I see things as they are and I remember the way things were and ask, "Why not be righteous again?" Before more children die, before we slip into a total eclipse of national righteousness, why not come back to God? Psalm 9:17 warns that, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psalm 137:1, 2: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." The prophet Jeremiah said it so well in Jeremiah 51:50b: "...remember the LORD afar off, and

let Jerusalem come into your mind.” Let us come back to the Lord. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). May we pick up our harps and play again the songs of Zion.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.