

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

III. The Latter Era Of The Divided Kingdom, 2 Kings 2:1-27:41

MM. Applying God's Lesson From The Plains Of Jericho

(2 Kings 24:18-25:7 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Though we greatly desire to be blessed by God, His blessing often seems to be absent in various realms today:

(1) It occurs at the state level: The "Quotable" editorial in the July 29, 2019 Republican-American, p. 6A cited the July 26 Hartford Courant story, "Connecticut is one of just three states where workforce has contracted since the Great Recession," and it claimed that many "Connecticut . . . workers" are "working part-time while looking for a full-time gig or settling for a second-choice job until they find what they really want." This problem is due mainly to the state's "longstanding reputation for business unfriendliness." (Ibid., lead editorial "Unaffordable paid-leave plan")

(2) It occurs at the national level: George Will's column, "Hazards of bipartisanship" (Ibid., July 25, 2019, p. 6A) reported how "the U. S. House" recently "voted to repeal . . . the 'Cadillac tax' . . . 419-6" because the "political class" came "together to sacrifice the national interest to its own. Repeal of the promised tax of 40% on a portion of the most lavish employer-provided health-care plans would enlarge projected budget deficits by almost \$200 billion in a decade." As usual, it's the taxpayer who is eventually left to pay for this bill!

(3) It occurs at the grassroots level: Susan Haigh's Associated Press story, "Food insecurity at state colleges, universities focus of Connecticut study" (Ibid., July 29, 2019, p. 1A) claimed, "Students across the U. S. are struggling with hunger and food insecurity . . . In nearly two dozen . . . studies, more than 30% of students did not have consistent access to food," and much of the cause is rooted in social problems like "homeless students living in shelters or tents or people escaping domestic violence."

Need: *So, we ask, "If we witness a significant absence of God's blessing, what does He want us to do about it?!"*

- I. When Zedekiah became king, he disobeyed God, oppressing his subjects, so he suffered a loss of blessing in being captured and mistreated by Babylon, 2 Kings 24:17-25:7; 23:33, 35; Jer. 21:1, 12-13:**
- A. Zedekiah's brother, former king Jehoiakim, had heavily taxed the people of Judah, 2 Kings 23:33, 35.
 - B. 2 Kings 24:19 claims Zedekiah sinned like Jehoiakim had done, and Jeremiah 21:1, 12-13 ESV explains this:
 - 1. Zedekiah and his royal officials, the "house of David," financially oppressed vulnerable subjects by failing to administer justice in their behalf, essentially robbing them, Jeremiah 21:1, 12-13 ESV.
 - 2. This sin violated God's call that Israel's kings *not* multiply silver and gold to themselves, but consider their subjects as their equal before God so as to treat their subjects well, Deuteronomy 17:17b, 20a.
 - C. God thus judged Zedekiah to be captured and physically abused by the Babylonians, 2 Kings 24:20-25:7:
 - 1. Due to God's great anger against the sins of the people of Judah and of Zedekiah, the Lord let Babylon's king Nebuchadnezzar come and besiege the city of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 24:20-25:2.
 - 2. In time, Jerusalem ran out of food, the Babylonians breached the city wall and Zedekiah and his soldiers fled from Jerusalem east toward the Jordan valley, 2 Kings 25:3-4, NIV ftn. to verse 4.
 - 3. The Babylonians pursued Zedekiah and captured him near Jericho, with his soldiers scattering from him, v. 5. The Babylonians took Zedekiah to Nebuchadnezzar who then passed judgment on him, slew his sons in front of him, put out his eyes and took him bound in chains to Babylon, 2 Kings 25:6-7 ESV.
 - 4. [Jeremiah predicted that Zedekiah would see Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 34:3) where Ezekiel predicted Zedekiah would not see Babylon though he would die there (Ezekiel 12:13). The predictions of both of these prophets of the Lord were thus precisely fulfilled! (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, ftn. to 2 Kings 25:7)]
- II. Zedekiah's capture occurred on the "plains of Jericho," a place with a huge lesson on God's blessing:**
- A. The Hebrew text uses the phrase "plains of Jericho" (*'arbot yereho*) **only** in Joshua 4:13, Joshua 5:10, 2 Kings 25:5, Jeremiah 39:5 and Jeremiah 52:8. (B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 787) The Joshua 4:13 use of this phrase occurs with Joshua and Israel's crossing of the Jordan River, the Joshua 5:10 use occurs with Joshua and Israel's first camp at Gilgal after that crossing and the last three uses occur with Zedekiah's capture.
 - B. The **contrast** between what *Joshua* and *Zedekiah experienced* in the **contexts** of these verses is **great**:
 - 1. God had miraculously and amply supplied Israel in Joshua's day with manna for 40 years and an extra day's supply of it along with Canaan's produce after crossing the Jordan, Exodus 16:35; Joshua 5:11-12. In contrast, Zedekiah and Jerusalem had suffered famine under the Babylonian siege, 2 Kings 25:3.

2. Joshua and Israel had headed west across the Jordan to conquer Canaan, but Zedekiah and his men headed east to try to cross the Jordan in escaping the Babylonians, Jos. 2:1; Num. 25:1; 2 Kings 25:4b NIV, ftn.
 3. God parted the Jordan at its spring flood stage so Joshua and Israel could enter Canaan where He left the lower, summer Jordan to flow to trap Zedekiah for his foes, Jos. 3:14ff; 2 K. 25:4; **B. K. C., O. T.**, p. 586.
 4. Israel's men under Joshua ministered to their posterity by stacking stones by the river, but Zedekiah and his men forsook their posterity by abandoning them when they fled from Jerusalem, Jos. 4:4-8; 2 Kings 25:4.
 5. God honored Joshua before Israel at the Jordan where Zedekiah's men deserted him, Jos. 4:14; 2 K. 25:5b.
 6. God removed the taunts of the Egyptians that Joshua and Israel would not reach Canaan by parting the Jordan so they could enter it where God let the Babylonians dishonor Zedekiah, Jos. 5:9; 2 Kings 25:5-7.
 7. Israel under Joshua was surgically circumcised at Gilgal in devotion to the Lord where Zedekiah who had rebelled against the Lord was cruelly blinded by the Babylonians in judgment, Joshua 5:2-8; 2 Kings 25:7.
 8. Israel under Joshua saw their sons preserved from harm by God's parting of the Jordan River where Zedekiah witnessed his sons being slain by the Babylonian king, Joshua 3:17; 4:4-7; 2 Kings 25:7.
 9. Israel under Joshua hemmed in the Gentiles of Jericho upon crossing the Jordan River where Zedekiah was hemmed in against the Jordan and captured by Gentile Babylonians, Jos. 6:1; 2 Kings 25:5-7.
 10. Joshua and Israel would see God miraculously fell the walls of Jericho so they could conquer it where the Babylonians felled Jerusalem's wall after capturing Zedekiah, Joshua 5:13-6:21; 2 Kings 25:4, 10.
- C. The **reason** for this **contrast** on the "plains of Jericho" was **a contrast in heeding the lesson of its stone pile**:
1. Joshua's stone pile by the Jordan River on the "plains of Jericho" was a witness to **future generations, including Zedekiah's generation**, that God was to be revered so as to be obeyed for blessing, Jos. 4:20-24.
 2. However, Zedekiah **failed to heed that lesson**, so he **missed the blessings of God that Joshua had known**.

Lesson: *For failing to heed the lesson of the stone pile by the Jordan River that had been stacked there by Joshua after Israel's crossing for all future generations, Zedekiah failed to recall that lesson that he in his generation also needed to obey God to enjoy the Lord's great blessings in his era as Israel in Joshua's generation had enjoyed.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation from sin, John 3:16. (2) May we heed the lesson of Joshua's pile of stones on the "plains of Jericho" and recall that God's blessing for us today is by way of heeding His Word.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In the introduction of this sermon, we mentioned several issues of concern many people face today. If we heed the lesson of Joshua's pile of stones on the "plains of Jericho" to heed God's promises for **our** era, here are Scripture passages **we** should heed to obtain God's blessing regarding these issues of concern (as follows):

(1) On the concern of getting the right, adequate job or source of income, James 4:13-15 directs us believers to follow God's leading in our lives to obtain the right job for us, and once we are in the right job, Psalm 62:10-12 shows God promises to reward us with income in proportion to our job performance as **He** evaluates our job performance!

(2) On the concern of paying our taxes, even if they seem oppressive, Romans 13:7-8 directs us to pay what is demanded of us by the government, and Philippians 4:19 has God promising to meet all our financial and material needs to pay for them **IF** we like the Philippian believers busy ourselves with prayer and financial support of God's worldwide discipling ministries, Philippians 1:5-6; 4:10, 15-19. 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 carries a similar promise.

(3) On the concern of food, housing and clothing security, the article, "Sin's contribution to homelessness" on the uniongospelmission.org web site claims that the sins of addiction, criminal activity and family breakdown produce homelessness. Psalm 37:25 is the answer, claiming God does not forsake or leave the children of the righteous to beg. Thus, the sin that is the cause for prolonged homelessness itself needs to be addressed to overcome homelessness.

In addition, Hebrews 13:5-6 directs that we avoid covetousness, learning to be content with what we currently possess as a key to the Lord's being with us and not forsaking us so that we can counter poverty.

Also, Proverbs has many directives on financial security such as working diligently versus being lazy (Prov. 10:4), earning money gradually in righteousness versus gaining a lot dishonestly (Prov. 13:11), avoiding debt (Prov. 22:7) and acquiring wisdom and understanding [education] as being worth more than silver and gold. (Prov. 3:13-14)

(4) On the concern of government overspending, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 calls us to earn our livelihood independently to have a good testimony and not be in any need. Since the government overspends, it is all the more reason to rely on our own income efforts and financial management as independent of the government as we can.

May we trust in Christ for salvation. May we recall the lesson of Joshua's pile of rocks on the "plains of Jericho," that God's blessing for every generation, including ours, is by heeding Scripture, so that we obey it.