

Jeremiah 22

Read Jeremiah 22:1-5: King Zedekiah was given a chance to make a reversal at the edge of personal and national destruction. We think of faith and salvation being associated with prayer, bible reading, worship and discipleship. God is boiling it down to a lower hurdle for the King and country.

Firstly, God is telling the King to **execute justice and righteousness**. Our best example of an earthly king was King David. David did not have a dad who was a king to teach him the ropes of good public service. It came under the inspiration of God. When David was ready to pass the torch to his son Solomon, he boiled the priorities down to a couple simple sentences.

Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: “I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; that the LORD may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’ (1 Kings 2:1-4)

Essentially, David was saying that a king will be successful if they make the hard decisions, and not shrink back or compromise. He added that you have to do what the Bible instructs you to do. If you do, God's blessings will flow over the top of all that you do. We are very limited in our abilities and strength, with one exception. God has given us full freedom to do good to others.

Another good example is when Moses handed over the mantle of leadership to Joshua for some intense job necessities. National defense is more about doing what God has said, than to make friends and satisfy your critics. The need for courage is mentioned over and over for kings. They cannot get lost in the good life. They must be all about the needs of those in harm's way.

“Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall

meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.
For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:2-8)

The New Testament leadership example by Jesus is given in Matthew 20. Jesus clarified that the leaders need to be the servants to their people. That is a selfless service of integrity and humility, with a commitment to others.

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28)

Secondly, Jeremiah says that a leader of the people needs to rescue the oppressed. How do they do that? Isaiah points out some ways. It is definitely not about fox hunts, banquets, ceremony or pomp. It is also not about being above the struggles of the common man. That is why Washington DC is a bad place for politicians to live. The leader has to be paying attention to what his people are going through. He has to be very connected. He has to get real solutions for real problems.

Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the LORD? “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. (Isaiah 58:5-8)

It can be hard to identify who the victims of oppression are. Our street people are a combination of drug addicts, mentally ill, freeloaders and victims of circumstances. Paul said that if a man will not work; he can go hungry.

For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)

It seems that proper management of the helpless needs to improve and remove all able-bodied people off of the welfare rolls. As long as we feed and fund the opportunists, we will keep attracting them.

Thirdly, a leader needs to make sure that no harm comes to the widows, orphans and innocent.

Honor and help those widows who are truly widowed [alone, and without support]. But if a widow has children or grandchildren [who are adults], see to it that these first learn to show great respect to their own family [as their religious duty and natural obligation], and to compensate their parents or grandparents [for their upbringing]; for this is acceptable and pleasing in the sight of God. Now a woman who is really a widow and has been left [entirely] alone [without adequate income] trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. Whereas she who lives for pleasure and self-indulgence is spiritually dead even while she still lives. Keep instructing [the people to do] these things as well, so that they may be blameless and beyond reproach. If anyone fails to provide for his own, and especially for those of his own family, he has denied the faith [by disregarding its precepts] and is worse than an unbeliever [who fulfills his obligation in these matters]. Honor and help those widows who are truly widowed [alone, and without support]. But if a widow has children or grandchildren [who are adults], see to it that these first learn to show great respect to their own family [as their religious duty and natural obligation], and to compensate their parents or grandparents [for their upbringing]; for this is acceptable and pleasing in the sight of God. Now a woman who is really a widow and has been left [entirely] alone [without adequate income] trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. Whereas she who lives for pleasure and self-indulgence is spiritually dead even while she still lives. Keep instructing [the people to do] these things as well, so that they may be blameless and beyond reproach. If anyone fails to provide for his own, and especially for those of his own family, he has denied the faith [by disregarding its precepts] and is worse than an unbeliever [who fulfills his obligation in these matters]. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. (1 Timothy 5)

Read Jeremiah 22:6-10: God tells the children of Israel that they are like *Gilead* to him. Gilead means *rocky*. He clarifies that they are the summit (high point) in his inventory of people. He adds the word *Lebanon*; which means the whiteness of snow-covered mountains, and the associated beautiful scenery. In other words, the children of Israel were to like a breathtaking view of the Rocky Mountains. He adds that now they will become like an abandoned desert to him. It is breaking God's heart to take this picturesque scene of snow-covered peaks and turn it into an uninhabited wasteland. We can relate to a comparison of Glacier National Park to the Mojave Desert. There is no comparison.

What happened to the geography in Israel is obvious; but its really not the main issue. This is a window into God's heart. He was so proud of his people; and it was such a beautiful thing to behold seeing them follow Joshua. The utter foulness and pollution and strangeness at the time of Kings Manasseh, Ahaz and Jehoiakim were unsustainable and an eyesore. His people became sickening to him.

We can be focused on how we feel today. We may not be too focused on making God's Day and making him happy. We can give pleasure to the King of the Universe.

Read Jeremiah 22:11-23: King Shallum was also known as Jehoahaz. He had a good father; but he was terrible. Good King Josiah took on Egypt without God's direction; and got killed in the process. His fourth son Jehoahaz took his place. Jehoahaz disregarded the incredible reforms that his dad had put into place. It would be like comparing a dad who was like a holy version of Trump to Biden his son. He only reigned three months before he was captured and brought to Egypt. This weak transition of power and leadership was so upsetting to God that he says right here that this man will not rule anymore. He prophesies here that he will become a captive. God, himself removed him from office before he even fully got settled in. All of his dad's good work went down the drain.

It is upsetting to God when a King or leader builds a mansion while ripping off the servants and day laborers. It is a false assumption that your fortress or army or your gold can protect you, if you are not doing your job (in God's eyes). A leader is protected in their position by acts of righteousness. We have more job stability knowing God and communicating with God before we go out the door...than any training or strategy sessions. I can confirm that it is far better to be lucky than good. The best minds end up shipwrecked every day. God delivers me in humbling ways every day.

Jehoiakim will receive the *burial of a donkey*. That is just a burned maggot-covered carcass rotting above ground. The Jews associated burial with the afterlife. The location and situation of the grave was very important to them.

'My father made me swear, saying, "Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me." (Genesis 50:5)

Read Jeremiah 22:24-30: Now God talks about Jehoiakim's successor, Coniah. He is also called Jeconiah. Similarly, Jeconiah's reign only lasted as long as his brothers (3 months). God predicts that Jeconiah will be taken by King Nebuchadnezzar. Jeconiah was taken away, as prophesied. His uncle Zedekiah took his place as king. God throws him out like a piece of trash.