

10184U

GLENLOCK BIBLE CAMP - 2002

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

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Study #4: Jehoiakim - the burial of an ass

Reading: Jeremiah 22 and 26

Well, b&s and young people, it's very nice to be back here again, to talk about the life and times of Jeremiah and particularly to talk about Jeremiah's associates. Tonight, we're going to talk about, perhaps the only study we're going to do in this series, in which we're going to talk about a character in a negative light, but that's not entirely unwarranted. So I'd like you to note this comment from brother Islip Collyer about the bible, he said this, 'The bible teaches us the truth regarding our nature; it shows us how to wash ourselves, how to obtain clean garments, and how to keep them from being defiled. We can spare no part of it, the grand characters and the desperate sinners, the wonderful conversion and the deplorable faults, the lofty exhortation and the outspoken condemnations. All are needed in the work of washing and clothing. The harmful book is the one which makes nakedness look desirable, gives to filthy rags the appearance of cloth of gold. The bible holds up a true mirror to human nature and the natural man rebels and sees how ugly it is!

Tonight, b&s, we're going to look at a very honest spotlight upon one of the sons of Josiah. You see, the bible displays all the good and bad characteristics of human nature through various characters. We saw on Sunday morning the goodness of Josiah, all his acts and all his goodness, his **checed**, was noted by God as being very, very honourable, and yet when Josiah died, he had 3 sons, 2 sons and a grandson, who would have followed him on the throne, all of whom were wicked and evil. It's quite amazing when you look at the genealogy of the last four kings of Israel (we might just run over them so we're familiar with the times that we're talking about). It's quite amazing when you look at these kings that follow:

- there was 31 years of the reign of Josiah;
- there was 3 months of Jehoahaz. Now Jehoahaz was the second son and we'll talk about that in a moment; but the people didn't want Jehoiakim and they put Jehoahaz on the throne.
- there was 11 years for the reign of Jehoiakim after Jehoahaz
- there was 3 months of Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim.
- there was 11 years then for Zedekiah the last to reign.

It was in the 4th year of Jehoiakim that Daniel and the good figs went into Babylon.

There was another captivity in Jehoiachin's reign, and when Jehoiachin was deposed by Babylon he likewise went into captivity and more of the people went off at that stage. So there were 2 major captivities, 4th year of Jehoiakim, 11th year of Jehoiakim (which was the 3 months of Jehoiachin) and then, of course, the final destruction in the days of Zedekiah. So 3 major overthrowings that took place, so the reign of Jehoiakim is absolutely critical to the story of Jeremiah, because there was the 18 good years that he had with Josiah, and then the last 22 ½ years which were very, very difficult years indeed.

So Jehoiakim came to the throne at the age of 25; he reign only 11 years before God brought a terrible death upon him, and we're going to see tonight why it was that Jehoiakim suffered such a terrible death. What is critical for Jeremiah is that the reign of Jehoiakim was the change of running against the footmen and contending against horses. The death of Josiah was the end of the flat and level ground, they were now running in the wilds of Jordan, amidst all the tangled bush wood and all the garbage and the lions and the serpents that were in that place; the whole climate now was totally changed when Jehoiakim came to the throne. We need to think about that because you could imagine as we saw how close Jeremiah and Josiah were, what the children of Josiah would have meant to Jeremiah. He had no family of his own, Jeremiah couldn't have a wife, he could have no sons and daughters by the decree of God. So I can imagine the sons of Josiah would have been tremendously important to him. What a sadness it was, to find that those very sons of Josiah his friend, became his persecutors. They beat him, they tortured him, they locked him up, they sought his life, they betrayed him, they refused to hearken to his words, they burnt his writings. What a tragedy that the sons of Josiah should turn out like that!

Just for recollection's sake, let's just remember what God said about Josiah. King Josiah, his heart was tender, he humbled himself before his God, he wept; now all those things about Josiah were commendable and he was spared as we saw in our earlier studies, he was spared seeing the terrible things that happened to his sons and God took him away before those things came to pass. The divine epitaph on Josiah was, 'his acts, his uncompromising stand, getting rid of idolatries through the Land and his goodness, his caring of the poor and needy, which gets a mention in chapter 22, they were to know God; He said, 'was this not to know Me'? Josiah was the man who did judgment and justice, he judged the cause of the poor and needy! So he was the perfect combination, was Josiah, of doing that which was right, of being strong and uncompromising for the truth, but at the same time, not losing the human touch in caring for those who are less fortunate and God says, 'he knew Me'. So we have a tremendous testimony to Josiah, don't we? what a tragedy his sons were so different! Again, we just touched on this the other night, that the prophet Zephaniah, who was prophesying in the days of Josiah, 'The word of Yahweh which came to Zephaniah in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah', so very specifically the prophecy of Zephaniah was directed against the royal family in the days of Josiah; but it wasn't against Josiah, it was against Josiah's sons; 'I will punish the princes and the king's children and such that are clothed in strange apparel'; it was a very specific prophecy against the sons of

the king, while Josiah was still alive.

You see, they had already begun to manifest themselves. You come to Jeremiah 22 and verse 21, now this is God addressing Jehoiakim (we'll look at this whole chapter in context shortly) but I want you to notice when He's addressing Jehoiakim He says this, 'I spake unto thee in thy prosperity'. You see, here was a time of prosperity when in the reign of Josiah there were no enemies evident at that time, they had prosperity in the Land, God had blessed them with good times, good harvests, because of the reign of Josiah. But God says to Jehoiakim, 'I spoke to you in the time of prosperity and I spoke to you through Zephaniah the prophet, I warned you; but this has been your manner from your youth, Jehoiakim, that you do not obey My voice'. Already as a youth, he was a villain; you see, Jehoiakim had manifested himself very early in the peace; and I guess whenever we read of these sorts of situations, of faithful fathers and unspiritual sons, we always wonder about that, don't we? as to how could it be? It's always very sad when you've got godly parents and children who will not walk in the same steps; there are lots of biblical examples such as Eli and Hezekiah, and David. It's always a question that parents agonize over as to why that should be the case? I guess there's always a combination of reasons, sometimes it's a natural perversity, everyone that has had more than one child, knows just how different they can be from the same parents; how some have a natural inclination to do that which is right and good, and others have to have a lot more coercion to do that which is right and good. You'll see that in the same children from the same parents, so natural tendency is one of the reasons; but also there's a degree of parental influence, you know, one of the things that we notice about the kings that were good, is that God always mentions their mother! So we see that mothers are a tremendous influence for good! Another thing that we can detect from the bible is that quite often it was the brethren who were very, very busy, particularly those who had huge national responsibilities, that sometimes their sons were so different to their fathers; when you think of David and Eli and Hezekiah and Josiah, all of them, had sons that were totally different and yet they were very busy with reforming the nation. So I'll leave you to take lessons from all of those things, we'll come back to that at the end of the class, but it's always a very sad thing when children don't always follow in their parent's footsteps.

In the case of Josiah (and I know I'm going back over some of the things that we did Saturday, but just for those who weren't here) one of the reasons that Josiah's sons were difficult to manage was that Josiah was married off at 13. Because his father, Amon, only reigned for 2 years, Josiah came to the throne at 8, the people around the throne were very keen to secure the succession, they did not want the throne of David to die out, because if you go back through the record, there had not been many sons in the line of David. So they married him off at 13 to two women, and at 14 he had a son, Jehoiakim, so this is one of the reasons that Josiah had problems with his sons, particularly, Jehoiakim and Jehoahaz because they were not much younger than Josiah was himself and it would have been very difficult for him to rein these sons in; and sons in a time of prosperity, being princes, and Josiah very, very busy going around to all the corners of the nation, getting rid of idolatry, they were probably left to themselves

somewhat. We really have to think about the qualities of their mothers, but obviously they weren't a great deal of influence. So we have these two older sons, Jehoiakim and Jehoahaz who were born when Josiah was quite young. But of the two of them, Jehoiakim undoubtedly was the worst!

The other problem Jehoiakim had was that he married very badly. I want you to come to 2 Kings 24 (and you might just want to keep a piece of paper in this chapter because Jeremiah 22 and 2 Kings 24 are very much linked). Now we're told in 2 Kings 24 who Jehoiakim married, it's actually in the record of Jehoiachin his son, verse 8, 'Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem'. Now I just want to say a couple of things about Nehushta, it's very important to notice Jehoiakim's wife was called 'Nehushta' (5179), she was the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem, remember that name, you're going to see that name come up in the book of Jeremiah a number of times because he was the king's father-in-law. He was one of the princes, one of the elders of the city that had authority, so Jehoiakim was married off to one of the daughters of the princes of the city, a man called Elnathan of Jerusalem. Now Nehushta, who can tell me what Nehushta means? 'serpent like', you're pretty close; 'brazen' yes! You remember the serpent made in the wilderness, the brazen serpent that Moses made, they kept that in Israel, and in the days of Hezekiah it became an object of idolatry, and it was called 'Nehushtan' because it means 'a piece of brass'. So when Hezekiah downgraded it, he called it just a piece of brass, nehushtan; now here's a woman whose name means 'a piece of brass' and we might say, 'she's a brassy piece', but whatever way you take it, you're going to see a lot about Nehushta when you get back to Jeremiah 22. She was an arrogant, ostentatious, aggressive woman and she was the daughter of Elnathan; she was used to having nice things. She was the daughter of a very wealthy man in Jerusalem, so that's whom Jehoiakim married, and they had a son called Jehoiachin, and we're going to see a bit about him later on as well. So that's just the background, let's go back to Jeremiah 22 and pick up the story of the family of Josiah and particularly Jehoiakim.

Now I want to do a little history lesson on the major events in the life of Jehoiakim. Remember, there was 11 years to his reign, and these are the things that happened, and I want to just put these in context and then we'll come back and look closely at a couple of these:

1. When the king of Egypt killed Josiah, what actually happened was, that the people decided that they did not want Jehoiakim to be their king. He was the oldest son, and the people of the land said, 'no, we don't want Jehoiakim, he's a villain, he's a rotter, he's a nasty piece of goods, and we don't like his wife either, we will have Jehoahaz the second son to be our king. So the people put Jehoahaz on the throne.
2. Three months later, Pharaoh came along and said, 'I don't want Jehoahaz, I want Jehoiakim because I reckon that Jehoiakim will get more taxes out of you'. So Jehoahaz, the second son of Josiah, was taken off the throne by the king of Egypt,

dragged off to Egypt where he was to live in captivity until he died, and the king of Egypt put Jehoiakim on the throne against the wishes of the people. You can read all this in 2 Kings; so he came to the throne, put there by the king of Egypt at the age of 25, **against the wishes of the people.**

3. Now you think of the blows to the national psychology: they've lost Josiah their great king; the king that they chose has been deposed and carted off into captivity; they end up with a villain, 'this has been thy manner from thy youth, says God. A hardhearted person will not listen to the Word of God. So he's put on the throne in his first year! The very first thing that Jehoiakim does is to murder a friend of Jeremiah, Urijah the prophet.

Let's just come to Jeremiah 26, and let's just look at that, we'll come back to that in a moment. The murder of Urijah, now in verse 1 it says, 'In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim came the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah, saying in verse 2, 'Stand in the court of Yahweh's house, and speak all these words to those who come to worship: **diminish not a word.**' He was to call them all kinds of names, mostly evil things, as a result of that Jeremiah was put on trial but I want you to notice that it was in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, that Jeremiah was commanded to go and stand in the temple and call them all kinds of names. He was put on trial! Now as part of the trial there was a debate between the people and princes as to what to do with Jeremiah; Jeremiah was on trial for his life. Some of them said in verse 11, 'Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the people saying, This man is worthy to die', so they were going to put Jeremiah to death because of his harsh words against the city.

Then in verse 17, and this is a court scene here going on, Jeremiah's on trial, 'Then rose up certain of the elders' (now the debate happens); now the first example, some of the elders said, and this would be those supporting Jeremiah such as Ahikam that's mentioned in verse 24, he was with Jeremiah in this debate. So the elders are debating the matter, now some of them stand up and say, 'look, we shouldn't destroy God's prophets, don't you remember in the days of Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah and he said that Zion would be ploughed like a field because of you, Hezekiah; did Hezekiah touch him? did Hezekiah put him to death? NO, he besought Yahweh and Yahweh repented. So we can't kill the prophets of God, you can't do that!' Now the argument that they made was that you can't kill the prophets of God, you can't resist the Word of God. So those that are with Jeremiah are saying you can't do it, Hezekiah didn't do that!

Well, the opposite argument comes in verse 20, so here's the opposite argument. The others say, 'Ah yes, but there was a man who prophesied in the name of Yahweh, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to the words of Jeremiah'. So they're saying, 'well, we hear what you're saying, that we shouldn't put the prophets to death and you can't get away with it, but it's already happened; Urijah has already been put to death! In verse 21, they say, 'Jehoiakim and all his mighty men, when they heard his words, the king sought to put him to death and when Urijah heard it, he was afraid and went to Egypt. And

Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt (look who he sent) his father-in-law, Elnathan the son of Achbor', that's his father-in-law, one of the princes, that's who he sent after Urijah. So Jeremiah is speaking in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, but there already had been one prophet put to death by Jehoiakim, before this trial starts. You see, they were saying, 'well, we've got history on our side too, because Jehoiakim has already got away with it. He's already killed one of the prophets of Yahweh; he killed a man who was repeating the words of Jeremiah, and he did it by sending Elnathan down to Egypt; and they fetched him out of Egypt and they brought him to the king and he slew him with the sword and cast his body into the graves of the common people. The most shameful thing that they can do to a Jew, is to bury him with the criminals; you know, Jesus talked about being cast into Gehenna, didn't He? this is Urijah, they shamed him and put him in the common grave. That's the debate that's raging around Jeremiah, in the end, Ahikam the son of Shaphan prevails, and Jeremiah was not put to death! But you see, there already was on history's record, the death of Urijah. So the very first thing that Jehoiakim must have done when he came to the throne, was to kill Urijah. Repeating the words of Jeremiah, so he murdered Urijah the prophet first and then Jeremiah was put on trial and rescued by Ahikam.

4. In the 3rd year, the drought and the famine came upon the Land, and you can read about that, just for example, come to Jeremiah 14, 'The word of Yahweh that came to Jeremiah concerning **the dearth**' or the drought; so all the good years of blessing that they had in the good days of Josiah came to an end in the days of Jehoiakim, and God sent a terrible drought upon the Land to try and turn the people's hearts. That was in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim.

5. In the 4th year of Jehoiakim, Baruch was told to write all the words of Jeremiah in a scroll (we'll look at that on Thursday night). So he recorded all the words of Jeremiah and then Baruch had his major depression and couldn't read them for 9 months. Chapter 25 was added to the scroll, Baruch goes into depression in the 4th year of Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar won the battle at Carchemish defeating Egypt. The Egyptians rush back home to their own territory, and Judah was now exposed to the Babylonians. The 4th year of Jehoiakim is one of the most significant years in bible history; that was the year that Daniel and others went into captivity, the first captivity was in the 4th year of Jehoiakim. Babylon now was a player on the world stage-(the first invasion) and they put Jehoiakim under tribute. Daniel and the good figs were taken away.

6. Then in the 5th year, Baruch reads the king's scroll and the king burns it.

7. The 7th year, the parable of the Rechabites. Then we come to chapter 22, where Jehoiakim has been reigning for 7 years, is condemned by Jeremiah. He then revolted against Babylon and in the 11th year he was killed.

So you can see that, in that sort of overall history of Jehoiakim, how much had an impact upon Jeremiah? Let's go to Jeremiah 22 and I really would hope that you've got

a coloured pencil, even better because I've got some colouring that I want you to do, because you know, one of the best things you can do, when you're reading your bible is to colour in key words, because it just makes the theme of the chapter just jump off the page. Now if I said to you, and we all had it read to us, what's the theme of chapter 22? what is God's anger directed against in this chapter? I know it's against Jehoiakim but what particular thing? Well, it's in verse 1, 'Go to the **house**', now we're talking about the king's palace, go to the house (now you want to colour in house in verse 1; in verse 2, 'the throne of David'; in verse 2, 'these gates'; in verse 4, 'the gates of this house', the throne of David; verse 5, 'this house'; verse 6, 'the king's house', alright? In verse 7, just colour in, 'thy choice cedars'; then we jump right down to verse 13, 'his house, his chambers; verse 14, 'a wide house', 'large chambers', 'windows', 'ceilings', 'paint'. Do you get the message? Verse 15, 'cedar'; and if you really want to go down, you can colour in verse 20, 'Lebanon'; verse 23, 'Lebanon', 'cedars', 'nest'; that's probably enough). Is there any doubt what the theme of the chapter is? it's the **palace** that's got God angry, and I'll tell you why it make God angry as we go through.

Now, b&s, I think this is a great chance tonight to open up a chapter of the bible that might not be so familiar to you. It certainly wasn't to me until about 3 years ago, so I hope for some of you, we might just open this up a little better and the chapter will make a whole lot more sense. So the theme is the **house**! You see, what Jehoiakim did, was that he **robbed the people**, to build a glorious palace of cedar. It became to him and his wife, a source of enormous **pride**. You see, they were trying to compete with Solomon with his house of Lebanon, and with David's magnificent palace; so they dishonestly robbed the tradesmen to build this house, and Jeremiah would had been hiding for nearly 7 years, came out of hiding and he was told by God in verse 1, to go to the house of the king of Judah.

To go to the palace; you know, when you go back to chapter 26 which is actually before chapter 22, in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, you find at the end of the chapter that God had to hide Jeremiah away, and he seemed to be often on the run, but now he's told to go and stand in the gate of the palace and make this prophecy against the palace and the king. So verses 1 to 9, of Jeremiah 22, is about **the sure judgment of God on the palace and the city, if they will not hear**. There was the challenge in verse 5, 'if you will not hear these words'; now that was Jehoiakim's problem, wasn't it? God had said that in verse 21, 'from thy youth you don't obey My voice', but here was another chance for Jehoiakim to hear the voice of God. If you don't hear these words, 'I swear by Myself', and there's not many times in the bible that God swears; He swears with an oath, He says, 'I swear by Myself, this house will become a desolation', and He's got it in for that palace.

Well, the judgments are clear! The **house will be burnt**; verse 7, **they will cut down thy choice cedars and cast them into the fire**, and many nations shall come by and say, 'what happened to this place, why has God done this to this great city? because they have **forsaken the covenant of Yahweh their God, and worshipped other gods and served them**'. So there was the condemnation in verses 1 to 9 of the house of the

king of Judah. Now we're going to pick up the record from verse 10 (if you've got a pen there, I'd like you to actually write in the names of the people in this chapter that are being referred to here.

What we have here is the family portrait of the family of Josiah. They're not obvious but when you see them, then the whole chapter makes a lot more sense. So we're going to start with verse 10, now the comment in verse 10 is, and God's talking to Jeremiah, 'Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him', so Jeremiah, you stop weeping for Josiah, he's been dead for 7 years. So where it says, 'weep not for the dead', in the Hebrew it is actually in the singular, '**weep not for the dead one**', so he's not saying, don't cry for all those that have died, but weep not for the dead one! Stop crying for Josiah, he's been dead for 7 years, mourning has to stop. If you want to weep, Jeremiah, 'you weep sore for him that goeth away'. Now there's a lot who had gone away, Daniel and others had gone to Babylon this is in the 7th year of Jehoiakim, by the way, so there's a lot who have gone away but there's one in particular that had gone away that the people were also lamenting. You see, they were saying, 'look, we wanted Jehoahaz, we didn't want Jehoiakim, we wanted Jehoahaz and he's stuck down in Egypt. You weep for Jehoahaz because he'll never come back. 'He shall return no more, nor see his native country', so him that goeth away, is Jehoahaz. Now here's where it gets tricky, he is also called Shallum; (for those of you who were not here the other night, all of the sons of Josiah have multiple names, and two of them were called Shallum); there was Jehoahaz which is also called Jehohanan, who's also called Shallum. Then there's another one called Shallum who we believe was probably called Daniel, and we went through that the other night. But in verse 11, 'For thus saith Yahweh touching Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah', now the other Shallum, the 4th son was never king. This one had been a king, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, we know it was Jehoahaz, he took over from Josiah. So this Shallum here is another name for Jehoahaz; so write along Shallum in verse 11, Jehoahaz, 'which went forth out of this place; He shall not return thither any more: But he shall die in Egypt in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more'. So that definitely is talking about Jehoahaz! he's gone for ever, he will never come back!

Then we come to verse 13 and the spotlight now turns on Jehoiakim; 'woe onto him', and that 'him' is Jehoiakim. 'Him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness' and you get straight to the point, Jehoiakim, the hallmark of your reign is this glorious palace that you've built by fraud and by robbery'. Look how he built it! He built his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong (by being a crook); how did he do that? he used his neighbour's service without wages and in modern terms, what Jehoiakim had done was, he had said to all the electricians, and all the carpenters, and the plumbers, 'come and work on my palace I'll pay you this much, you know, double wages, triple time for weekends, no problem-plenty of money in the bank! and when they were all finished he said, 'thank you very much, you aren't going to get paid; I'm the king and what are you going to do about it?' All the tradesmen went broke and all their families starved; and Jehoiakim wouldn't pay any of the tradesmen! God was watching that! Do you know what God had said back in verse 3? 'Deliver the spoil from the hand of the oppressor, do no wrong, do no violence', and here was a man who was a crook!

and he'd robbed his own brethren to build himself a glorious palace of which he was so proud!! So God said to him, 'Woe to him that builds his house by unrighteousness' and God tells us more about the thinking of Jehoiakim, and now God unveils his heart, this is what Jehoiakim was saying in his heart, 'I will build me a **wide house** (an expansive house) and **large chambers** (you know, it wasn't enough just to have 44 bedrooms and 16 bathrooms, he wanted 144 bedrooms; I'm going to make bigger and better plans) 'and he cut him out **windows** (so he had all those lovely decorated windows) and it's ceiled **with cedar** (so there it was, the house of cedar, that's what it was made of; it's primary element was cedar, beautiful cedar of Lebanon) and all the rest of it was **painted with vermilion**'. It was a time of dearth, it was a time of famine, there was heavy tribute being paid into Egypt, there was a land tax put in place which hit rich and poor alike; and yet all the time he's building an enormous palace of cedar with elaborate designs.

Now I want you to notice the word 'closest' there in verse 15; you know, God challenges Jehoiakim, 'do you think you're going to reign because you clothe yourself in cedar?' Now the word 'closest' (8474) is an awful translation, it should be 'contend or compete' (now you want to make a note of chapter 12 verse 5, it's exactly the same word that says, if you're going to **contend** with horses; you've got to run or **compete** against horses, chapter 12 verse 5, exactly the same word. So God said, 'Jehoiakim, your attitude is, you're competing in cedar; the NASB (the North American Standard Bible) has 'competing in cedar', exactly those words. so that's what it was, it was a competition; I'm going to build a better house than Solomon or David, I'm going to outdo the house of Lebanon that existed in the days of Solomon. God says, 'Jehoiakim, don't you remember your father's simple lifestyle? did not thy father eat and drink? He was content with just to have the necessities of life? and he went out and did judgment and justice.' He didn't go hungry! it was well with him, God blessed him; there was no dearth or a famines in the days of Josiah. He judged the cause of the poor and needy and you're robbing the poor and needy, and God blessed Josiah. He knew me! Jehoiakim, can't you take the good example of your father? So you see, God's condemning him through reference to Josiah. So where it says, 'did not thy father' (write in the margin there, Josiah) 'So, Jehoiakim, what about your father, Josiah? why don't you follow his example?

Then God said in verse 17 a scathing rebuke! 'You Jehoiakim, but thine eyes' (you might want to write Jehoiakim again, so that when you read it the next time, you'll know exactly who we're talking about) and your heart is only concerned for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression and for violence for to do it'. That's all you want to do! your father did justice and judgment and all you do is violence and oppression! quite a contrast, Jehoiakim! you're a rotter to the core!

Then comes the condemnation of Jehoiakim! 'Therefore thus saith Yahweh concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah'. Now we just need to understand a little bit about the Jewish mind towards death. The Jews are extremely respectful of the dead; we know that they were always accustomed to bringing in professional mourners; you

know, the reverence for the dead was intense in Jewish society. The most terrible thing that you could do to a Jew was to give them a dishonourable burial; you know, Jesus talked about, you 'garnished the tombs of the fathers'. The Jews were very much into the importance of burial; how many times do you read about a king who had died and they buried him in the sepulchres of his fathers? You see, the place where a king was buried was critical, and there were only the leprous kings that they couldn't bury in the sepulchre of their fathers, and the best way to disgrace a Jew was to bury them in an unclean place. That's why Jesus could say to His generation, the most terrible thing that could happen to you, is you could be buried in Gehenna! Well, we would probably think, 'well, who cares where our body ends up; who cares if it's cremated, it doesn't really matter!' but to the Jews the sanctity of the burial place was incredibly important. For kings, they were always buried in the sepulchres of the kings with great ceremony and great pomp; you see how the Egyptians bury their kings and many other nations had tremendous graves for their kings. The worst insult was what happened to Urijah, the graves of the common people! the pauper's grave as we would call it.

So you see, with that background we could understand the condemnation that would come on Jehoiakim! Look at verse 18, 'They shall not lament for him' (that's a contrast to his father, isn't it?) you know, we're told in 2 Chronicles 35, 'that **all the Land mourned** for Josiah', **even the ungodly** knew they had lost a good man. But nobody was going to cry over Jehoiakim! Nobody-and he's a king! and nobody would cry over Jehoiakim, they would all be glad to see the last of him because he was such a villain; there won't be any mourners going around saying, 'ah my brother'. That's what the mourners were paid to do, they'd walk behind the coffin of somebody they didn't know, but they were paid mourners, you know, so there would be this great ceremony - 'ah, it's terrible, my sister's died' and you say, 'who is it in the coffin? I don't have any idea, I'm just paid to do this!' and that's the way it was with Jewish society, but there would be no lamentation for Jehoiakim! They won't even lament his glory, he was a king, a king on the throne of David and they won't say, 'ah, isn't it terrible we've lost the king!' Nobody would cry for Jehoiakim.

Then God says this is how he's going to die! I might just say here, b&s, that even in our society, only good things are said at funerals. When you get to a funeral, none of the lesser parts of a person's life are usually brought up, are they? Normally people think of the best things they can say at funerals, but, nobody's going to be crying for Jehoiakim, there would be nothing good to be said. What he would get is verse 19, a shocking fate for a king! 'He shall be buried with a burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem'. Now, just come across to chapter 36 and verse 30, you see, this was the second condemnation of Jehoiakim: he had already been told in the 5th year of his reign, what God had in store for him, chapter 36 verse 30, this was the occasion in which he burnt the Word, it says this, 'Therefore, thus saith Yahweh of Jehoiakim king of Judah, he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David (so the dynasty is going to be lost from the house of Jehoiakim) and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of

Jerusalem, and upon the men, all the evil that I have pronounced : because they hearkened not!' (there it is again, you resisted My Word from thy youth, says God, and here he is burning the bible)

So again, we have another prophecy against Jehoiakim. Now if we had time we could go and add the one that's in Ezekiel, I'll leave it for you to look up for yourself, there's a prophecy in Ezekiel about the fate of Jehoiakim as well. So we have 3 prophecies about his terrible death, we have 2 records in the Kings and Chronicles of what happened to him, and we have the record of Josephus that fills out the details. Now just let me give you a picture of what happened to Jehoiakim, just to show you how accurate God was in His prophecy. When the Babylonians came down in the 11th year to besiege the city, they captured Jehoiakim. They firstly, put him in fetters of iron, so he was made to walk around in great heavy chains. Then they put him in a steel cage for public ridicule, it was actually a cage with hooks; he was impaled upon hooks inside this cage, I believe, with his arms outstretched, and it says in 2 Chronicles 36 verse 8, 'because of that which was upon him', and some commentators have suggested that maybe he had actually tattooed himself like the surrounding nations. When the Babylonians saw this, they put him on public display because of that which was upon him, he was put up in a cage with hooks on top of the wall, naked in this cage! It was wintertime, says Josephus! it was December when it happened to him and he died of the cold in the cage! The Babylonians threw his body over the wall and it laid outside the wall unburied, and that was the king on the throne of David. All of that accords with the three prophecies. That's exactly what God did to Jehoiakim because he would not listen to the Word of God.

He got the burial of an ass! Why did God say, 'I will give you the burial of an ass?' Well, you come to Psalm 32, and you see why it was, b&s, the bible talks about asses. You know, Esau was a wild ass man, uncontrollable, stubborn, unspiritual; Psalm 32 which is David's reflection upon his own hardheartedness while he hid his sin with Bath-sheba, and David says in verse 8, 'I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Don't be like the horse, or the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee'. In other words, you can't get a horse or an ass to do anything unless you've got a bit in their mouth, they only respond to force, they will not be lead without force and a bridle. They have to be dragged everywhere, and particularly asses. You see, Jehoiakim got the burial of an ass because he was an ass, he would not listen even from his youth. He died unredeemed a wild ass man like Esau, stubborn and determined to do evil. A terrible fate, b&s, the burial of an ass they do everything they can to suppress the spiritual mind of God. That was the end of Jehoiakim.

But God isn't finished! Back in Jeremiah 22, He moves on to the rest of the family. 'Go up to Lebanon, verse 20, and cry; lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed'. You see, when a king's on a throne, there are plenty of people who walk around saying, 'yes king Jehoiakim, we love you king Jehoiakim', but the minute the king's gone, all the lovers are destroyed. God says to

Jehoiakim, verse 21, 'I spake unto thee (that's Jehoiakim) in thy prosperity; but you said, I will not hear'. You know, God had sent the bible, the first time ever the words of Jeremiah had been written out, it was sent to Jehoiakim in the 5th year and he burnt it; God said, I spake unto you in thy prosperity but you said I will not hear; this has been thy manner from thy youth, Jehoiakim, that you will not obey My voice. The wind will eat up thy pastors, thy lovers go into captivity, you'll be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness', and so he was! God has no time for those who despise the example of their parents and those who reject His Word.

Then He turns on the queen! I just want you to come back to a terrific connection in Jeremiah 13, you know this is an earlier prophecy probably in about the 4th or 5th year, Jeremiah was told in verse 15, 'Hear, (this is Jeremiah speaking the words of God) 'be not proud for Yahweh has spoken'. Verse 17, 'If you will not **hear** (that was Jehoiakim's problem, wasn't it?) 'my soul shall weep in secret places for your **pride** (they won't hear and they're proud) 'my eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because Yahweh's flock is carried away captive' (in the 4th year that's exactly what happened, they went away). 'Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves' (you see, Jeremiah had given this appeal before, Jehoiakim and Nehushta, humble yourselves, that's the king and the queen when this prophecy was written) 'sit down, for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory' (your palace won't save you in that day!). So that appeal had been made before and they didn't hear in the 4th year; well God now comes back, He's sorted out Jehoiakim, then back in chapter 22 He now turns on Nehushta.

Jeremiah 22 verse 23, you know, sometimes the translators lack courage; when they couldn't understand the Hebrew or the Greek, they would often just put it in the margin, and say we know what the Greek is saying but we can't see what it means. If only they had been courageous! you see, for verse 23 the margin is exactly correct in the Hebrew, 'O **inhabitress** of Lebanon', it's in the feminine gender. Now Lebanon, of course, is cedar, 'O inhabitress of the cedars of Lebanon, that makes thy nest in the cedars'; now women are nest makers, aren't they? that's a common analogy that we use! that they're nest makers. They tidy the house up and they build a home around the family; and it's lovely that they do so, but that's the natural instinct, to make a nest. This woman had made a nest of cedars, so it had been her idea, she had pushed Jehoiakim down that path, and God now turns on Nehushta, so the inhabitress of Lebanon is Nehushta; 'she made her nests in the cedars', and then comes the irony, God says, 'Nehushta, how gracious are you going to be when pangs come upon thee as a woman in travail?' You see, God had been watching this woman in her house, you can imagine the airs and the graciousness as she took all the wives of the princes on a tour of her palace; 'good morning, ladies, come on and let me show you the house. See the painting that we've done, the ceiling's vermilion....', and you can just picture her walking around the house, absolutely proud of her house and all the absolutely beautiful cedar, the polish! you know, and we bought these tapestries from Egypt and these have come from Assyria', and she's showing off her house! God says, 'how gracious are you going to be? I'm telling you, Nehushta, I'm going to kill your husband in the most shameful

way; your son will be dragged off to Babylon where he'll die, and you're going with him'. That's what God said to her, and 'how gracious will you be in chains, Nehushta, because I'm sick of your pride?'

Look what He says, you see, the pangs firstly would be the husband in verse 23, the death of Jehoiakim; and her son would reign 3 months, 18 years old when Jehoiachin came to the throne. Now verse 24, if you've got your pencil there, 'As I live, saith Yahweh, though Coniah (that's Jehoiachin, that's the son of Jehoiakim and Nehushta. He's called Jeconiah, Jehoiachin and Coniah, same person) so God is now addressing the son, the grandson of Josiah, so you see, God's going through the whole family, isn't He? Now what's going to happen to Nehushta's son? God says, 'don't think to yourself, Nehushta, that you can console yourself with the fact that the family's still got the throne; okay, Jehoiakim's dead but we still got the throne in the family, my son's now king! God says, 'I don't care, Nehushta, if Jehoiachin was the signet ring on my finger, I would rip it off and I'd throw it all the way to Babylon'. That's what God says, 'Don't think because he's got the throne, that I respect him; he's no better than his father!' 'I would take it off and I would pluck thee hence, I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face ye fear, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans'. Look what He says to Jehoiachin! 'I will cast thee, Jehoiachin, out and thy mother that bare thee (that's Nehushta)'. Jehoiachin, you and your mom are going to go to Babylon and you're going to die there! You'll never come back! That's what I think of this family! 'But to the land where thou desirest to return, they shall **not return**'. That's a pretty final judgment, isn't it?

Verse 28, 'Is this man Jehoiachin a despised broken idol? Is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?' He had a family, you know, Jehoiachin had a number of children, not at this stage because he was only 18, but in Babylon he lived many years, and he had a large family, but they never, ever sat on the throne of David. When you go through the chronology in Matthew you find that it was through Jehoiachin that the right to the throne of David was inherited by Jesus through his legal father, Joseph. Jesus did not inherit the right to the throne of David through Mary. The legal right to the throne of David came through Joseph and because he was his legal father, the right came through Joseph, through Jehoiachin. But as far as they were concerned the dynasty was lost to the family of Jehoiakim; you see, the next king Zedekiah, was a younger brother of Jehoiakim. So it went Josiah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and when Jehoiachin was taken away, it went back to the next brother of Jehoiakim, to a son of Josiah. So the dynasty was lost! certainly to the family of Jehoiachin and Jehoiakim, and that's why it says in verse 30, 'Write ye this man **childless**, now you can check the record in 2 Kings 24 verses 11 to 16, Jehoiachin had lots of children, but as far as the throne was concerned, (that's 2 Kings 24 verses 11 to 16), he had children 1 Chronicles 3 verses 16 to 18, but as far as the throne was concerned, there were no more sons of Jehoiakim or Jehoiachin who would reign on the throne. 'No man shall prosper sitting on the throne of David and ruling anymore in Judah', so the dynasty was gone! Don't you think,

Nehushta, that you can recover from the death of Jehoiakim, because I'm going to take Jehoiachin away in exactly the same way as I took his father away!

Now I want you to come to 2 Kings 24 again, I said we'd come back there because with that background of the condemnation and the 7th year, look what happens in the 11th year! Verse 6, 'So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. The king of Egypt came not again anymore out of his land (so the Egyptians had given up trying to fight the Babylonians, the Babylonians now have a free reign) Verse 8, 'Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 3 months (and very significantly his mother's name was Nehushta) the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh (only 3 months to do it, but he did it in 3 months), 'according to all that his father had done (so he was a chip off the old block of Jehoiakim). 'At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem and the city was besieged'. (I want you to notice verse 12, this is incredible!) You know, every king and Jehoiakim particularly, had resisted the call to surrender; but Jehoiachin, 18 years of age, he went out to the king of Babylon and he took mom with him! 'he, and his mother, and his servants' (do you see how it specifically mentions his mother? isn't it beautiful how the bible is so consistent? Jehoiachin, the 18 year old, when the king of Babylon besieged the city, he walks out and surrenders, according to the word of Jeremiah - surrender! so Jehoiachin is starting to listen, he's not quite as bad as his dad, and he drags his mother out, and you know what Jeremiah said, dad died the burial of an ass, and you and I have been told we're going into captivity. Come on, mom, let's walk out and surrender! and he did!) The record is very, very specific, that the king of Babylon took him in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. 'Nebuchadnezzar took all the treasures of the house of Yahweh (notice verse 13) **and all the treasures of the king's house**' (you could almost see the Babylonians stripping the cedar off, taking the window frames, taking down the tapestries from Egypt; you can almost see them, can't you? taking all the treasures of the king's house. God said, 'I'll make this house a desolation', and they did! and they ripped the place apart). 'Took all the captives, verse 14, but look at verse 15 (you know, the bible is so accurate) 'he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, **and the king's mother** (there she is again, Nehushta, how gracious is she going to be when it comes upon you, Nehushta? all your airs and graces will be no good at all, and you'll go into Babylon). And so they did!

But, b&s, Jehoiachin had started to think! 18 years of age, he started to think about the words of Jeremiah. When you come to the next chapter to 2 Kings 25 and verse 27, this is a great example of how the mercy of God can work so slowly and yet so graciously. Remember Manasseh? Verse 27, 'It came to pass in the 7 and 30th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin, (37 years later, he's now 55; he's got a whole raft of children and grandchildren, he's had 37 years in the dungeons of Babylon). Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison. He spake kindly to him, why? why would Evil-merodach in the 37th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, suddenly think about a captive king down in the dungeon? It adds weight to the suggestion **that Daniel was his uncle**, because at this stage Daniel is

one of the 3 rulers of Babylon, and the new king, anxious to please people would have heard from Daniel that it was his nephew Jehoiachin down in the dungeon; Evil-merodach, look what he does! 'He set his throne above the thrones of the kings that were there in Babylon; all the kings that had been captured, used to eat at the table of Nebuchadnezzar, but right at the top of the table was installed Jehoiachin, who had been captured as an 18 year old, a stupid 18 year old, but with one thing to his credit, that he started to listen to Jeremiah. 37 years later, God remembers him, 'changed his prison garments (he'd come from the dungeons) and he ate bread continually all the days of his life, and the allowance was a continual allowance given of the king, **all the days of his life.**' You see, God remembered him because he listened!

Isn't that beautiful, b&s, that you know, he was restored by the king of Babylon? It's a beautiful thing, the mercy of God towards that king; he humbled himself, and perhaps also another consolation for Josiah, that even though 3 of his sons were useless, ungrateful, and unholy children, that perhaps that 4th son who we believe might be Daniel, and the grandson Jehoiachin, did respond to the Word.

So what do we learn, b&s, from Jeremiah 22 and the family portrait of Josiah? Let's go back there and just pick out just one or two points from Jeremiah 22. I hope that helped you to see that chapter in a clearer light and in context with the invasions of Babylon. You know, the great lesson is, of course, the response to the Word, the difference between Josiah, Jeremiah and Jehoiakim. You know, Jeremiah said of the Word of God, he said, 'thy words were like a fire in my bones', Jehoiakim said of the Word, 'give me the Word and I'll put it in the fire', quite a contrast. There's the difference responses, Josiah, his heart was tender, he humbled himself when he heard the Word; Jeremiah rejoiced at the Word; Jehoiakim burnt them! and those that despise the Word will suffer the burial of an ass. A shameful and disgraceful punishment awaits them! We noticed the tremendous balance of Josiah, that even as a king he never forgot the poor and the needy. What a great comparison there was to Jehoiakim who was a villain, an oppressor, a robber, from the days of his youth. You know, there's a tremendous contrast between Josiah and his son Jehoiakim:

- One prepared his heart from youth, one was wicked from his youth;
- One rent his garments, the other was a leader of worldly fashion, those who were in strange apparel, says Zephaniah.
- Josiah turned to Yahweh with all his heart and the other hardened his heart.
- Josiah delighted to read the Law of God and the other burnt the Law of God.
- Josiah executed judgment and justice, and the other shed innocent blood and was oppressive.
- Josiah cared for the poor and needy, Jehoiakim robbed and deceived the tradesmen.
- Josiah supported Jeremiah's work, Jehoiakim persecuted Jeremiah.
- Josiah humbled himself before God, while Jehoiakim was proud and arrogant.
- Josiah lived a simple lifestyle and Jehoiakim was indulgent and materialistic.
- Josiah built God's house while Jehoiakim built a house of cedar for his selfish pride.
- Josiah was loved and mourned but Jehoiakim was hated and despised.

Quite a contrast, isn't it? between the two of them, they were totally and utterly different.

So, what do we learn, b&s? I think we can learn the lesson, can't we? from the sons of Josiah, that it doesn't always help for children to have things too easy; one of the great problems is that every generation wants to make their children's lives easier than their own! My mother was put into service at the age of 12, the second eldest girl in a family of 10 in the depression years; never got to go to high school. When she got married, she was determined that none of her children would never make a bed or wash a dish; and we didn't. But it wasn't good for us! So you see, don't fall for the trap of thinking you're going to do your children a service by making their lives easy; our children have enough problems dealing with a world that says, 'look after yourself', 'look after #1', without us indulging them. We need to train our children that the policy of Paul and of Christ was, 'it is more blessed to give than to receive'; no one is helped by too easy a life, having no responsibilities nor duties to do. Start young and make your children earn the things that they want, they'll learn discipline and they'll be grateful. I'll always remember when I wanted a pair of football boots father said, 'that's okay, you can have a pair of football boots but you have to earn them', well what do I have to do? well, I need a trench dug, I'll pay you a shilling a foot'; No problem! Three weeks later and many blisters, I got a pair of football boots that I was still polishing at the age of 18! because I'd work so hard for them. I never lost those football boots, you see, that was the value, wasn't it? If I had just been given a pair of boots, I would have lost them the first semester, but when you work for things you learn to appreciate them. I think that was one of the problems with the king's sons, they had it all too easy, they had time for strange apparel, for finding out what the Gentiles were doing. So it's good to make children learn responsibility at a young age.

From Jehoiakim and Nehushta, let's not fall for the trap of building nests of cedar for our own pride. It does us all good to think of our brethren and sisters around the world who live in bamboo huts, our brethren and sisters who lose those huts when the cyclone comes through and rebuild from whatever the neighbour's hut blew into their yard. Let's just think, b&s, the same God also is their Father, and not take pride in the blessings that we have. If we are house proud, be sure that God sees it as He saw Nehushta, 'better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right', says the Proverbs. 'Godliness with contentment is great gain', let us use our wealth for service and not for self indulgence.

B&S, let's just take away the most important lesson that we learnt from Josiah and from Jehoiakim and that is the value of having our hearts tender to the Word of God! to hearing what the Spirit says and letting it move us to action. Let us never harden our heart against the Word as did Jehoiakim! B&S, it's a sad story to think that that's where the sons of Josiah ended up, but in the end, every man will bear his own burden. Pray God, that when Josiah comes to the kingdom, he will see the labours that he did with Jeremiah, come to fruition in that Sunday School class of spiritually minded ones, and maybe also his grandson, Jehoiachin, blessed by God in the kingdom.