

“The Wrath of God Rose Against His People”

Scripture Readings: 2 Chronicles 34-36 (excerpts); John 2:18-22

Rev. Nollie Malabuyo • November 6, 2022

Dear Congregation of Christ: This morning, we end our sermon series on the Kings and the People of Israel. We began with the Israelites clamoring for a king just as the other nations had kings. The prophet Samuel warned them of all the evil things that their kings would impose on them. And Saul, the first king, fulfilled Samuel’s warning of an evil king. God deposed him, and installed David, “a man after God’s own heart.” David was a righteous king, but he also committed adultery and murder, for which he wholeheartedly repented before God. His son Solomon was enthroned after him, ushering in a “golden age” of Israel. God made him the wisest man who ever lived, and gave him power and riches beyond imagination. But he also committed adultery with many foreign women, who seduced him to worship their pagan idol-gods.

Because of his sins, Solomon’s kingdom suffered God’s judgment after he died. His son Rehoboam, with his corruption and overburdening the people with taxes, caused Solomon’s servant Jeroboam to lead a successful rebellion of ten out of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jeroboam established the northern kingdom called Israel. Only one tribe, Judah, was left of Solomon’s kingdom. King David’s dynasty, beginning with Rehoboam, consisted of mostly evil kings, with a few exceptions such as Jehoshaphat, Uzziah and Hezekiah. These righteous kings destroyed pagan temples and idols the people built in the high places of Judah with the help of their evil kings.

After Hezekiah, only one other king, Josiah, reigned in righteousness. He destroyed the idol-gods and their temples. When the priests were repairing and restoring the temple, they found the Book of the Law of Moses. So Josiah commanded the priests to teach the lost book to the people, and the people then worshiped and obeyed the words of the LORD. But Josiah, like most of the former kings, also disobeyed God’s commandment not to go to war against Egypt. This disobedience cost him his life.

From Josiah came four more kings who were all evil, and so caused the people to be evil, and caused the cup of God’s wrath to finally overflow against his own people the Jews (Isa 51:17). These four were Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. We will briefly outline the wicked, turbulent and chaotic reigns of these four last kings of Judah. Therefore, this morning, our theme is, **“The Wrath of God Rose Against His People,”** under three headings.

The Fall of Jerusalem Under Four Evil Kings

The annals of these four evil kings are narrated in 2 Chronicles 36. The king who ascended the throne after Josiah was actually Josiah’s second son Jehoahaz, not Jehoiakim, the eldest. Josiah believed that the younger son was more capable than his older brother. However, he reigned for only three months after he provoked Neco, the king of Egypt. The Pharaoh attacked Jerusalem,

captured Jehoahaz, and brought him as a captive to Egypt, where he died. Judah also had to pay a heavy tribute to Egypt.

Neco then installed Jehoiakim, the older brother, as his puppet king of Judah. He was a wicked king who reigned for eleven years. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon was growing in power while Assyria was waning. Jeremiah warned Judah to repent of their sins, or else God would send the mighty Babylonians against them (Jer 5). Instead of repenting, Jehoiakim and his false priests sent him to prison and later, to a muddy well to die. Babylon defeated Egypt in the great battle in Carchemish in modern-day Syria in 605 B.C. Jeremiah's prophecy was then fulfilled when the Babylonians invaded and conquered Jerusalem and made Jehoiakim a puppet, vassal king. Nebuchadnezzar also looted part of the temple, and together with many young men, brought them back to Babylon. This was the first wave of exiles to Babylon. Seven years later, in 598 B.C., Jehoiakim again rebelled against Babylon, and this time, he died after he was defeated and captured. Again, some young men were exiled as a result.

The next evil king, Jehoiachin, did not fare better than his uncle Jehoahaz. He also reigned for only three months, before the Babylonians again laid siege to Jerusalem. To appease the Babylonians, he gave himself up, including all his household, and thousands of high government and military officials and rich nobles. Only the poor were left behind to tend the farms.

In his place, Babylon installed another puppet, vassal king whom they called Zedekiah. He too was a wicked king, as we read in 2 Chronicles 36:13–14, *"He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel."* He led the officers, priests and the people of Judah into abominable sins that the surrounding nations committed, even desecrating the holy temple.

In 36:15-16, we read a summary of how God dealt with his people in compassion and patience by sending his prophets to warn them of impending judgment. But the people mocked, despised and scoffed at the prophets, including Jeremiah. Therefore, *"the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy."* God's compassion and patience ran out, so he sent Nebuchadnezzar to Judah one last time. In 586 B.C., after a long siege of three years, the Babylonians finally destroyed Jerusalem's walls and burned the palaces and the temple to the ground. They looted all the treasures of the temple and the palaces. Zedekiah was captured, blinded, and together with tens of thousands of Jews, he was deported to Babylon to serve the conquerors.

Nine centuries before Jerusalem's destruction, in Leviticus 18:26-28, God warned the Israelites in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land of Canaan,

But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.

Their obedience to God's laws was not going to save them from their sins. Rather, their tenure in the Promised Land was contingent upon their obedience. God was the landlord, Judah the

tenants. If they disobeyed God's laws, the land would "vomit" them, just as the pagan nations will be "vomited" out of the land by the Israelites. Therefore, the fall of Judah and Jerusalem to the Babylonians was the fulfillment of God "vomiting" the Jews out of the Promised Land of Judah.

The Sins of the Kingdom of Judah

Jeremiah and all of God's prophets from the time of King Saul to King Zedekiah warned and exhorted the people of Judah to repent of their sins. But they continually violated God's covenant laws given to them at Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments were a summary of God's moral requirements for his people, and the people, all twelve tribes of Israel, disobeyed them all the way back to their wilderness wanderings on the way to the Promised Land.

They violated the First Commandment, *"You shall have no other gods before me,"* by worshiping and serving the gods of pagan nations in Canaan and other nations around them. Because they worshiped these pagan gods, they built wood, stone and metal idols to them, disobeying God's Second Commandment against making images to worship them. The prophet Ezekiel condemned them, saying, *"Your fathers blasphemed me, by dealing treacherously against me"* (Ezk 20:27). They mocked, despised, scoffed at, and even murdered God's prophets who proclaimed his word, breaking the Third Commandment, *"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain."*

And because they worshiped idol-gods, they did not keep the Sabbath holy. Therefore, God rebuked them because they *"despised my holy things and profaned my Sabbaths"* (Ezk 22:8) by doing business for profit on the Sabbaths. Isaiah exhorted them to *"call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable... [not] seeking your own pleasure"* (Isa 58:13). Because of their disobedience, God prophesied against them, saying, *"But if you do not listen to me, to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter by the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched"* (Jer 17:27).

Ezekiel also condemned the people, saying, *"Father and mother are treated with contempt in you"* (Ezk 22:7a). They did not honor their fathers and mothers, defying the Fifth Commandment. He also called Jerusalem *"the bloody city... guilty by the blood that you have shed"* (Ezk 22:1-4), breaching the Sixth Commandment, *"You shall not murder."* Their offense against the Seventh Commandment was appalling, *"One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you violates his sister, his father's daughter"* (Ezk 22:11).

In wantonly disobeying the Eighth Commandment, *"You shall not steal,"* Ezekiel further condemned them, *"In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion"* (Ezk 22:12a). The people would often swear by the name of God, *"As the LORD lives, yet they swear falsely"* (Jer 5:2), and *"slander to shed blood"* (Ezk 22:9), disregarding the Ninth Commandment, *"You shall not bear false witness."* Finally, in violating the Tenth Commandment, *"You shall not covet... anything that belongs to your neighbor,"* Ezekiel condemned them, *"With lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain"* (Ezk 33:31). The prophet Micah also pronounced woes on those who *"covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance"* (Mic 2:2).

This litany of sins committed by the people of Judah is like a habitual criminal's laundry list of heinous crimes. How is America doing today compared with Judah 26 centuries ago? Christians must acknowledge, lament and repent of our nation's violations of God's commandments. Even churches are also guilty of these violations. We are all idolaters, worshiping money, fame and power. We desecrate the Lord's Day with our own pleasures. We dishonor our parents, especially politicians who advocate denying parents' approval before transgender surgeries and abortions—which are first-degree murder—are performed on their children. We idolize sexual immorality. We try our best to steal by not working and being on welfare, depending on handouts from the government. We slander others for our own benefit. We do all of these crimes because we covet and lust for everything that is not ours. In the coming elections on Tuesday, let us remember to vote for those candidates who are the least violators of God's holy commandments.

God Charged a Pagan King to Rebuild His Temple

As much as Judah's destruction is lamentable and seemingly hopeless, the epilogue of 2 Chronicles offers hope for God's people. In verses 22-23, Cyrus king of Persia, who conquered the Babylonian empire, proclaimed that the LORD, the God of heaven, has charged him *"to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah."* Therefore, he allowed all Jewish exiles who desired to help build a new temple and rebuild Jerusalem, to go back to the Promised Land of Canaan. This edict completed the ten Sabbath years, 70 years of captivity that Jeremiah prophesied (2 Chr 36:21).

Fifty thousand Jews, led by Zerubbabel, therefore traveled back to Judah and built a second temple in Jerusalem, completing it in 515 B.C. God's love and compassion towards his chosen nation Israel did not vanish. With the return of the exiles from Babylon, the line of kings continued until Jesus the Son of David, the Messiah, was born in Bethlehem of Judah. Thus, the LORD used a pagan king to accomplish his purpose of saving his chosen nation, the church, made up of all who believe in his Son Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin, Satan and death.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: Just before he was crucified on the cross, our Lord Jesus Christ prophesied that the glorious temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. This event happened forty years after his death.

But early in his earthly ministry, he also prophesied that if "this temple" was destroyed, he would rebuild it in three days. The Jews were astonished at his saying, for it took them many years to restore the temple. What they did not know was that Jesus was not referring to the Jerusalem temple. Rather, he was referring to his body, which would be in the grave for three days before he would be resurrected. His disciples came to this truthful saying of Jesus only after his resurrection because the Holy Spirit gave them this knowledge (John 2:18-22).

Two thousand years ago, Jesus started building the true temple of God, the church, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Today, this temple is still being built, not in Jerusalem, but in all the nations. And when the fullness of time comes, Christ will return from heaven and take his chosen people to the new heaven and new earth. Many Christians believe and teach that a temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, but the Scriptures say otherwise. For there will be no temple there, for God, his Son, and his people will be the temple there forever (Rev 21:22).