

JUDAH'S LAST FIVE KINGS

Jon Macon

Josiah King of Judah was a physical descendant of David, and was also one who spiritually followed in his footsteps. *“And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left”* (2 Kgs 22:2). In fact, God says that *“like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him”* (2 Kgs 23:25). Sadly, three of Josiah's sons and one of his grandsons reigned as kings of Judah after Josiah, but all of them did evil in the sight of the Lord. Zephaniah prophesied about them in the days of their father: *“And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children”* (Zeph 1:8).

Jehoahaz who died in Egypt

Jehoahaz was the first of Josiah's sons to be king of Judah, and acceded to the throne upon his father's death (2 Kgs 23:30-34; 2 Chr 36:1-4). He was also known as Shallum (Jer 22:11). *“And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done”* (2 Kgs 23:32). Jehoahaz had only reigned as king of Judah for three months (2 Kgs 23:31; 2 Chr 36:2), because “Pharaoh Nechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold” (2 Kgs 23:33). *“And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt”* (2 Chr 36:4). Jehoahaz was in Egypt when Jeremiah prophesied of him, *“For thus saith the Lord touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place; he shall not return thither any more: but he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more”* (Jer 22:11-12). This prophecy was fulfilled exactly as God said. *“And Pharaoh Nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there”* (2 Kgs 23:34).

Jehoiakim who received no burial

Josiah's son Jehoiakim was no better than his brother Jehoahaz. *“And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done”* (2 Kgs 23:36-37; 2 Chr 36:5). Jeremiah 22:13-15 contains this warning from God: *“Woe unto him that builds his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that uses his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; that saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cuts him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar?”* God reminded Jehoiakim of the goodness of his father. *“Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it”* (Jer 22:15-17). God said, *“I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice”* (Jer 22:21). *“Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my*

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(continued)

brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah Lord! or, Ah his glory! *He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem*" (Jer 22:18-19). Jehoiakim did not listen to this either. In fact, when he heard God's words against him and against the wicked people of Jerusalem and Judah, he killed the prophet Urijah (Jer 26:20-23), and also cut up Jeremiah's roll with a penknife and burnt it in the fire (Jer 36:21-23). The Lord then repeated his prophecy against Jehoiakim with more added. Jeremiah 36:29-32 says, "Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah; *He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: 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 of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words."

Zedekiah who was blinded and fettered

Jehoiakim did indeed die like the Lord had said, and his son Jehoiachin became the next king of Judah, but for only three months. He was 18 years old when he became king (2 Kgs 24:8). "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done" (2 Kgs 24:9). In his days, Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon besieged Jerusalem, removed Jehoiachin from his throne, and took him and his mother to Babylon (2 Kgs 24:8-16; 2 Chr 36:9-10; Est 2:6; Jer 24:1; 27:20; 28:4; 29:2; Matt 1:11-12). No descendant of Jehoiachin ever reigned in Judah again (Jer 22:24-30). The last king of Judah, was Josiah's son Zedekiah, uncle of Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:17). With familiar words, 2 Kings 24:19 says of Zedekiah, "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done." Jeremiah the prophet warned Zedekiah, "Thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house: but if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand" (Jer 38:17-18). But Zedekiah "humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel" (2 Chr 36:12-13). Jerusalem was besieged, the city fell, was burned, and the temple also destroyed (2 Kgs 25:1-11). At that time, Nebuchadnezzar "*slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon*" (Jer 39:6-7). This was the sad end of the wicked sons of a righteous man. What happened to Josiah and his sons is an example of what Ezekiel 18:20 says concerning how God works with mankind: "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*"