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Dear Associates and Friends,

February 2022

This month's article is the 42nd installment in the Israel and Judah history series. "[Israel and Judah: 42. Judah's Last Kings, 1](#)" tells of YHWH's warnings to His people of the Kingdom of Judah to stop the stupidity of worshipping other gods, doing horrific sins and evils against their own people. Yet the kings, leaders, and people refuse to change their ways. After the death of the last good king Josiah, the kingdom progresses through steady decline toward ultimate and total disaster when God removes all restraints to His judgments. No one heeds God's true prophets throughout centuries as they predicted and warned Judah of punishments described with gruesome detail.

While the basis of this month's article is from the Books of Kings and Chronicles, narrative portions of the prophetic Book of Jeremiah fills gaps in our understanding of historical events. Although the order and structure of his prophecies are problematic and difficult, some parts of Jeremiah's writing are compelling and even frightening.¹

This month's article begins by telling about the final four kings of Judah. Three of the final four kings of Judah are sons of Josiah. One is a grandson. All are tragic figures, although they all made bad choices, religiously and politically.

Cast of Characters:

YHWH. Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord God Almighty, the only true God. YHWH chooses prophets to take His message to His people Judah. The people renewed their Covenant with YHWH to be faithful to Him, as their ancestors did in the time of Moses. The people of Judah made that covenant renewal at the glorious Passover festival led by King Josiah just before his death. However, even though they recommitted to their Covenant with vows to YHWH, the people of Judah did not stop their gross idolatry during Josiah's reign. After his death, they openly practiced sin and idolatry which they hid while Josiah was alive. They immediately did the opposite of what YHWH required and the opposite of what they promised to do. Their sins and idolatry were willful acts.

The people of Judah knew that YHWH punished and destroyed the northern Kingdom of Samaria (Israel), witnessed by all the people of Judah decades before. YHWH promises to do the same to His people in Judah for the same reasons: to punish the people for sins, punishments threatened since Moses. The ultimate punishments included dismantling the Kingdom of Judah and exiling its people to foreign lands.

Jeremiah. Prophet of God. In this episode Jeremiah comes to the foreground of events. The Book of Jeremiah begins in the 13th year of Josiah (Jeremiah 1:2). He wrote the Book of Lamentations both to lament the death of Josiah, but also to lament (and warn) of YHWH's coming punishment and destruction of Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Judah. Only after Josiah dies does Jeremiah become more prominent

¹ Large sections of Jeremiah have chronological identifications such as "**In the beginning of the kingship of Jehoiakim son of Josiah ...**" (Jeremiah 26:1–24 and 27:1). In other prophecies of YHWH presented through Jeremiah we are given specific years, such as Jehoiakim's 4th year (Jeremiah 25:1, 36:1, 45:1 and 46:2) and Jehoiakim's 5th year (Jeremiah 36:9). Even then, the reason we are given such dates is not always useful to help understand the message, whether in the time of Jeremiah or in prophetic fulfillments future to us.

upon the public scene, although he may have been active outside of Judah during his international prophetic ministry. This is explained in Dr. Martin's original 1975 lecture, "[Prophetic Birth of Our Civilization](#)."²

Part of Jeremiah's prophetic commission was to travel around the known world visiting the most powerful kings and sovereign rulers giving them prophecies about a new system of political order. Then he came back to Judah and was harassed, threatened, beaten, and even put in a pit of waste until he was rescued (Jeremiah 38:1–13). Jesus was likely referring to Jeremiah, among others, when He said, "**A prophet is not without honor, but [1] in his own country, and [2] among his own kin, and [3] in his own house**" (Mark 6:4).

Jeremiah was destined to have a hard life. To give you an idea how much the people of Judah were to suffer, note what God told Jeremiah not to do. He told Jeremiah that he was not to marry. Then He told him why³:

"The word of Yahweh came to me, saying: 'You shall not take a wife for yourself, And there shall not be sons and daughters for you in this place. For thus says Yahweh:

'Concerning the sons, And concerning the daughters born in this place, And concerning their mothers who bore them, And concerning their fathers who begot them in this land,

- They shall die deaths of great travail;
- They shall not be bewailed [mourned],
- Nor shall they be entombed;
- They shall become manure on the surface of the ground,
- They shall be consumed by sword and by famine,
- And their carcasses will become food for the flyer of the heavens And for the beast of the earth."

• **Jeremiah 16:1–4**

God wanted to spare Jeremiah that pain of watching loved ones die. His life would be spared and even protected by Babylonian officials. Later we learn he was known personally to Nebuchadnezzar for not being an enemy of Babylon. Continuing with the cast of characters:

Jehoahaz (Shallum). King of Judah briefly, for three months. He is identified as doing evil even during his short reign. Shallum was chosen and anointed to be King by the people of Judah. It did not work out well for him or for the people of Judah. The Pharaoh Neco who killed Josiah, the father of Jehoahaz, had another idea. He imprisoned Jehoahaz, took him to Egypt where he died. His captivity and death were prophesied to occur by YHWH through Jeremiah.

Jehoiakim. He became the King of Judah immediately after his younger brother — for 11 years. Nothing good is said about him. Evil the entire time as king, he proceeded from bad to worse. He killed true prophets, and favored false prophets and priests. YHWH gave prophecies specific to him, and he apparently ignored them. This happens when someone comes to think their pagan gods have relative

² This article by Dr. Martin is one of my personal favorites. It covers much information in a short space about the difference between the pre-Nebuchadnezzar kingdoms of the world and the post-Nebuchadnezzar Babylonian system. Dr. Martin wrote:

"Events coalesce around the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Now when was this time? It was the beginning of the 6th century BC, specifically around 585, 586 BC. This 6th century BC when God speaks about a Head of Gold coming along (a new type of civilization), is one of the deep-cut times in history, a major historical line of demarcation."

See also the articles "[Introduction to Jeremiah](#)," "[Jeremiah, Part 2](#)," "[Jeremiah, Part 3](#)," and "[Jeremiah, Part 4](#)."

³ This is the same thought the apostle Paul had when he told some that because of persecution, some should not marry (I Corinthians 7:25-40). That was a temporary situation that was resolved when the persecution lessened. When he wrote First Corinthians, the apostle Paul anticipated Christ would soon return. He learned later by the revelation of the Mystery to mankind to Paul and others, it would be a long time before Christ's return to earth.

or even equal power to YHWH.

Pharaoh Neco. This Egyptian leader killed King Josiah of Judah in battle on the field of Megiddo (north of Jerusalem and southeast of the Sea of Galilee). This victory gave Neco control of the land area extending from northeast Egypt up to the upper Euphrates River valley in Syria today. Neco demanded that Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, meet him at Riblah in Syria. Neco imprisoned Jehoahaz, and he later died a captive in Egypt. Neco meets a strong opponent in Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. They fought a famous battle at Carchemish that was a Babylonian victory.

Nebuchadnezzar. King of Babylon who will devastate and then destroy the Kingdom of Judah, then Jerusalem, and finally the Temple of YHWH. It will be a three-step process. Most of the people will be either killed or exiled to Babylon. Only a small remnant will stay in the land.

In this month's episode of "Israel and Judah" God's chosen people continue down the path to destruction, a path they chose for themselves. With the sins and depraved evils done by the Kings of Judah acting as bad examples, their acts were mirrored by other leaders, Levites, priests, and the people of Judah. In sum, things were similar to the days we live in now. Evils, crimes, and horrors are multiplying as they are increasingly exposed and on public display. All too many public officials prosecute the innocent while allowing evils and crimes to prosper without comment. It has become an upside-down world — just like in the days of Jeremiah.

Thank You

In 1974 Dr. Martin began producing independent research until his death in January 2002. I took over as Director at that time. Dr. Martin had instructed Ramona Martin to give the editorial part of ASK over to my care. Our working partnership has operated well since that time. I have updated and expanded Dr. Martin's work, but the ASK website is still very much his workmanship, with upgrade touch-ups here and there. And as you readers know, I have written significant articles of my own, besides the "Israel and Judah" series. However, I always keep in mind that contributions I have made are based on the foundation of Ernest Martin's work.

We are thankful for your support as we look forward to the future to expand our outreach, unhampered by those who would silence our voice. ASK is small, but ASK is solid both in our knowledge of God's truth and in our faith and hope for our personal futures, your futures, and for everyone in the world. That destiny is for every human being to become a child of the living God.

Help us to keep working to get that mature teaching to the world. You can help yourself by using ASK resources to forward your own studies. The ASK website is a deep well of the most important biblical information. Drink deeply. Those who do so constantly tell us they are refreshed in these difficult times. You will find over time, if you are wise as serpents and meek as doves, you can answer the questions people have about God, and do so without being confrontational toward others.

Keep studying. Keep praying. Keep praising God for creating you, teaching you, and leading you in the paths of righteousness while you grow in grace and in knowledge:

"For Yahweh Himself gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and comprehension; He stores up sagacity [cleverness] for the upright, A shield for those walking with integrity, So as to preserve the paths of right judgment, And so He may guard the way of His benign ones.

Then you shall understand righteousness and right judgment, And you shall be upright in every good route; For wisdom shall come into your heart, And knowledge, it shall be pleasant to your soul."

• *Proverbs 2:6–10. Concordant Literal Old Testament*

Thank you for supporting ASK, so you can continue to learn, and we can continue teaching.

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