

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of The Chronicles: God's Preservation Of His Davidic And Levitical Covenants

LI. Handling A Growing Distrust Of Leaders

(2 Chronicles 36:9-10 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many people today are experiencing a growing distrust with their leaders, and with it an increase in anxiety:

(1) A letter by Penny O'Connell of Woodbury in the October 9, 2020 Republican-American, p. 10A, claimed, "Moderate socialism is not a bad thing -- it provides for unemployment insurance . . . Medicare and Social Security payments" and "the Affordable Care Act," so "(p)lease do not be manipulated into fearing socialism." In Penney's view, voters who dread "moderate socialism" as she termed it are being manipulated by harmfully deceitful leaders.

However, Jonah Goldberg's piece, "Bernie sees what he wants to see" (Ibid., February 22, 2020, p. 8A) gave the opposite view, that though some progressives hold up Scandinavian nations as models of the "democratic socialism" that they envision for the U. S., those nations have abandoned socialism in their economies because it proved to be so bad. In addition, most European nations with more generous welfare systems and more progressive taxation than the U. S. due to socialism "also have much worse unemployment and economic growth," Ibid.

(2) Distrust of officials and parties running for office exists due to concerns over their possible future actions regarding the Supreme Court: the editorial, "Candor needed on 'packing,'" Ibid., October 12, 2020, p. 10A, reported, "Some progressives have advocated increasing the number of seats on the high court, to bring about ideological 'balance.'" However, the editor claimed this "idea . . . is, in a word, horrifying . . . Court-packing . . . 'assuredly would undermine the public's faith in the judiciary as an independent entity and, by extension, in government at large."

(3) Distrust of the character of politicians who are running for office abounds: the October 16, 2020 issue of the Republican-American, p. 10A-11A ran six letters that critiqued the character of such people.

(4) Distrust of leaders of our nation from the past who were once well-regarded runs rampant. One story last week told of the toppling of an Abraham Lincoln statue, and the political cartoon that appeared in the October 16, 2020 issue of the Republican-American (Ibid., p. 10A) pictures a mother telling her young son, "They tore down all the old 1861 Civil War statues so they could make room for the new 2020 Civil War statues."

(5) We face this problem in Christian circles: former members of our Church who moved to the southwestern part of the United States were visiting us last Sunday, and they reported how difficult it was for them to find pastors in their area who preach solid Bible truth. In the last few years, we've had similar feedback from believers in Vermont, Nebraska, Colorado and California! This problem was noted as far back as 43 years ago by Dr. John G. Mitchell in his article, "The vanishing art of expository preaching," Moody Monthly, November 1977, p. 41-43.

Need: So, we ask, "*How does God want us to handle the problem of a growing distrust in all sorts of leaders?!*"

- I. When Jehoiachin ruled Judah, he acted wickedly (2 Chronicles 36:9), and the prophet Ezekiel told how Jehoiachin's atrocities led to his people become disillusioned and to distrust him, Ezekiel 19:5-7:**
 - A. Ezekiel poetically depicted Jehoiachin as a fierce lion (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Ezekiel 19:5-9) who would use his royal power to kill a man (v. 6b), then physically abuse the slain man's widow (*wayeda' 'almenotaw*, v. 7a: Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 838) only later to destroy the town where they had lived. (v. 7a)
 - B. The town's people would flee to other towns, leaving their destroyed homes and town a wasteland out of fear and distrust for Jehoiachin. (v. 7b; Keil & Delitzsch, Commentary on the O. T.: Ezekiel 19; studylight.org)
- II. God hated Jehoiachin's [Coniah's] sins, and had only harsh words of judgment for him, Jer. 22:24-30:**
 - A. The Lord said that even if Coniah were His prized signet ring used in signing documents, God would "tear" him off of His hand and "hurl" him and his mother into Babylon, Jer. 22:24-27 ESV; B. K. C., O. T., p. 1157.
 - B. God then cursed Coniah's line, claiming He would never again allow Coniah or any of his descendants prosper while ruling on the throne of David, Jeremiah 22:29-30 ESV.
- III. However, during the reign of Jehoiachin's father Jehoiakim, God's prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 17:5-8 had taught Judah's people to trust in God versus man to handle their need for national security without making alliances with Gentile nations, but, by another application, to handle Jehoiachin's horrible reign. (Ibid., p. 1151, 1126. This source shows that Jeremiah 17 was written in Jehoiakim's era.)**

Lesson: *God punished Jehoiachin for abusing his subjects, but He ALSO made provision for His people BEFORE Jehoiachin had come to power to know how to handle the disillusionment and distrust they would face under him.*

Application: (1) *May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.* (2) *To handle a growing distrust of leaders, (a) may we realize that God will justly deal with their sins just as He punished Jehoiachin's sins, and (b) may we apply God's Word in Jeremiah 17:5-8 (as explained below) to deal effectively with the growing distrust in leaders.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We now explain God's edifying instruction in Jeremiah 17:5-8 (as follows):

(1) First, "Jeremiah's messages were given during times of stress, upheaval and need" in Judah, *Ibid.*, p. 1123. "He was a weeping prophet to a wayward people" in "the dark days leading to" Judah's "destruction," and her kings, her priests and her false prophets were abusive, idolatrous and full of evil intrigue. (Jeremiah 2:26; 6:13-14) Jeremiah's message in Jeremiah 17:5-8 then certainly applies to similar spiritual circumstances we face today!

(2) Second, we translate Jeremiah 17:5-8 from the Hebrew text (*Ibid.*, Kittel, p. 736) as follows: (v. 5) "This is what Yahweh says, 'Cursed is the **male warrior** (*geber*, *Ibid.*; B. D. B., *A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T.*, p. 149-150) who **relies upon** (*batah*, *Ibid.*, p. 105) **mankind** (*'adam*, *Ibid.*, Kittel; *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 9) and makes flesh his **arm, strength** (*zero'a*, *Ibid.*, p. 283-284) and whose heart **turns aside** from (*sur*, *Ibid.*, p. 693-694) [Me] Yahweh.

(v. 6) "And he shall be like a juniper bush in the **Rift Valley** [around the Dead Sea] (*'arabah*, *Ibid.*, p. 787; *Ibid.*, *Bible Know. Com., O. T.*, p. 1151) and will not see good when it comes but will dwell in the **parched place** (*harer*, *Ibid.*, p. 359) of the wilderness, a land of **saltiness** (*melehar*, *Ibid.*, p. 572) [salt flats of the Dead Sea] where no one [such as a caring gardener] **abides, lives** (*yashav*, *Ibid.*, p. 442-444).

(v. 7) "Blessed is the **male warrior** (*geber* again, *Ibid.*, Kittel) who **relies upon** (*batah* again, *Ibid.*) Yahweh, and Yahweh **has become** (*hayah*, *Ibid.*, Kittel; *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 224-228) his **confidence** (*mibtah*, *Ibid.*, p. 105).

(v. 8) "And he **shall become** (*hayah* again, *Ibid.*, Kittel) like a tree that has **been transplanted** (passive tense of *shatal*, *Ibid.*, p. 1060) by the water of a **stream** (*yubal*, *Ibid.*, p. 385), [a tree] that sends forth its roots and shall not fear when **heat** (*hom*, *Ibid.*, p. 328) comes but its **foliage** (*'aleh*, *Ibid.*, p. 750) will be **fresh, luxuriant** (*ra'anan*, *Ibid.*, p. 947), neither in the year of drought will it be **anxious** (*da'ag*, *Ibid.*, p. 947) and neither will it **cease** (*mish*, *Ibid.*, p. 559) to bear fruit."

(3) We apply this passage to the issue of facing disillusionment and a resulting distrust of leaders (as follows):

(a) This passage contrasts two male warriors at the height of their human powers (*geber*, v. 5a, 7a) with contrasting results, indicating that human ability or might is utterly futile in handling the problem of disillusionment and distrust in others. **No matter how humanly strong we think we are, we must rely on God instead of other people or we will suffer spiritual defeat!** (b) The word for trust here, *batah*, is very strong: in the Arabic cognate it means to "throw one down upon his face, lie extended on the ground," *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 105. One must completely choose not to rely on mankind and instead fully rely on God for the promises of God in this passage to be applied! (c) The male warrior who trusts in mankind is left to fend for himself as if he were a gaunt juniper in a salt flat near the Dead Sea, a dangerous place for any plant, where the male warrior who trusts in the Lord is like a tree that comes under the care of a Master Gardener, God, Who transplants him onto His irrigated garden. (d) Fear and anxiety are the experience of the male warrior who relies on mankind where the male warrior who relies on the Lord is free of anxiety. (e) The male warrior who relies on mankind is unproductive, like a gaunt juniper in the wastelands as opposed to the male warrior who relies on the Lord is ceaselessly productive. (f) By implication, the male warrior who relies on mankind like the juniper in the saltland dies prematurely where the male warrior who relies on the Lord flourishes a long time like a foliage-rich, fruit-bearing tree even in a time of typical duress for others.

In other words, (a) God does not want us to look to other people, be it people around us or human leaders of any institution, as our source of stability and happiness, but instead to rely fully upon the Lord. [One reason why the Lord may be letting us face unreliable or deceitful leaders today is to get us to shift our dependence away from relying on man to relying on God!] (b) If we fully rely on human beings for our stability in whatever institution we face, be it the government, business, church, etc., we will end up like a juniper bush in the hot, salt flats around the Dead Sea without access to nourishment, without God's oversight and care, being left to become unproductive, anxious and headed for an abbreviated lifespan! (c) However, if we fully rely on the Lord as our Resource of stability and happiness, we will become like a tree that God as a Master Gardener transplants out of the wild onto His well-irrigated garden plot where He cares for us, prunes us and trims us and causes us to remain luxuriously endowed with His blessings and continued productivity free of anxiety even in times of typical duress for people!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we then handle the growing distrust of leaders in today's world by realizing that God will deal justly with them, and may we heed Jeremiah 17:5-8 for personal blessing under God's nurturing care.