

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing Part LXI: God's Judgment For Inconsistency In Repenting (Jeremiah 34:1-22)

I. Introduction

- A. When Babylon began to attack Jerusalem and all hope seemed lost, Judah's king Zedekiah made a covenant with the people to release their fellow Hebrew slaves in obedience to the Mosaic Law. However, when the Babylonian army temporarily withdrew its attack, the people reneged on their commitment of repentance.
- B. This greatly displeased the Lord, so He promised seriously to punish these people, providing us a big lesson:

II. God's Judgment For Inconsistency In Repenting, Jeremiah 34:1-22.

- A. When the Babylonian army first began its attack on Jerusalem, Jeremiah was sent by God to Judah's king Zedekiah to announce the unedifying news that the Babylonians would capture Jerusalem, setting the city on fire and taking Zedekiah captive to Babylon, Jeremiah 34:1-3.
- B. The good news in all this was that Zedekiah would not die by the sword, but in peace, and the people would build a bonfire at his death to lament his passing, an honorable deed also done to his father, Jeremiah 34:4-7.
- C. Concerned about pleasing the Lord in hope that God might show more mercy unto them, king Zedekiah made a covenant with the people in Jerusalem to release their fellow countrymen, fellow Hebrews they wrongly held as slaves who were supposed to have been released after six years of servitude according to the Mosaic Law, Jer. 34:8-10; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Jeremiah 34:8-11 with Exodus 21:2.
- D. However, after they made this covenant, news had arrived that the advancing Egyptian army had caused the Babylonians temporarily to lift their siege on Jerusalem that they might regroup against the Egyptians (Jer. 37:5). Consequently, exhibiting their artificial commitment to repentance, the former "slaveowners, feeling that the danger was past, forced their slaves back into service" regardless of the rule of the Mosaic Law, Ibid.
- E. For such inconsistency in repentance, the Lord promised severely to punish the wrongdoers, Jer. 34:11-22:
 - 1. When the former slave owners violated the Mosaic Law by taking back into custody their fellow Hebrew slaves (Jer. 34:11), the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah with a message for them, Jeremiah 34:12.
 - 2. That message reminded the people that God had made a covenant with their forefathers to which they were subject during the Exodus that they were to release fellow Hebrew slaves after six years, Jer. 34:13-14a.
 - 3. However, their forefathers had not obeyed this command of the Law (Jeremiah 34:14b).
 - 4. Nevertheless, the people of Jerusalem in Zedekiah and Jeremiah's day had initially decided to do what was right in the matter by making a covenant to release their unlawfully held Hebrew slaves, Jeremiah 34:15.
 - 5. However, they had then reneged on their covenant, polluting God's name in violating their covenant made by taking an oath in His name through taking back their fellow Hebrew slaves (Jeremiah 34:16), so God was about to "proclaim liberty" to these wrongdoers to be "released" from His protection and turned over to the "freedom" of the sword, disease, famine and captivity to the kingdoms of the world, Jeremiah 34:17.
 - 6. Furthermore, the men who had transgressed God's covenant that they had made by cutting the calf of the covenant bilaterally into two parts and passing between the severed parts, signifying their commitment to keep their covenant or what had happened to the calf was to happen to them -- God would fittingly hold these men to that covenant by giving them into the hand of the Babylonians to kill them and for their bodies not to be honorably buried, but to be eaten by scavenging animals and birds, Jeremiah 34:18-20.
 - 7. King Zedekiah and his princes would be handed over to the Babylonians who would return and renew their siege against Jerusalem. The Babylonians would fight against the city, defeat it, burn it with fire and make the outlying cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant, Jeremiah 34:21-22.

Lesson: *When the men of Jerusalem covenanted before the Lord in His Name to release their fellow Hebrew slaves whom they had held for more than six years in repentance to God's Word only to renege on that covenant of repentance once they thought the Babylonians were not going to defeat the city, God chose to treat them in accord with their covenant, letting them be slaughtered like they had slain and bisected the calf in making their covenant.*

Application: *(1) God loves repentance, but He does NOT tolerate one's renegeing on repentance, so we must follow through with our commitments to repent or suffer His sure, severe discipline! (2) God also expects us not to practice the sins of our forefathers (Jer. 34:13-14). We must thus (a) evaluate what our forefathers have believed and practiced in light of Scripture and (b) heed His Word above our forefathers' beliefs and practices!*