

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing

Part LXIV: Learning To Obey God Versus Manipulating Him And His Messenger (Jeremiah 37:1-10)

I. Introduction

- A. The pagan world that affected apostate Judah in Jeremiah's era practiced deity manipulation, efforts in worship to try to influence a deity to do what the worshiper wanted the deity to do.
- B. In sharp contrast, Judah's true God was sovereign and immutable, neither subject to nor affected by any manipulation by any other entity, what the people of Judah failed to acknowledge in Jeremiah 37:1-10.
- C. We thus view this event for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Learning To Obey God Versus Manipulating Him And His Messenger, Jeremiah 37:1-10.

- A. When Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had placed Zedekiah on Jerusalem's throne in place of Jehoiachin, neither he, his court officials nor the people of the land even "paid attention to" (*shama'*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 1033-1034) God's words through Jeremiah, Jeremiah 37:1-2. They were not only disobedient to God's Word, but they failed to respect God's Word, the Lord and also God's messenger Jeremiah who had been giving them God's Word.
- B. At that time, the Babylonian army that had been attacking Jerusalem had temporarily withdrawn to fight the Egyptians who were marching out against them. Egypt, who was in alliance with Judah, was attempting to come to Judah's aid, Jeremiah 37:5, 7b. Zedekiah hoped that the Babylonian withdrawal from Jerusalem meant God might deliver the city from defeat, so he sent Jehucal, one of his officials along with the priest Zephaniah to Jeremiah with the request, "Please pray to the Lord our God for us," Jeremiah 37:3 NIV.
- C. Zedekiah hoped that this delegation of important civil and religious leaders who bore the king's petition might impress the prophet Jeremiah to beseech the Lord in Jerusalem's favor, and that God in turn might be impressed by the intercessory prayer of His prophet Jeremiah to deliver Jerusalem from the Babylonians.
- D. Since Jeremiah had not yet been imprisoned so that he was free to come and go from the king (Jer. 37:4), the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in response to Zedekiah's request to Jeremiah, Jeremiah 37:6.
- E. That message revealed that God was intent on teaching Zedekiah and Judah that He as Israel's sovereign and immutable God was unlike pagan deities, that He could not and would not be manipulated by the king, his officials, the priests or the people who had paid no attention to His Word, nor by their efforts to manipulate His prophet into manipulating Him in turn to come to their aid, Jeremiah 37:7-10:
 1. Before Jeremiah prayed to the Lord in behalf of Zedekiah's request, the Lord told Jeremiah to tell Zedekiah that Pharaoh's army that had marched out to support Judah in accord with Judah's treaty with Egypt would instead return to Egypt, breaking its treaty with Judah, Jeremiah 37:7.
 2. God added that when Egypt retreated, the Babylonians would return and renew their attack on Jerusalem and eventually capture it and burn the city down, Jeremiah 37:8.
 3. Thus, instead of deceiving themselves into thinking that the Babylonians would surely leave them, meaning that Jeremiah's intercession would move God to show them mercy even though they had not even paid attention to God's words, the Lord assured Zedekiah that the Babylonians would surely not leave Jerusalem, Jeremiah 37:9.
 4. The Lord added that even if the people of Judah were able somehow to defeat the Babylonian army, leaving just a few wounded Babylonian soldiers lying in their tents temporarily unable to fight, those few wounded soldiers would still eventually come out of their tents and burn Jerusalem down, Jeremiah 37:10!

Lesson: *When king Zedekiah, his officials and the people of the land not only disobeyed God's words through Jeremiah, but failed even to pay attention to them in complete disrespect for God, His words and His prophet, only then to try to manipulate God's prophet in turn to manipulate God into rescuing them from Babylon by sending a delegation of civil and religious leaders to ask God's prophet to intercede in their behalf, God resolutely refused and countered Zedekiah's wishes by assuring him that Jerusalem was destined to be defeated and destroyed!*

Application: *(1) If we want God to answer our prayers, we cannot come to Him trying to manipulate Him to meet our needs while failing to submit to His sovereign rule and thus failing to pay attention to His Word in order to obey it, cf. Psalm 66:18; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15. (2) We must also watch that we not try to manipulate God's messengers, for God controls His messengers, and any effort to manipulate them challenges God's rule over them!*