

## 2 Chronicles 36:11-21 • Leaving God No Alternative

### Introduction

In these final verses of Chronicles is a powerful lesson as to exactly how and why Final Judgment comes about. This is not only a lesson about the definitive Final Judgment of all mankind to come, but about why God brings a person, nation, or group to a complete end, even if they may have started out on the right foot. Many scholars believe that this is a parallel teaching to the End Times, that just as Israel completely exhausted its spiritual credibility and usefulness on earth and was replaced by the church, so in turn the church will come to an end and be one of the reasons God extracts it and returns to using Israel again. In any case, there is practical application in learning how God works in these situations that we may understand our role in either contributing to it, or successfully avoiding it.

<sup>11</sup>Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup>He did evil in the sight of the LORD his God; he did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet who spoke for the LORD. <sup>13</sup>He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear allegiance by God. But he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel. <sup>14</sup>Furthermore, all the officials of the priests and the people were very unfaithful following all the abominations of the nations; and they defiled the house of the LORD which He had sanctified in Jerusalem.

### [Read v.11-14]

#### Q: What were Zedekiah's chief flaws in his spiritual character?

1. "He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet who spoke for the LORD". In other words, he rejected God's Word through His messenger.
2. "He rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear allegiance by God". In other words, his own word was useless because he only invoked God's name when it was convenient, with no intention of following through and honoring it.
3. "He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel". In other words, he was personally rebellious and in rejection of God's Word.

**Point:** Zedekiah's problems were all traced to his complete and total rejection of God's Word and ways, both privately and publicly, both internally and externally. "He did not humble himself...but stiffened his neck and hardened his heart..." summarizes a life devoted to pride in self rather than subjection to God's Word.

#### Q: What were the priests' and people's chief flaws regarding their spiritual character?

1. They "were very unfaithful following all the abominations of the nations". That is, they transgressed God's Word by imitating and following the spiritual practices of the nations around them, to whom they were supposed to be an example of faithfulness to the One True God.
2. "They defiled the house of the LORD which He had sanctified in Jerusalem". That is, they attempted to simultaneously use the temple while embracing false gods and their related practices. They were merging God's ways with their own ways, giving credibility to the **false** ways while simultaneously rendering ineffective the **true** ways provided through God's Word.

**Point:** No one could distinguish any difference between those alleged to be "God's people" and the ungodly any more because they incorporated false worship side-by-side with going to the temple to such a degree, that they were no longer "sanctified"; that is, wholly set apart and devoted exclusively to God's Word and ways alone. They were completely compromised.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; <sup>16</sup>but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, until there was no remedy. <sup>17</sup>Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm; He gave them all into his hand.

**[Read v.15-17]**

**Q: What was God's initial response to the presence of unfaithfulness?**

A: He "sent word to them again and again by His messengers". He provided them with every extended opportunity to repent of their disobedience to His Word.

**Point:** People sometimes ask, "How can a loving God allow evil to occur in the world" and fail to realize that the situation is actually reversed; God is asking us, "Why won't you listen to Me and cease from doing evil by obeying My Word?"

**Q: What were the responses to God's repeated sending of His Word?**

A: They did not simply reject it once, but "continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets". Time after time God sent His Word, and time after time they did not merely reject it, but actually mocked, despised, and scoffed at it.

**Point:** The Biblical definition of "rejecting God's Word" is not having heard it, or not listening to it one time, but a heart that actively turns against it over and over again. It expresses one's choice to not just follow something else, but to come to despise what God offers in its place.

**Q: What does it mean, "until there was no remedy"?**

A: As stated in v.14, the worship of God in accordance with His Word was supposed to sanctify His people, to make them pure and acceptable according to His holiness and righteousness. Their repeated rebellion resulted in their becoming so defiled, so committed to sin, that there was no alternative to final judgment for that sin.

**Point:** What some may not understand about Final Judgment is that it's not so much about a final date which God has set for all things to end as much as it is about the spiritual condition of mankind, when their repeated rejection of Him exhausts all attempts of reconciliation and the only alternative left is final destruction.

**[Read v.18-21]**

<sup>18</sup>All the articles of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his officers, he brought them all to Babylon. <sup>19</sup>Then they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burned all its fortified buildings with fire and destroyed all its valuable articles. <sup>20</sup>Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, <sup>21</sup>to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.

**Q: Why is the destruction of the temple and its contents a powerful lesson to Judah?**

A: They had come to the false belief that the very existence of the temple prevented anything bad from happening to them. They believed they were protected simply because God had chosen Jerusalem in which to build His house and could therefore live however they pleased. They came to believe more in the things of God than the Word of God which actually established them.

**Q: How does v.21 substantiate this assertion, that they had rejected the greater authority of God's Word?**

A: The judgment came against them based on the fact that they had not kept God's Word in regards to giving the land its sabbath rest every 7 years for the past 490 years. It relates to the fact that keeping the sabbath was the very sign by which the covenant – what we now call the Old Testament – was sealed between God and His people. To violate the sabbath was to render the covenant of His Word with them null and void. So it wasn't about the **things** of God, but their disobedience in carrying out the **Word** of God.

*'So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed."*

*Exodus 31:16-17*

***Point:*** *They were not rejected because of technical infractions in the course of carrying out the sacrifices or others rituals and observances concerning the temple, but because their heart was not actually devoted to God's Word in the course of carrying them out. This became evident when they took "shortcuts" and chose not to obey the **whole** Law and instead counted on the things of God to be enough to protect them. In other words, rejecting God's Word eventually resulted in being spiritually deceived.*

### ***Epilogue***

*The recurring theme of Jesus' Olivet Discourse, in which He personally explains what we need to know about the End Times leading up to Final Judgment, is focused more on the issues of deception and unfaithfulness than any other:*

*"See to it that no one misleads you (24:3)...many will come in My name...and will mislead many (24:4)...many will fall away (24:10)...many false prophets will arise and mislead many (24:11)...most people's love will grow cold (24:12)...if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'...do not believe him (24:23)...false Christs and false prophets will arise...so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect (24:24)...if they say to you...'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them (24:26)...Therefore be on the alert (24:42)..."*

*It's easy to see the parallels to Judah's last days in how the rejection of God's Word worked spiritual deception to the point of leaving God no alternative but to invoke Final Judgment.*

- How does this compare to how you see the increasing problem of spiritual leaders who are no longer themselves embracing God's Word?*
- How does this compare with believers' increasing disinterest in God's Word?*
- Do you see the correlation that, statistically, Christians and non-Christians are no longer distinguishable when it comes to moral issues such as adultery, divorce, abortion, etc.?*
- Do some people today trust more in the things of God such as going to church than in obedience to the Word of God?*