

"God's Love Story Sermon Outlines"

by Doug Hamilton

Section 18: When God's Love Story Unravels (2 Kings)

It was July 586 BC (Jer. 39:2) inside the city of Riblah, Syria. A thirty-three year old man named Zedekiah was rounded up with his family and taken 300 miles to the Babylonian basecamp. Zedekiah was a king in his own land of Israel, but here he is nothing more than a prisoner awaiting punishment. The prophet Jeremiah warned King Zedekiah *"Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire. ³ You will not escape from his hand, for you will surely be captured and delivered into his hand; and you will see the king of Babylon eye to eye, and he will speak with you face to face, and you will go to Babylon.'*" (Jeremiah 34:2-3). Only a few weeks before he attempted to make a run for it following an 18 month siege of Jerusalem by the invading Babylonians, but did not get far. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, was already livid with anger because Israel decided to hire Egypt to war against the Chaldeans. Zedekiah must now face a decision of judgment not only from Nebuchadnezzar, but also from God.

For a year and a half the Israeli king watched as his people starved and suffered thirst in Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege. The prophet Jeremiah warned him this would happen and now it had. What was going through Zedekiah's mind as he appeared before the Babylonian king? Perhaps he was thinking about the destruction of his city and homeland, for it was smoldering when he departed. Possibly he was thinking about all the young people who died on the battlefield because of his stupid decisions?

Nebuchadnezzar lined up Zedekiah's young children and forced him to watch as their throats were slit from one ear to the other. Even before the tears finished falling from Zedekiah's eyes, the Babylonian king ordered his eyes to be plucked out, insuring the last image to run through his mind to be the murder of his own children. This is about as far from God's Love Story that one can imagine and a sad moment in human history.

Sometimes our behaviors can lead to predicted disaster in our lives. This leads to an important question, what are the signs when "God's Love Story" is about to completely unravel in the lives of a people? A brief look at the demise of the Southern Kingdom of Judah should yield some important clues.

1. God's Love Story unravels whenever there is a failure to pass godly faith to the next generation.

- a) Zedekiah was the third son of King Josiah, the greatest king in the history of Israel. Josiah *"did right in the sight of the LORD...nor did he turn aside to the right or the left"* (2 Kings 22:2).
 - i. Josiah began a great restoration program for the Temple of God (2 Kings 22:5-6).

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- ii. He led national repentance upon find a copy of the book of the Law (2 Kings 22:11, 19).
- iii. He destroyed the pagan idols and altars (2 Kings 23:4-6).
- iv. He drove out the male homosexual prostitutes (2 Kings 23:7).
- v. He destroyed cemeteries and priests commemorating immorality and idolatry (2 Kings 23:15-20).
- vi. He re-instituted the Passover to the highest glory since early in the days of the Exodus (2 Kings 23:21-23).
- vii. *2 Kings 23:25 Before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.*

Josiah was the best of the best concerning the kings, both of the Northern and Southern kingdoms. The one area where he lacked the most was in the family life. He failed to pass a practical faith down to his children.

- i. Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, was initially chosen by the people to be their new king. The scripture states *He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done (2 Kings 23:32)* Because of this, Pharaoh Neco imprisoned and exiled him to die in Egypt.
- ii. Another son named Jehoiakim took the throne. *He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done (2 Kings 23:37)*. Under him idolatry and paganism flourished once again. He died on December 10, 598 BC and received a shameful burial as predicted by the Jeremiah (Jer. 22:18).
- iii. Jehoiakim's son, Jehoachin, inherited the throne and all the sin along with it. 2 Kings 24:9 states *He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done*. His wickedness lasted only three months before he was removed and exiled to Babylon.
- iv. That leads us to Zedekiah, the final king on the throne in Judah. 2 Kings 24:19 says "*He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.*" Jeremiah went to Zedekiah and said the nation would fall under his watch. When Edom, Moab, Sidon, Tyre and Ammon put together an alliance to rebel against Babylon, he warned Zedekiah not to resist the yoke of Babylon and the people would be allowed to stay on the land (Jeremiah 27). The king would not listen and the beginning of the end was in place. Four years later he was caught aligning with Egypt to attack Babylon. That was the final straw for

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Nebuchadnezzar and he moved to destroy the rebellious kingdom and nation.

The life that King Josiah had for God actually spared the nation from ruin and destruction for one generation. He had four descendants take the throne and not one of them had a redeeming faith. Whenever and wherever you find a generational pattern of unfaithfulness springing up from the people, then you know that God's Love Story is about to be unraveled in their lives.

2. God's Love Story unravels whenever there is a failure to keep godly leadership among the present generation.

- a) During the days of Jehoiakim, King Nebuchadnezzar started round one of the submission phase by carrying away many of the spiritual leaders of the day. In 605 BC, spiritual men like Daniel and his three friends (Dan. 1:1-2, 6) were carried away into captivity. This left a spiritual void in the lives of the people.
- b) Later on King Jehoiakim, upon having the scroll of Jeremiah read to him, decided to silence the warning by having it cut up and burned in the fireplace (Jeremiah 36:23). This was an effort to stifle the spiritual leadership in Israel during a time that they need it most.
- c) During the days of Jehoiachin, King Nebuchadnezzar imposed a leadership drain on the nation of Israel. Cuneiform tablet readings record on April 22, 597 BC that Jehoiachin, his mother and ten thousand other nobles, leading men and women of Judah, captains and officials were carried away into Babylon (2 Kings 24:12-14). This left only the poor and feeble with no political, social or military leadership. By the time Nebuchadnezzar came to destroy Jerusalem in 586 BC, the nation already experienced an unraveling of God's Love Story.

Whenever there is a void in leadership, the people will perish. Proverbs 11:14 says "*Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory.*" Jeremiah directly addressed this in 23:1-2 "*Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!*" declares the LORD...*You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,*" declares the LORD." If you ever sense a lack of quality leadership among the present generation, then beware for God's Love Story is about to be unraveled among the people.

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3. God's Love Story unravels whenever there is failure to recognize a sin of the past generation.
- a) There are only two primary ways we learn from mistakes, either from our own or from the mistakes of others. The foremost is costly and the latter is wise, sparing the student from many of the consequences. In the case of the final kings of Israel, they only learned from their own mistakes and it resulted in a complete unraveling of God's Love Story in their lives.
 - b) All the reforms that Josiah put in place were undone by the final four kings. Male prostitutes, spiritualists, pagans, idolatry, immorality, sorcery, witchcraft and the like were all popular again. The same stupid mistakes of alliances of the past were being carried out again.
 - c) They had failed to recognize sin of the past and the result was an embracing of sin in the present. When the people become dull to past sin in the culture, it spreads to the present.
 - d) When we see a people referring to past sin as something good and acceptable, watch out! When the people are calling good evil and evil good (Is 5:28), watch out! Whenever there is a failure to recognize sin of the past generation, then there will be an unraveling of God's Love Story from that culture.

In closing:

God's Love Story is for all, but all will not be for God's Love Story. Nations and people throughout time have both embraced God's Love Story and rejected it. When there is a rejection of this by the population, there will be an unraveling of that fabric that makes a people strong and vibrant with hope. Our nation today is not the same nation of yesteryear.

- We have failing in our efforts to pass godly faith to the next generation like we should.
- We are failing to bring forth godly leadership for the nation.
- We are failing at recognizing sin as sin in our culture.

If we will just focus on those three areas and expend our energies on them, then we will be making the greatest impact that we can. Make sure to be a good influence on those around you. Make sure to be evangelistic to those in our society. Reach out to them with the gospel of Christ, change their hearts, souls, minds and ultimately their future. Make sure that God's Love Story never unravels in our lives and the lives of those around us!