

By Bessie Wilbon

Sunday School Lesson



LESSON BACKGROUND

The kingdom of Israel had fallen more than 130 years before Jerusalem was destroyed. Two factors contributed to this: (1) Israel had the misfortune of being located on the main route that linked the major world powers on that day. The other factor in Judah's advantage was that some of the kings during this period were good kings who sought to do God's will. Because of the actions of these kings, God stayed His hand of judgment for a time. Unfortunately, the successors of Josiah did not follow his leading, (of being a good king) and the result was a rapid deterioration in the religious and political situation, leading finally to disaster.

Josiah was mortally wounded in the battle against the Egyptians and was succeeded on the throne by his son, Jehoahaz. After three months he was dethroned and his brother, Eliakim, was installed as king, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," (2 Kings 23:37). He persecuted and tried to kill the prophet Jeremiah.

Jehoiakim was followed by his 18 year old son, Jehoachim, who was taken prisoner and taken to Babylon. Another son of Josiah, Mattaniah, was the chosen successor. His name was changed to Zedekiah.

THE LESSON

"Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled in Jerusalem for 11 years. His mother was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah from the city of Libnah. King Zedekiah sinned against the Lord, just as King Jehoiakim had done. The Lord became so angry with the people of Jerusalem and Judah that he banished them from his sight. Zedekiah rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and so Nebuchadnezzar came with all his army and attacked Jerusalem on the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign. They set up camp outside the city, built walls around it and kept it under siege until Zedekiah's eleventh year." (2 Kings 24:18-20; 25:1-2).

The exact event or series of events that signaled the beginning of the revolt is not known. Whatever it was, the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign Nebuchadnezzar began his campaign against Judah. He captured several outlying, fortified towns before proceeding against Jerusalem. After surrounding the city, he built forts or siege towers from which he could attack it. The details of the siege can be found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Nebuchadnezzar's strategy was to starve the city out. After a year and a half, the strategy proved effective as the people of Jerusalem were reduced to weakness by starvation. The book of Lamentations gives us some of the horrible details of the suffering that accompanied the final days of siege.

In many ways Zedekiah resembled a tragic character in a classical Greek drama. He had one flaw in his character that proved his undoing. He was indecisive, wavering back and forth when faced with an important decision. "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done."

Jehoiakim despised the prophet Jeremiah and would have had him killed had he thought he could get away with it. Zedekiah, on the other hand, often consulted Jeremiah. Unfortunately, after he had received good advice from the prophet, he usually didn't follow it. Zedekiah was surrounded by counselors who were pro-Egyptian, and he was afraid to oppose them, even though he knew in his heart that they were wrong. Thus he allowed himself to be pushed into rebelling against the Chaldeans. If he had followed the advice of Jeremiah, his nation might have been spared the destruction that came upon them.

Aren't we all somewhat like Zedekiah on occasion? We have committed ourselves to God and we seek counsel from the Scriptures and from Bible teachers. Yet we are often guilty of compromising our convictions and ignoring the Bible teachings. May the tragic fate of Zedekiah remind us that the price of such compromise is exceedingly high.

Our nation stands at the pinnacle of power reached by other great empires. The decisions we make will determine our destiny. We dare not think that we enjoy some special privilege that keeps us immune from God's judgment.

We are tempted to believe that our destiny can be assured by placing our trust in vast armaments. Whatever justification there may be for the billions we spend on defense, in our more sober moments we know that rockets and nuclear bombs are not our final refuge. We must learn from the history of ancient Judah that a nation can remain strong only when its citizens are prepared "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly" with God.

To walk such a course has never been easy. It requires a knowledge of God's will for us as revealed in the Scriptures. It requires the courage to follow His will wherever it may lead us. It also requires a knowledge of the past so that we avoid the pitfalls that proved the undoing of Judah and Israel.

First Baptist Church-West Burns Mortgage

West to recognize the commitment that, without fanfare, the leadership and membership have accomplished together. It was five years ago in November, 1981, that the Mortgage Liquidation Drive began and it has been achieved 11 years short of the time allotted.

The day will have festivities of celebration including an afternoon reception and evening banquet which will be held at the Sheraton Hotel on I-85, at 6:30 p.m.

All are welcome to attend. The church is located at 1801 Oaklawn Ave. Rev. Humphrey is pastor.

NEW ST. JOHN

"Sometimes we Christians let other things take precedence in our lives, when Christ should be preeminent. In the Christian life, Christ is not a sideline. He is the center," attests Rev. Robert Leak. And in his sermon on Sunday, November 9, 11 a.m., Rev. Leak will preach on: "Making Jesus the Main Attraction in Your Life."

"It will make your life more meaningful," he assures. Also, at 3 p.m., New St. John's Angels of Love will host its annual concert and many outstanding guest choirs and choruses will participate.

Everyone is urged to attend. Finally, expressions of thanks are offered to Rev. Mack McRae, Rev. Sis. Wilson and Rev. Norman Kerry Jr. for their help in making New St. John's Trustee's annual program a great success.

The church is located at 2000 St. John Rd. Rev. Leak is pastor.

ANTIOCH

The second Sunday in November has been designated as annual Youth Day at Antioch Baptist Church. Various youth activities are scheduled throughout the week-end.

This year will feature a "Family Banquet" to be held Saturday, November 8, at 6:30 p.m. Miss Shawn Pennington, chairperson of Youth Day activities, will serve as mistress of ceremonies at the banquet; Mrs. Thomasena T. Drummond will be the banquet speaker.

On Sunday, November 9, Rev. Michael A. McClain, former pastor of First Mayfield Memorial Baptist Church, will be the guest minister for the 11 a.m. Worship Service.

The youth of the church will lead the music and other supporting services.

The public is cordially invited to all services.

Antioch Baptist is located at 232 Skyland Ave. Rev. Preston Pendergrass is pastor.

PLAZA UNITED

Space to sell crafts is still available at the Plaza United Methodist Fall Fest slated for Saturday, November 15, 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Each space will rent for \$5 with proceeds going to benefit the Plaza Adult Living Service, a day care program for the elderly.

To reserve a space to sell crafts, call Doris Hendricks at 537-7934 during daytime hours.

Craft booths will be set up in the church gymnasium. An attic sale, food sales and numerous other events are planned to attract area residents all day long.

The church is located at 5600 The Plaza.

Baptist Convention

Cary - The Baptist State Convention, the statewide organization of Southern Baptists in North Carolina, will consider a new relationship with the denomination's oldest college, Wake Forest University, during the annual convention meeting in the Greensboro Coliseum, November 10-12.



The spotlight chose to shine on Thomasena Drummond, wife of Rev. Paul Drummond, pastor of St. Paul Baptist Church and her daughter recently. The two shared a birthday luncheon hosted by the Missionary Groups at the church. Approximately 50 friends attended the gala affair which was held at McDonald's Cafeteria. Among the many gifts the mother and daughter received was a beautiful cake made by Vender Moore and presented by Gertrude Hamilton.

The proposed change between church and college would give the university complete autonomy in the election of trustees and governance of the institution. Currently, the Baptist State Convention elects the

university's trustees. Under the new proposal, Wake Forest would also no longer receive financial support from the state convention.

The annual convention opens Monday, November 10, 6:30 a.m.

with three sessions on Tuesday and a closing session Wednesday morning. Around 3,500 "messengers" (delegates) are expected to attend.

The convention will also elect officers, adopt a \$27 million budget, hear reports from several of its agencies, and consider a change in status for Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute, a training school for ministers in Hendersonville.

"A LIFE'S TOUCH"

with Rev. Hazel Shropshire

Everybody's looking for what I call a "Burger King" religion. "Have it your way." People want their own kind of religion. But you can't have it your way. You've got to have it God's way or you're not going to have it at all. God will bring you to a winding path to discipline you.

Any inquires call or write:

Rev. Hazel Shropshire
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