

I want to show you what happens to a nation when its leaders - as well as God's people in that land - reject the Bible as the Lord's divine voice. Wherever the authority of Scripture is removed, chaos soon follows - and judgment appears at the door.

I know of no nation on earth today that is governed by God's Holy Word. In many Muslim lands, the people submit themselves to the authority of the Koran, and Mohammed's word is law. But in supposedly Christian nations, no such subjection to Holy Scripture exists.

Certainly, America no longer allows itself to be governed by God's Word. Our Puritan forefathers founded this nation on the Bible, establishing a system of government to be ruled by the authority of Scripture. Now our leaders toss aside God's Word as if it were a yoke of slavery. They have not only rejected the Bible but have done everything possible to remove it from our society. It is now politically correct to despise God's Holy Word.

I tell you, it is absolutely fatal for any nation to reject the Bible's authority, and to ignore the warnings and pleadings of God's watchmen. America may be judged for other particular sins - but by rejecting God's Word as our standard, we'll surely bring judgment upon our land.

Some Christians object, saying, "America is a missionary nation. If God judges us, who will evangelize the world?" At one time, the same was true of Israel. God called that nation to be a light to the rest of the world. Yet, in spite of Israel's incredible calling, the Lord brought

Governed by the Word of God

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judgment on them. And now America faces the same judgment.

If Paul says the entire Old Testament is meant for our instruction today (see 1.COR 10:11), then the book of Jeremiah provides us with an object lesson on this subject of rejecting God's Word. This lesson begins in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim's reign over Judah.

At that time, God instructed the prophet Jeremiah to write down all the prophetic warnings he had delivered over the previous twenty-three years. During that period, Jeremiah had warned that a great day of accounting was coming because of Jehoiakim's wicked grandfather, the notorious, blood-shedding King Manasseh.

Manasseh had turned the temple into an abominable center of idol worship. He dabbled in witchcraft and turned to enchantments, familiar spirits and wizards. This evil man despised God's Word trampling His laws and rejecting His commandments. Scripture says, "*Manasseh seduced (Israel) to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel*" (2.KIN 21:9).

Moreover, Manasseh's hands were stained with the blood of innocents: "*Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord*" (verse 16).

The result was national chaos and judgment at the hands of an angry God. The Lord declared: "*Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle*" (verses 11-12). "*I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down*" (verse 13).

God was saying, "I'm going to judge your nation so harshly, you'll think your world has been turned upside down. Even your enemies won't believe what they hear I've done to you." Even though Manasseh eventually repented, God would not call off the judgments. He would only delay them for a season.

There is no denying that our nation is in a similar state today. We have shed the blood of over 30 million babies through abortion. How could a holy God wink at this ocean of innocent blood spilled over 3,000 miles wide and 2,000 miles long? How could He ignore the pitiful cries of these slain children?

God judged Manasseh for much less. The bloodshed our nation has caused through abortion is more than that evil king could have caused in a lifetime. And now our nation faces the same judgment Manasseh faced - because it refuses to do anything to stop the killing of babies, even in their final trimester.

How can America continue killing its unborn? We do it because we have refused to believe what God's Word says about shedding the blood of innocents. If we were truly a Bible-believing nation, this awful tragedy never could have taken place.

**Manasseh's Son, Josiah,
Inherited the Throne - and He
Did Right in God's Eyes (see
2.KIN 2:2).**

Manasseh's son, Josiah, trembled at the Word of the Lord. The Bible says when he ascended to the throne, he *"walked in all the way of David his father [his great-great grandfather], and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left"* (2.KIN 22:2).

Under Josiah's reign, Judah's high priest found the holy scriptures lying in a dusty corner of the temple. He handed the scroll to a scribe and sent him to read it to Josiah. Scripture tells us, *"It came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes"* (verse 11).

Josiah took seriously God's Word, shuddering in terror as he heard it read aloud. He realized, "We've reached the flash point of sin Moses talked about. We're under judgment." And immediately, Josiah came under the authority of God's Word.

The king sent representatives to the prophetess Huldah, asking, "What should we do? The wrath of God is against us because of our sins." Huldah answered, in essence: "The judgment God promised to pour out on Jerusalem and Judah still stands. But because you have humbled yourself and

wept before Him when you heard what He spoke, you won't see the evil He has promised to bring upon the nation" (see verses 15-20).

What an amazing word: Josiah would never have to see judgment fall upon Judah because of his wicked father, Manasseh. Yet immediately this godly king set about conforming the nation to God's Word. For the next thirty-one years, every time he learned a new statute from the scriptures, he repented and conformed to it. And his obedience ushered in an unprecedented time of blessing and prosperity in Judah.

For example, when Josiah read that homosexuality was wrong, he dealt with all the Sodomites in the land. And when he discovered God's hatred for idolatry, he smashed all the pagan altars and idols. Also, when he learned that God hated human sacrifice, he swept it all out. Josiah complied with God's Word simply because he feared it.

During the final nineteen years of Josiah's reign, Jeremiah began to warn of the judgment still to come upon Judah: *"I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way ... but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them"* (JER 35:15,17).

God had pronounced judgment upon Judah twenty-seven years before. Why was He going to bring down His judgment now? He knew the people of Judah didn't share Josiah's zeal for the Lord. Theirs was not a genuine heart repentance. They gave the Lord lip service, but their hearts were given to idolatry.

"Because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered" (verse 17). *"Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? ... ye hearkened not unto me"* (verses 13-14).

God was saying, "Shake my people, Jeremiah - stir their hearts. Maybe then they'll see their evil ways and repent. Then I can forgive, cleanse and restore them." This is the reason why God continually sends watchmen to warn

His people: It is because He loves them. His warnings are simply expressions of His great mercy.

Yet Christians today are no different from the people Jeremiah warned. Like them, we cry, "Please, pastor - no more hard messages. Preach smooth things to us." Many don't want to bring themselves under the governance of God's Word.

We see this attitude in mainline churches. They are moving closer to a union with churches that have forsaken the Scriptures as the Word of God, claiming to set aside their differences in a plea for love and unity. Yet they are also casting aside God's Word in the process. Now the great Reformation doctrines that thousands of believers paid for with their lives are at risk: salvation by faith alone, justification by faith. By returning to salvation by works, this church union is embracing righteousness by good works alone - and that is the doctrine of Antichrist.

This world church union is also moving toward ordaining homosexual ministers. And that is straight from the pits of hell. Yet church leaders continue to ignore the warnings of godly voices, who urge them not to give up defending the gospel of Christ.

**God Gave Jeremiah a Final Word
for His People, to Be Delivered at
the National Fast.**

When godly Josiah died, his son Jehoiakim took the throne. And in the fourth year of his reign, God told Jeremiah, *"Go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the Lord in the ears of the people in the Lord's house upon the fasting day"* (JER 36:6).

Verse 9 tells us it was *"in the ninth month ... (that) they proclaimed a fast before the Lord to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem."*

Jerusalem's leaders knew the awesome Chaldean army was approaching. They had received intelligence reports that this overpowering enemy was marching through the land, intent on overthrowing Jerusalem and destroying the temple.

So, after twenty-seven years, Jeremiah's warnings were finally hitting close to home. Soon every-

one in Judah began flocking to Jerusalem. And everyone was so familiar with the things God had said would happen to them, it sounded like a worn-out song: "We're going to be judged for our idolatry, for rejecting God's Word, and for shedding innocent blood. The Chaldeans will overtake Jerusalem, destroy the temple and take us into captivity in Babylon. God's judgment has been set - it can't be avoided."

Yet year after year, no judgment came. In fact, the more the people sinned, the more prosperous they became. They scoffed at Jeremiah, saying, "You keep telling us hard times are coming. But we've seen nothing but prosperity." I wonder how much mockery Jeremiah endured during those years. Did he ever doubt the word that God had given him?

But Jeremiah's words finally came to pass. Suddenly, in the midst of all the good times, Jerusalem's leaders received the bad news: "The Chaldeans are upon us."

Now, God has always had a holy remnant. And I'm sure they were present in Judah at this time, praying for nationwide repentance, as the country had seen previously under Ezra and Nehemiah. That earlier generation had trembled when Ezra read the scriptures (see EZRA 7:10). And they responded by repenting and coming under the governance of God's Word.

So now, as the fast was being held in Jerusalem, Jeremiah sent his scribe Baruch to deliver what would be God's final warning before judgment arrived. Baruch thundered a message that distilled twenty-seven years of warnings: "*Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord ... in the ears of all the people*" (JER 36:10).

Three types of people heard God's Word delivered on that day. Jeremiah 36 describes these three types as passive hearers, perturbed hearers and penknife hearers. Each of these hearers is present in the church today - and they react in the same way the people did in Jeremiah's day:

1. Passive Hearers

The fast in Jerusalem became a fatal one. How? Incredibly, as Baruch thundered Jeremiah's impassioned call to repentance,

many listeners remained totally passive. They were completely unmoved by the word they heard: "*Neither he [the king], nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah*" (JER 37:2).

Can you imagine the scene? A national fast had been called - a time of solemnity, reverence and seeking. And now the people were being given a final warning. Their enemy was thundering down on them, coming to enslave them and march them off to Babylon. Yet the Israelites just stood there blinking; nothing registered. The word they'd gathered to hear from God went in one ear and out the other.

I am dumbfounded by the passive hearers I see in the church today. These people "come to the fast" - attending church regularly, singing in the choir, raising their hands in praise. Yet they remain completely passive to the word they hear preached. Their pastors warn, "The antichrist spirit is already at work in the world, deceiving many. Every follower of Christ has to prepare by being grounded in Scripture." But these words fall on deaf ears.

Such Christians have grown blind to the danger they're in. One day they're going to be in the battle of their lives. Hell is going to spew forth its demonic hordes, and the enemy will pour in like a flood. Yet these believers will be frozen in a state of passivity.

The word passive means "receiving an action or word without responding or initiating a response in return." Does this describe your attitude toward the Bible? You may think the coming days of judgment will drive you to God's Word. But the Israelites also knew judgment was coming, and they remained passive. You'll do the same, if you haven't already turned to God's Word.

I acknowledge that our generation suffers from sensory overload. Our minds are satiated with images and reports of awful tragedies - planes falling from the sky, mass murders in schools and churches, atrocities taking place all over the world. And every day, it seems, a new health study is warning that some previously innocent food is now killing us with cancer. It all can be so overwhelming.

Yet it is equally true that we can become numbed by our comfortable lives. Our prosperity and ease can cause us to fall into a narcotic-like stupor, lulling us into believing the good days will never end. We gradually shut our ears and hearts to God's Word and the warnings of His prophets.

So it was in Judah - and so it is in the church today. In each case, people have gone back to their homes and careers, thinking, "How hard can things get? Our leaders will find a solution. There's no use getting worked up over it."

But passivity toward God's Word opens the door to every kind of false doctrine. In Judah, the people eventually paid heed to false prophets. And the same thing is happening in the church today. People are running here and there to receive "words" from so-called prophets and flesh-driven evangelists. Yet much of what these preachers tell them is absolutely contrary to Scripture. And, tragically, many biblically illiterate believers can't discern the falsehoods, because they don't know God's Word.

2. Perturbed Hearers

To be perturbed means "to be greatly disturbed, made uneasy, upset, confused." This describes the reaction of Michaiah, an official in Jehoiakim's court. Michaiah had overheard Baruch's message at the fast - and he shook with terror. This man was a part of Judah's intelligence-gathering group. And he quickly realized Baruch was speaking things no one could possibly know unless they were revealed by God Himself.

Michaiah hurried to the king's court to share what he'd heard with the other leaders. To paraphrase, he told them, "Gentlemen, I've got disturbing news. I've just heard Jeremiah's prophecy, and it concurs with our information. So he has been telling the truth these many years after all. The Chaldeans are too powerful for us - we can't stand up against them. And now we can't ignore it. We've got to listen to this word from God."

The officials decided to invite Baruch to a secret meeting, where he could give them the rest of the story. "*So Baruch ... took the roll in his hand, and came unto them*" (JER 36:14). As Baruch began to read

aloud, *"It came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other"* (verse 16). The phrase for *"were afraid"* here means "shuddered." These men literally trembled as they heard God's Word.

This reverent group of men represents God's holy remnant. While an entire multitude can be passive and unmoved upon hearing God's Word, those who are shut in with the Lord tremble when they hear His awesome truth.

I believe God has a trembling, influential remnant hidden away in this last hour. Just a few weeks ago I received word of a prayer meeting taking place among several U.S. Senators. These men and women have heard prophetic messages of coming judgment, and they have shuddered at God's Word. Now they are spreading that word, quietly and judiciously, among those who have ears to hear.

I thank God for all perturbed hearers - godly men and women who accept the word of the Lord and tremble.

3. Penknife Hearers

The perturbed men in Judah's court stated, *"We will surely tell the king of all these words"* (JER 36:16). They went to King Jehoiakim, who was sitting in his winter house with his staff, warming himself by the fire. Somberly, the godly tremblers told the king, "A disturbing word has come to us through the prophet Jeremiah. Judgment is at the door. It has all been written down in the holy book. We beg you to read what it says."

The king instructed his scribe, Jehudi, to fetch the book. However, as Jehudi began reading, *"It came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed"* (verse 23).

The trembling men were astonished at this brazen act. The Bible

says they *"made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them"* (verse 25). Scripture adds that the king's staff *"were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words"* (verse 24).

In our society today, many judges, politicians and atheistic powers wield penknives. They're ready to cut and burn God's Word out of existence. But these people will never succeed. When Baruch told Jeremiah what the king had done, the prophet instructed his servant simply to write out another scroll with the same prophecies, *"and there were added besides unto them many like words"* (verse 32).

God's Word came back more powerful than ever. You see, Jeremiah knew that no one can ban God's book. Communist China has tried it, yet millions of Bibles are now being printed there. The floodgates have also burst open in Albania. Just a few years ago, officials there boasted they had removed all Bibles. But today churches are springing up and Bibles are flowing freely.

The Bible-despising King Jehoiakim represents a new generation brought up under godly parents. Somewhere along the way, Jehoiakim developed his own idea about who God was. Something in his heart would not let go of the spirit of this world, and he rejected God's pure Word. He ended up backsliding in the midst of a great revival.

This kind of young believer is seen everywhere today. Such Christians grew up witnessing great revivals and sitting under godly teachings. Yet the spirit of the world has gripped them, and they've become addicted to the permissive lifestyle of the age. For example, many refused in their younger years to give up ungodly music. And now they're mocking the old hymns of their parents. Essentially, they have taken penknife in hand, cutting those spiritual songs out of

their lives and substituting fleshly music.

Now, as adult leaders in ministry, these Christians have brought penknives into God's house. They have lost all holy fear, despising powerful, Holy Ghost-led meetings. They complain that the "old styles" of worship or preaching aren't contemporary enough.

This had led to tragic results. A minister friend of mine called me recently, distraught over his teenage son. The young man had been drinking and getting into all kinds of trouble. When the father sat his son down, the boy told him his youth pastor had said drinking was okay, that the Bible actually approved of it.

This misguided youth minister claimed, "We live in a day of freedom, with no guilt. You can drink and still serve Jesus." No! That youth pastor took penknife in hand and cut God's Word to shreds. And in the process he nearly destroyed a minister's son.

Scripture says, *"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set"* (PROV 22:28). Yet young Jehoiakims in the pulpits are removing those Bible-centered landmarks left and right. And they're leading their sheep farther away from God's pure Word.

Of course, I am not indicting all of the younger generation. There are many godly young men and women today in both the pulpit and the music industry who tremble at God's Word. I want to encourage all these young people: know God's Word. Don't substitute what you think is right or what feels good. Instead, drop everything that's contrary to what God's Word says. Then you will come under its total governance. And the Lord will honor you with all the power and authority of the gospel.

By David Wilkerson
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