

Jehoiakim

2 Kings 23:36-24:4

Slide 1

Have you ever trusted in the wrong person? A pastor had a discussion with his staff about trusting people.

He asked them to give their opinions on this subject. The answers varied from *“I don’t trust anyone”* to *“I’m by nature a trusting person who gets hurt a lot.”*

When they asked the pastor his views, he said, *“I trust everyone.”* They were astonished by his answer since he was known as a very skeptical person.

Then he clarified his statement, *“I trust everyone to be who they really are. If they’re a weak person, I expect them to lie when confronted.*

If they’re a prideful person, I expect them to do everything they can to maintain the image that people have of them.

If they’re timid, I expect them to crawl into their shell and not talk if the conversation becomes difficult.

I expect people to be human, with all of the interesting reactions that comes from the huge variations of personalities seen on a daily basis.”

Jesus believed the same. Jesus didn’t put his trust in humans, because He knew what was inside.

Regardless of what we believe, that doesn’t lessen the sting of betrayal when you have a person you thought you could trust brazenly turn their back on you.

That's one of the things that we'll explore today in the second of the last three kings of Judah. His name is Jehoiakim. He was the older brother of the previous king who only reigned for 3 months.

2 Kings 23:36 – 2 Kings 24:1-4, “Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother’s name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiiah; she was from Rumah. And he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as his predecessors had done. During Jehoiakim’s reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he turned against Nebuchadnezzar and rebelled. The Lord sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the Lord proclaimed by his servants the prophets. Surely these things happened to Judah according to the Lord’s command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord was not willing to forgive.”

Slide 2

Jehoiakim's life is a study of the perils of pragmatism. Pragmatism believes you should do whatever works, regardless of the moral or ethical ramifications that action might produce.

Pragmatism is often what causes people to act in ways you'd never expect, like breaking a confidence or betraying you in ways that really hurt.

There's an extreme example of modern-day pragmatism seen in those who believe in global climate change.

In the extreme fringes of that movement, there are those who hold to the belief that we need to reduce the world population from the current 8 billion people to only 500,000 to save the planet.

What that means is we need to have 7 billion, 999 million, 500 thousand people die immediately. My answer to them is, *“Okay, you first.”*

Jehoiakim was a pragmatist in that he believed doing what was the easiest thing in any given situation.

Unfortunately, he had no moral compass to guide those decisions so they were devoid of anything remotely resembling God’s will for that time.

In fact, the prophet Jeremiah sent him a written message giving him God’s instructions for a specific situation.

Apparently, it was a lengthy scroll because as he read it, he would cut off the piece he had just read and throw it into the fire. He trusted more in his own ideas and wisdom more than God’s.

Slide 3

2 Kings 23:35, “Jehoiakim paid Pharaoh Necho the silver and gold he demanded. In order to do so, he taxed the land and exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land according to their assessments.”

The Jewish historian Josephus gives us some background into why Jehoiakim paid off Pharaoh Neco.

Neco had just deposed his younger brother as King, and placed Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah.

Basically, Neco wanted a puppet king in Judah as a buffer against Babylon should King Nebuchadnezzar decide to come west and try to conquer Egypt.

Judah was too weak to defend themselves against either nation, so Jehoiakim paid Egypt to be their mercenaries, and he heavily taxed his people to pay for that.

Unfortunately, Neco didn't live up to his end of the bargain. When Babylon attacked Judah, he didn't come to their aid. Neco betrayed Jehoiakim and Judah in the worst possible way.

Jehoiakim trusted in Egypt for his protection, and when it came time to fulfill that promise they practically bankrupted the nation to buy, they were betrayed.

He'd paid off the second biggest bully on the planet to protect him from the biggest bully on the planet, and Neco refused to help. That shows us an important principal, *"Never trust in Egypt."*

I'm not talking about the modern nation or its people. I'm sure there are many wonderful people who currently live there, I'm talking about Egypt as it's typically portrayed in the Bible.

Egypt is a type, or example of the fallen world. It's a metaphor for sin or following a path not approved by God.

All Jehoiakim would've had to do was repent, then lead his nation in repentance, and God would've fulfilled His promise to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

2 Chronicles 7:14, *"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

But he didn't want anything to do with God. He wanted to do it his way, and his way led to failure, after failure, after failure.

Do you know anyone like that? Someone who won't turn aside from a horrible idea, so they keep trying the wrong way, only to get bad results.

Albert Einstein said, *"The definition of idiocy is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result."*

The main word in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is *"If."* If means you must make a choice to turn from your stubbornness and yield to God. Because, if you don't, your heart will grow harder and harder, and you'll get worse and worse.

The second thing we learn from Jehoiakim's life is that he followed the worst of the worst in his moral life.

Slide 4

In the verse 3 of our focal passage, I read about something called, *"The Sins of Manasseh."* This refers to rampant sexual sin followed by child sacrifice, also referred to as *"the shedding of innocent blood."*

Manasseh was the great grandfather of Jehoiakim, and probably the worst, most evil, and sinful king that Judah ever had.

Let me list just a few of his greatest sins from 2 Kings 21

- He rebuilt the high places (explain)
- Erected altars to Baal
- Built Asherah poles
- Worshipped astrology
- Built pagan altars in the temple
- Sacrificed his own children through the fire
- Practiced witchcraft
- Consulted mediums
- Killed the innocent to the point that the streets ran with blood

Yet, Jehoiakim had a Godly example in his father, Josiah, but he chose to follow his grandfather's example into sin and evil.

What that teaches us today is that sin has a very powerful pull, especially on the young, despite being raised in a home where God's honored.

It also shows the malignity of sin, since sin usually starts out small, like a slow growing cancer.

You don't feel it, but it sends out cells throughout your body, looking for a weak one to corrupt and change into another cancer cell.

If left unchecked, it'll change every single cell in the body into a cancer cell, but the organism it's infecting usually dies long before that happens.

In 2008, there was a lot of debate about what rights and recognition should be given to the LGBT community. These were focused mostly on marriage but also included general rights.

Those who opposed this said, *"If we open this door for them, they'll blow the door off the hinges and we'll have all kinds of crazies trying to get recognized as legitimate."*

Those on the LGBT side said, *"We were fearmongering and using the slippery slope argument and that wouldn't happen."*

What has happened? Well, today we have furies. These are people who believe they're really animals and they want legal recognition as such.

Not only that, but we're also drugging and mutilating children based on a pseudoscience called *"gender identification."*

Even our language is under attack. The definition of words that have meant one thing in the English language for 500 years are being changed to suit the needs of a very few.

Words like mother, father, male, female are all becoming fluid instead of hard and fast definitions.

It shows how a nation can go from a Josiah, a man who loved God and ruled his people with justice and goodness, and in less than 3 months after his death go right back into the worst evil imaginable.

But that isn't just a lesson for a nation, it's a lesson for you and me as well. What's your secret sin that you hide from others? Do you have a sinful attraction or addiction that Jesus needs to heal?

Because left unchecked, you'll begin to slide down that slippery slope toward things you never thought possible.

Adultery never starts with two people looking at each other and the next second they're in bed. It starts with a longing look. Maybe some risqué conversation and joking.

In the modern era, it begins with some texting that moves into more and more sexual topics. Then the sexting starts, maybe a few pictures or phone calls. Then, before you know it, they end up in bed.

It's the slow progression. We've all heard about the frog in the pot of water.

If you put a frog in a pot on an unlit burner on the stove with some room temperature water, it'll happily stay there waiting for a fly to come near for its lunch.

If you turn the burner on very low, the water will slowly heat, and the frog won't even notice the change.

You can keep increasing the heat, and the frog being cold blooded won't feel the danger coming until it's too late, and he is cooked.

The enemy of your soul does that in our society, and he does that to you personally. He starts out small, dangling some kind of bait in front of our eyes.

We take a nibble or two and find it to be exciting, a little dangerous and enticing so we take a bigger bite and that's when the hook's jerked, imbedding itself into our jaw and we're his.

If that's you today, if Satan has a hook in you that you're too ashamed to admit to anyone, there's hope, and there's help for you, which brings us to our last topic we see in Jehoiakim's life.

Slide 5

Conclusion

In the midst of all of this evil, God still offered them a chance to repent

Jeremiah 36:1-3, "In the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now. Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, they will each turn from their wicked ways; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin."

The Bible records that God sent word through Jeremiah to Jehoiakim that he was on a dangerous path in trusting Egypt and not God.

I mentioned earlier that Jehoiakim's response was to cut the pieces of the scroll off as they were being read to him and throw them in the fire.

Not only that, but he tried to have Jeremiah put to death because of the message. It just didn't fit his plans, so it was easier in his eyes to kill the messenger to stop the message.

The irony of this is that the people of Judah were already fasting and praying for God to deliver them, but Jehoiakim put a stop to that, and therefore sealed the fate of the nation.

It wasn't enough for him to doom his own soul, he had to doom the souls of others as well. This is what we see today.

Today we have a lot of Jehoiakim's among us. They are social media influencers, broadcasters, commentators, politicians, local leaders, college professors, etc.

They are all around us, but God's Word still stands true to us, both as a nation and as individuals.

2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Again, the key word here is "If." *"If my people, who are called by my name."* That's the promise available to anyone who becomes a follower of Jesus Christ, but it comes with a condition.

If Jehoiakim had humbled himself, prayed, and turned from his wicked ways, he would've been remembered much differently this morning. But he didn't, and it eventually cost him his freedom, and then his life.

If you'd humble yourself, pray, seek His face, and turn from any wicked way:

- God will forgive
- God will touch, and
- God will heal you and our land.

But the choice is yours. You and I are HIS people. God judges a nation based on the actions of the church not a sinful world.