



# The **Fiery** Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

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Text

Jeremiah 22:1-30

Topic

Jeremiah comments on the awful administrations of the last four kings to rule Judah before the Babylonian captivity

Title

*"We the Kings Disoriented Are"*

Introduction

It's possible that King Tut **was** 'buried with his donkey.'

Archaeologists tell us that animals are often found in Egyptian tombs. Most commonly they are pets like dogs, cats and monkeys. These animals were carefully mummified along with their owners.

The only real evidence, however, that King Tut was buried with his donkey are the lyrics to a now ancient song. A fragment of it reads,

*Buried with a donkey (funky Tut)  
He's my favorite honkey!  
Born in Arizona,  
Moved to Babylonia (King Tut)*

Tut may not have been buried with his donkey, but there **is** in our text this morning a king of Judah who received a donkey's burial. Concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, we read "he shall be buried with the burial of a donkey" (v19).

It wasn't going to be an elaborate funeral, however. The verse goes on to state he would be "dragged and cast out beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

The final four kings of Judah are lamented and condemned by the prophet Jeremiah. We will see that as kings it was their duty to show compassion on especially their most disadvantaged subjects but they were, instead, compassionless.

Although these verses are definitely about kings and the standard God holds them to, I think we'd all agree that compassion, or the lack of it, is important in our walk with the Lord.

As we discuss these failed kings I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Should Expect Yourself To Be Compassionate, and #2 You Should Inspect Yourself For Being Compassionless.

#1 You Should Expect Yourself  
To Be Compassionate  
(v1-5)

Upon the death of godly King Josiah his youngest son, Shallum, was put on the throne. His name was changed to Jehoahaz. At

the time of Jehoahaz's reign Judah was oppressed by Egypt. The Pharaoh took Jehoahaz to Egypt as a prisoner.

The Pharaoh placed Eliakim, the oldest brother of Jehoahaz, on Judah's throne. He took the name Jehoiakim.

When Egypt fell to Babylon Judah and Jehoiakim came under the control of Babylon. Jehoiakim tried to rebel against Babylon. In about 606BC Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon sent an army to besiege Jerusalem. Jehoiakim was carried away in chains.

The next king of Judah was Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, who took the name Jehoiachin. Again the Babylonian army came against Jerusalem. Jehoiachin surrendered in 597BC and was carried away captive to Babylon along with a large number of other Jews.

Nebuchadnezzar placed Mattaniah on the throne; he took for himself the throne-name Zedekiah. Zedekiah tried to ally himself with a new Pharaoh against Babylon. Bad move.

The Babylonians came the third time with vengeance. They besieged Jerusalem. The Jews held out for more than a year but finally a breach was made in the walls and the enemy poured into the city. Jerusalem was destroyed.

Zedekiah and his family escaped, but only temporarily. He was overtaken and seized. His sons and seventy others were slain as he looked on; and then, with this sight fresh in his mind, he was blinded and taken in chains to Babylon.

Our text in chapter twenty-two is a review of the administrations of these four kings. We first see what God required of them as kings - what His standard was. It was that they be compassionate.

### Jeremiah 22:1-3

1 Thus says the Lord: "Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word,

2 and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates!

3 Thus says the Lord: "Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

The things mentioned in verse three are not exhaustive. They are meant to be a summary of God's Law regarding the governing of His people. The emphasis is clearly on showing compassion upon the less fortunate members of society who could not represent or help themselves.

The word 'compassion' expresses a deep emotion, a striving of the innermost being, to pity others and their situation. It's a strong emotional reaction to someone else's situation that causes actual physical responses that 'move' you to do something. You might go so far as to say it isn't compassion if you aren't moved to action.

Jeremiah 22:4-5

4 For if you indeed do this thing, then shall enter the gates of this house, riding on horses and in chariots, accompanied by servants and people, kings who sit on the throne of David.

5 But if you will not hear these words, I swear by Myself," says the Lord, "that this house shall become a desolation." ' ' "

Pretty straightforward, really. Show compassion and your throne will be blessed by God. Be compassionless and your throne will be left desolate.

Think of all the many qualities you look for in a leader. There's a bunch that come to mind. Compassion may not be our first thought but it is God's measuring stick.

What's so important about compassion? It is Christ-like. Jesus was often moved with compassion. You read that He was "moved with compassion" at least seven times in the Gospel accounts of His ministry. You don't have to read it to know it was always a motivation as the Lord looked out upon hurting human beings.

In every example where Jesus felt compassion for someone or for a group of people, there was such a movement of compassion from within Him that it surged out of Him to meet their needs. In some cases that movement of compassion caused Him to provide food, to raise the dead, to deliver the demon-possessed, to heal the sick, and to provide teaching for those who were like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus was moved with compassion even before He walked on the earth as He saw the lost condition of the human race and was so affected that He determined to come in the flesh to die on the Cross in order to save us.

It should be obvious that a king, as a steward over God's people and a representative of God to them, would be tasked with being compassionate. **It is just as obvious that each and every believer in Jesus Christ is tasked with being compassionate.**

We live in a time when it's easy to see the needs of others. When we do, we should expect our reaction to be one of being moved to help them.

You aren't tasked with meeting everyone's needs, but you are tasked with responding to the needs you are shown. It's a joy to do so because you are never more like Jesus than when you are moved to action by compassion.

#2 You Should Inspect Yourself  
For Being Compassionless  
(v6-30)

Were the last kings of Judah compassionate? Hardly.

Jeremiah 22:6-10

6 For thus says the Lord to the house of the king of Judah: "You are Gilead to Me, The head of Lebanon; Yet I surely will make you a wilderness, Cities which are not inhabited.

7 I will prepare destroyers against you, Everyone with his weapons; They shall cut down your choice cedars And cast them into the fire.

8 And many nations will pass by this city; and everyone will say to his neighbor, 'Why has the Lord done so to this great city?'

9 Then they will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshiped other gods and served them.' "

10 Weep not for the dead, nor bemoan him; Weep bitterly for him who goes away, For he shall return no more, Nor see his native country.

No king is named in these verses but since the context is the final judgment of Judah it indicates Judah's final 'king,' Zedekiah, is their subject.

What can we learn from Zedekiah about being compassionless? Upon close inspection you see that during the time of Zedekiah the people had "forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshipped other gods and served them." You could say that they tried to serve two masters.

If its been a while since you were moved with compassion and actually acted upon it then chances are your heart is divided. You're trying to serve God and something or someone else.

You can't ever serve two masters. God must be your only master.

Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. Beginning with verse eleven Jeremiah looks back and describes the compassionless reigns of the three kings who preceded him.

Jeremiah 22:11-12

11 For thus says the Lord concerning Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, who went from this place: "He shall not return here anymore,

12 but he shall die in the place where they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.

Shallum's throne-name was Jehoahaz. We're not told in these verses where he went wrong but it was no secret. He reversed the spiritual progress his father had made and did evil instead in the sight of the Lord. It didn't take him very long, either; he was only king for about 100 days.

Do we ever reverse our spiritual progress? Let me ask you this. Or, better yet, ask yourself. Are you more sensitive to sin than you were a year ago? Or are you desensitized to sin?

It might take the form of thinking you have new liberties to do and pursue things that previously you believed to be less than spiritual, unedifying, and distracting - if not downright sin.

We are constantly being pressured to move the boundaries when it comes to personal holiness. The world around us is conspiring to say that what is immoral is moral, and that what is wrong is right.

Becoming desensitized to sin is a surefire way of becoming compassionless.

The next long section, verses thirteen through twenty-three, describe Jehoiakim.

### Jeremiah 22:13-23

13 "Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness And his chambers by injustice, Who uses his neighbor's service without wages And gives him nothing for his work,

14 Who says, 'I will build myself a wide house with spacious chambers, And cut out windows for it, Paneling it with cedar And painting it with vermilion.'



15 "Shall you reign because you enclose yourself in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink, And do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him.

16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy; Then it was well. Was not this knowing Me?" says the Lord.

17 "Yet your eyes and your heart are for nothing but your covetousness, For shedding innocent blood, And practicing oppression and violence."

18 Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: "They shall not lament for him, Saying, 'Alas, my brother!' or 'Alas, my sister!' They shall not lament for him, Saying, 'Alas, master!' or 'Alas, his glory!'

19 He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey, Dragged and cast out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

20 "Go up to Lebanon, and cry out, And lift up your voice in Bashan; Cry from Abarim, For all your lovers are destroyed.

21 I spoke to you in your prosperity, But you said, 'I will not hear.' This has been your manner from your youth, That you did not obey My voice.

22 The wind shall eat up all your rulers, And your lovers shall go into captivity; Surely then you will be ashamed and humiliated For all your wickedness.

23 O inhabitant of Lebanon, Making your nest in the cedars, How gracious will you be when pangs come upon you, Like the pain of a woman in labor?

Jehoiakim wanted a big, red, cedar palace. What's worse, he wanted it during a time when Judah was clearly in decline. To accomplish his personal building project he oppressed his subjects.

This is probably the 'biggie' when it comes to killing compassion. It's materialism and the coveting of the things in the world.

Showing Christ's compassion requires generosity and sacrifice of material things. If you're covetous you're not going to be moved with compassion. Or, when you are, you're going to bottle it up. That's one reason why the apostle John can say, "whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (First John 3:17).

#### Jeremiah 22:24-30

24 "As I live," says the Lord, "though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off;  
25 and I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life, and into the hand of those whose face you fear - the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of the Chaldeans.  
26 So I will cast you out, and your mother who bore you, into another country where you were not born; and there you shall die.  
27 But to the land to which they desire to return, there they shall not return.  
28 "Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol - A vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, And cast into a land which they do not know?  
29 O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the Lord!  
30 Thus says the Lord: 'Write this man down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah.' "

Coinah is Jehoiachin. This account of him is fairly positive. There's a kind of sadness to the phrase "though Coniah... were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off." It reads as though Jehoiachin was a victim of the actions of others.

It was too late for him to have much of an effect because judgment had already been decreed and God must remove the "signet," meaning that the nation would lose its sovereignty and have no king but be exiled.

Same with verse twenty-eight. He was not "a vessel in which [God took] no pleasure." He was king at a time when the throne had become defiled by compassionless predecessors who had set in motion the events of the destruction of Jerusalem and it was too late for Jehoiachin to turn things around.

We learn from the experience of Jehoiachin that being compassionless can become a way of life for the entire community or country. Although God holds the leaders responsible the actions of the led are not without consequences.

This preaches to us to be a compassionate community as a church - Compassion Chapel of Hanford.

We should be excited about our work with Gospel for Asia and in Peru. We should be excited about our support locally of the Crossroads Pregnancy Center and about our Deacons Fund that helps folks in need.

We should be excited about any and every need presented to us as an opportunity to be moved with compassion.

Currently we've been praying that God would show us a way to disciple certain disadvantaged individuals, e.g., the homeless, who really want to turn their lives around. To give us a place to nurture and house some people.

Compassion costs and our initial response can be, "I just don't have the resources, otherwise I'd help."

When Jesus was on the earth He had, in one sense, **almost no resources by which to help anyone**. At one point He explained that He was poorer than a bird because even a bird has a nest to sleep in. He had less than a fox who at least had a hole in the ground. When among crowds needing food the inventory of what Jesus had on hand was meager, e.g., a few loaves and fishes.

Jesus had at His disposal, however, all the resources of His heavenly Father. When Jesus was moved with compassion He did what His Father told Him to and needs were met.

We, too, have at our disposal all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. And for sure we have a lot more physical resources than Jesus had when He was on the earth.

Don't overlook that spiritual needs were met as the priority. There's a lot of talk today about how the church is blowing it because we aren't meeting the physical needs of people.

Part of our duty as Christians is to show compassion in tangible ways. But to do so without bringing people the Gospel is to leave them better off in their sins, more comfortable on their way to a Christless eternity.

The greatest compassion we can show is the sharing of the Good News that God is not willing that any should perish but that all would come to eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Compassionate Christianity ought to be our platform; "Be Moved," our slogan.

