

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 11 December 2022. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Final King of Israel

Matthew 1:11-12

This past week, I was on the phone with my brother Shawn; and during the conversation, we somehow got onto the subject of board games. At this point, my son Seán joined the discussion; and he told his Uncle Shawn that he and his friends like to play the game “Risk.” (“Risk” is a strategy game in which each player has an army; and the goal is to take over the world, continent by continent.) Now, when *my son* Seán asked his Uncle Shawn whether he was familiar with the game “Risk,” he said that he *had* played it once; but he decided, after the very first game, that he didn’t like it. You see, during that one game of Risk that my brother played, his friend (the one who was teaching him the game) made a treaty with him. He told Shawn that it is very unethical to break any treaty that you make with another player; and he really stressed this point. Well, during the game, this same friend—the one who had lectured Shawn *not* to break a treaty—broke his treaty with my brother; and since Shawn had been counting on his help, he ended up losing big-time! Shawn decided, from that point onward, that he didn’t want to play Risk anymore. He didn’t like people breaking treaties with him—even if it *was* “just a game.”

Well, guess what? God doesn’t like it when people break their promises to Him, either: and He isn’t playing games! He takes the keeping of promises very seriously. In fact, it was the breaking of a treaty that brought God’s wrath upon the nation of Judah in the year **586 B.C.**, and which caused them to be taken away captive to Babylon! Now, this certainly was not the only reason why God was angry with Judah. For four centuries, God’s cup of wrath had been getting fuller, as His people continually worshipped idols, and broke His covenant; and now, that cup was filled to the brim. God put Judah on notice, during the reign of king Josiah, that soon *after* Josiah’s death, He would bring judgment upon the land. Yet, there was *one particular sin*, committed by one particular king, which finally brought down God’s judgment upon Judah. In this morning’s message, we will learn what that sin was.

As you know, we have been studying the royal genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded in **Matthew 1**. The genealogy began with Abraham; and we have now come to the time of the very last kings of Judah, at around 600 B.C. This morning, we will learn the sad record of the destruction of Judah, and of the end of the Davidic monarchy. However, we will also see that, although the royal line of David has seemingly been cut down, it is not dead. There is *one more King* who is yet to sit on the throne of David. In fact, He has already been born; and He is now awaiting the day when He will claim His throne. His name is Jesus of Nazareth. The title of this message is ***The Final King of Israel.***

Read Matthew 1:1-12.

I. Jehoiakim—the despiser of God’s Word (v. 11)

The next person in the royal line of the Lord Jesus is **Jehoiakim**, the son of Josiah. Sad to say, Jehoiakim, unlike his righteous father Josiah, was a very wicked king. Let’s turn to **2 Chronicles 36**, and see what God has to say about his life and reign.

Read 2 Chronicles 36:1-7.

As you will remember, **Josiah** was the last righteous king of Judah. God allowed Josiah to be killed in a battle against the king of Egypt in **609 B.C.**, when he was only 39 years old; and

after his death, things began to change swiftly. Josiah had four sons; and of these four sons, three of them ended up sitting on the throne of Judah. However, all three of them were “puppet” kings. They were all under the power of foreign kings.

Now, as we just saw in our Scripture, the first of Josiah’s sons to sit on the throne was **Jehoahaz**. Jehoahaz was the oldest of Josiah’s four sons; and thus, the people of the land chose him to be king after the death of his father. Tragically, though, Jehoahaz did not follow the Lord, as his father had done. He worshipped idols, and did wickedly in the sight of the Lord. Therefore, God allowed him to reign for only three months. At the end of those three months, **Pharaoh Necho** of Egypt (the same king who had slain his father) came up against Jerusalem, and took Jehoahaz away as a captive, and slapped Judah with heavy tribute. Egypt now had complete control over Judah; and the Pharaoh could place whomever he wished upon the throne. Necho chose to put Josiah’s second son, **Eliakim**, on the throne; and just to show him who was in charge, Necho changed Eliakim’s name to **Jehoiakim**.

Now, the Bible says Jehoiakim reigned for 11 years; and during those 11 years, the political landscape of the entire Middle East was changing drastically. You see, the mighty Assyrian Empire had begun to collapse only a few years earlier. **Nineveh** (the capital of Assyria) was destroyed by the Babylonians in **612 B.C.**; and thus, there was now a huge power vacuum to fill. Assyria was now gasping its last breaths of survival; and Egypt and Babylon were fighting to take control of the countries that Assyria had once controlled. It was in the midst of all this turmoil, in the third year of Jehoiakim’s reign, that God’s judgment upon Judah began in earnest: and the instrument that God chose to judge them was Babylon. In **605 B.C.**, **Nebuchadnezzar**, the crowned prince of Babylon, defeated the Egyptians at the **Battle of Carchemish**; and after this victory, he swung down into Judah, and besieged Jerusalem. King Jehoiakim knew that he didn’t stand a chance against the Babylonians; and so, he surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, and agreed to serve him. Jehoiakim was now under the power of *Babylon*, and not Egypt. Jehoiakim also had to agree to let Nebuchadnezzar take away nearly all the members of the royal family, as well as thousands of his most skilled and educated citizens, as captives to Babylon. This was the beginning of Judah’s **70-year captivity in Babylon**, which the prophet Jeremiah had foretold. Over the next twenty years, three waves of captives would be taken away to Babylon; and this was the first of those three deportations.

Now, there were four godly young men who were taken away in that first deportation in 605 B.C. Their names were **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah** (better known as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego); and all four of these young men were members of the royal family! The Bible says that they were *“of the king’s seed.”* Yes, brethren: the righteous prophet Daniel was a descendant of David, and was close to the throne! Now, this raises a question: “Why Daniel?” Why did God allow such a godly young man as Daniel to be taken away? In fact, if Daniel was in the royal family, and was close in line to the throne, why didn’t God allow *Daniel* to be king? Couldn’t Daniel have turned things around?

There are a couple answers to this question. First, there comes a point, for any nation, when the people have passed God’s threshold of mercy, and when they are ripe for judgment. When that time comes, it matters not whether a righteous man is temporarily put into leadership over the land: the judgment is still coming. In fact, at that point, God will not *allow* a righteous man to be put over the people, because the people *deserve* a wicked, despotic ruler to be over them. Remember when the people of Israel didn’t want to be ruled by God anymore, and they insisted on having a king? God gave them the kind of king that they wanted (King Saul); but he ended up being a murderous tyrant! A man named **William Penn** once rightly said that “Men must be governed by God, or they will be ruled by tyrants”; and the same is true for us

today. As a nation, we have spat in God's face. More than 75% of the people voted to call homosexual unions "marriage," and to allow children to be murdered in the womb. From earliest childhood, children in school are taught the virtues of pornography and drag queens, and are made to read books that glorify incest, paedophilia, and bestiality, and are taught that boys can dress like girls, and girls like boys. They are even urged to consider whether they might actually *be* a boy in a girl's body, or *vice versa*. Fornication and adultery abound everywhere; and no one thinks anything of it. These things are the signs of a society that is in advanced moral decay, and that is ripe for destruction. God's people (though few in number) have been calling Ireland to repent and turn to God; but she will not. We may not know how, or when, it will happen; but you may be sure that judgment is coming upon this nation—whether by a foreign enemy, or by our own internal self-destruction.

Now, the other answer to that question, "Why didn't God allow Daniel to be king?" is this: God had a very important task for Daniel in Babylon. Through Daniel's godly influence in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, the knowledge of the God of Israel was spread throughout the entire Middle East; and his influence lasted for centuries. How did the wise men who came to worship Jesus know about the prophecy of "the star that would arise out of Jacob" in **Numbers 24**? How did these Gentile astronomers know about the prophecy of the "70 weeks of years" in **Daniel chapter 9**, and thus were aware that the time of the Messiah's birth was near? Because they knew the Hebrew Scriptures. And where did they obtain the Scriptures? From a wise man named Daniel, who had lived in the court of Babylon 600 years earlier. Christian, don't ever despise the position into which God places you! Dark times of judgment are coming upon our world; and when the judgment falls, we are likely to suffer along with the wicked (just as Daniel was taken away as a captive to Babylon, even though he was faithful to God). If and when destruction come upon this land, and you are suffering affliction and persecution, do not resent it, or complain about it: instead, ***"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."***

Now, let's get back to Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim, despite being so wicked, *was* chosen by God to be in the lineage of the Messiah. Yet, you may have noticed, when we were reading **Matthew 1:11**, that Jehoiakim's name was *not* mentioned in the genealogy. Matthew said that ***"Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren."*** The genealogy skipped straight from Josiah to Josiah's *grandson*, Jechonias. Why did God leave out Josiah's son, Jehoiakim? Perhaps this is why!

Read Jeremiah 36:1-6, 10-16, 20-32.

Jehoiakim despised Jeremiah's prophecy so much, that when the Scripture was read to him, he personally took a knife in hand, cut it up, and threw it into the fire! That is a dangerous thing to do, my friends! God has special judgments prepared for those who mutilate His Word. Because of this wicked deed, God promised that one day, the Babylonians would cast him out onto the open field outside Jerusalem, and he would be buried like an ass. (God repeated this same pronouncement in **Jeremiah 22**.) God also promised that Jehoiakim would ***"have none to sit upon the throne of David."*** Though his son, Jehoiachin, did sit on the throne for a scant 3 months, he had no permanent successor. Jehoiakim cut up God's Word; thus, God cut out the very mention of his name from the genealogy of the Lord Jesus! As for that Scripture that Jehoiakim cut up and burned, God gave it *again* to Jeremiah, word-for-word; and we still have it to this day. Man may try to destroy God's Word; but it will never be destroyed!

II. Jehoiachin—the last Jewish king until Messiah comes (v. 11)

(Read Matthew 1:11 again.) We now come to the next man in the lineage of Jesus Christ. This man also happens to be the very last king in the lineage of Jesus Christ. His name is **Jehoiachin**, the son of Jehoiakim. (He is also known by the name **Jeconiah**.)

Read 2 Chronicles 36:8-10.

In a few moments, we talk about Jeconiah's character. However, before we do, there is something that we need to get straight: and that is the *age* of Jeconiah when he became king. You'll notice that in **verse 9**, we are told that Jeconiah was "***eight years old when he began to reign.***" Yet, in **2 Kings 24:8**, we are told that Jeconiah was "***eighteen years old when he began to reign.***" So, which is it? Is this another one of those "scribal errors"? Did those sleepy scribes slip up again while they were copying the Scriptures? Most modern Bible translators say "yes." In fact, many modern translations change the word "***eight***" to "eighteen," even though the Hebrew text clearly says "*shemonah shaniym*" ("***eight years***").

Should we be worried about this, brethren? Should our faith in God's Word be shaken because there seems to be an error? Not on your life! **Psalm 12:6** says, "***The words of the LORD are pure words...Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.***" God promises to preserve *all* His words for ever; and we can bank on this promise. What is the answer to this problem, then? It's simple: Jeconiah was *anointed* as king when he was eight; but he actually *began to reign* as king when he was eighteen.

Is there any proof of this? Yes! First, we know that Jeconiah actually began to reign as king when he was 18, because the Bible says that he had "***wives***" who were taken away to Babylon, as well. (An 8-year-old wouldn't have wives.) With this in mind, let's wind back the clock from Jeconiah's eighteenth birthday, and go back ten years. What was happening when Jeconiah was *eight* years old? His grandfather, King Josiah, was in the last year of his reign; and he was about to go to battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. Josiah surely realised that his four sons had all turned out to be rotten, and that none of them was worthy to be king after he died; and, for all he knew, he just *might* die in this battle with Necho (which, in fact, he did). Not wanting any of his four sons to come to the throne, he decided to anoint his eight-year-old grandson, Jeconiah, to be king, with the hope that he might turn out better than his father. In order to do this, he actually had to *adopt* him as his own son! This was not an unusual thing in Old Testament times. **Jacob** legally adopted his grandsons, **Manasseh and Ephraim**, as his own sons; and that is what Josiah did with his grandson, Jeconiah. Sadly, the people of Judah did not uphold this decision. After Josiah's death, the people placed his son *Jehoahaz* on the throne. However, *Josiah's* choice for the next king was his *grandson*, Jeconiah.

Now, how can we be sure that Josiah anointed his grandson to be king? For two reasons. First, in **2 Chronicles 36:10**, we are told that after Jeconiah was taken away to Babylon, his "***brother***," Zedekiah, was made king. The Hebrew text clearly says *akhiv* ("***his brother***"). Yet, according to **2 Kings 24:17**, Zedekiah was Jeconiah's *uncle*. Is this a "scribal error"? No! Zedekiah is called the "brother" of Jeconiah, **because legally, Zedekiah was his brother!** When Josiah adopted Jeconiah as his own son, Zedekiah *legally* became Jeconiah's *brother*—even though he was, biologically, his uncle! The other reason we can know that Jeconiah was adopted by his grandfather is that in **Matthew 1**, the genealogy goes straight from Josiah to his grandson, Jeconiah. It is as though Jeconiah were *actually* Josiah's son!

As you can see, Jeconiah was Josiah's one last hope! There must have been something in young Jeconiah that gave his grandfather the hope that he might turn out differently from his father and uncles. However, such was not the case. After Jeconiah's father was deposed and

killed by Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar placed Jeconiah on the throne of Judah; but Jeconiah did all the same wicked things that his father had done. Thus, after Jeconiah had been on the throne for only 3 months, God put it into Nebuchadnezzar's mind to take Jeconiah away to Babylon as a captive, and imprison him. (This was in the year **597 B.C.**) Nebuchadnezzar also took away many skilled craftsmen, courtiers, and even priests. In fact, the prophet Ezekiel was one of those priests. Just like Daniel, Ezekiel was taken away to Babylon so that he could preach to the Jews who were scattered in Babylon, and call them to repentance. Ezekiel had a hard life in Babylon; but God used him to break up the hard ground of the hearts of his Jewish brethren. Because of him, many Jews turned back to their God.

Now, as we've already seen, Jeconiah was last king in the bloodline of Jesus Christ. However, there *was* one more descendant of David who sat on the throne after Jeconiah: and that was Jeconiah's brother-by-adoption, Zedekiah. Even though Zedekiah wasn't in the bloodline of Christ, it is important to know what happened to him. Let's fast-forward to the year **586 B.C.**

Read 2 Chronicles 36:11-21.

In **Ezekiel 21**, God called Zedekiah the *“profane wicked prince of Judah, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end.”* God then went on to say, *“Remove the diadem, and take off the crown...I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is: and I will give it him.”* God made it clear that, although Zedekiah was a descendant of David, he was not in the royal line of the Messiah. (God did not call him the “king” of Judah; He called him the “prince” of Judah.) Secondly, God said that the crown would be taken away from Zedekiah. And why? Was it because of his idol worship, his extortion, his adultery, his oppression of the poor, his murder, or his persecution of God's prophet Jeremiah? Believe it or not, no! There is *one specific sin* that Zedekiah committed, which was the “last straw” in God's eyes—not only for himself, but for the nation of Judah. What was it? The sin of lying, and breaking a promise! You see, when Nebuchadnezzar put Zedekiah on the throne of Judah, he compelled Zedekiah to swear by the name of Jehovah that he would be faithful to him, and would pay tribute to him; and Zedekiah made that promise. However, in Zedekiah's ninth year as king, he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and sent ambassadors to Egypt, to ask the Pharaoh for help against the king of Babylon. For this transgression, God brought down his wrath on Judah. In **Ezekiel 17**, God said this of Zedekiah, *“Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape. Therefore...my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.”* Not keeping your promise is a serious thing, folks! It doesn't matter whether you say “I swear by God” or not. Anytime you give your word, you do so in the presence of God; and He is witness. Christian, let your “yea” be “yea,” and your “nay” be “nay.” Be a man, or woman, of integrity!

And so, after 400 years, the royal family of David was cut down. Was this the end of the line? What about God's promise to King David that his seed would sit upon the throne of Israel forever? Could God keep this promise, now that the last descendant of David had been cast off the throne? It wasn't looking good. In fact, it looked impossible: and here's why.

Read Jeremiah 22:24-30.

According to this prophecy, Coniah (another name for Jeconiah) would be written *“childless”*; and *“no man of his seed”* would sit upon the throne of David, nor rule *“any more in Judah.”* Was this the end of the line, then? Had God just made it impossible to keep His own promise? No! In fact, God *repeated* His promise once again! Let's read further.

Read Jeremiah 23:1-6.

Even though God vowed that none of Jeconiah's seed would sit on the throne of David, He went on to promise that He will one day **“raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper”**; and this King, He said, will be called **“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”** Now, how can this be? We know that this **“righteous branch”** is the Lord Jesus; yet, how can Jesus be heir to the throne of David, if God said that none of Jeconiah's seed would sit on the throne? It's simple: Jesus is the *biological* descendant of David through His mother Mary; but He is the *legal* and *royal* descendant of David through His stepfather, Joseph! In **Luke 3**, we are given Jesus' *blood* genealogy through his mother Mary, all the way back to David; but in **Matthew 1**, we are given the *legal, royal* genealogy of Jesus through his adopted father, Joseph, all the way back to David. Though Jesus was not a *blood* descendant of Jeconiah, He didn't have to be so, because *legally*, He was his descendant. Both biologically and legally, Jesus is “the son of David”!

Now, whatever happened to Jeconiah? Did he ever repent, and turn to God? The Bible doesn't say; however, we do know that God was merciful to him. After Jeconiah had been a prisoner in Babylon for 37 years, he was finally released. You see, Evil-merodach, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, had had a “falling out” with his father; and Nebuchadnezzar put his son in prison. While in prison, Evil-merodach got to know Jeconiah, and became good friends with him. Then, after Nebuchadnezzar died, the Babylonian people released Evil-merodach from prison, and placed him on the throne; and one of the first things Evil-merodach did was to take his friend Jeconiah out of prison. In fact, he gave Jeconiah a position of high honour, and gave him a daily ration of food. The Bible tells us about all this in **Jeremiah 52**; but we also read about it in the Babylonian records. In the royal archives of Nebuchadnezzar, there are clay tablets that record the details of the daily rations that were given to “Yaukin, king of the land of Judah,” and to his sons. Though Jeconiah was a wicked man, God preserved him for the sake of his father David. You may count on it, brethren: God *always* keeps His promises!

Now, before we close, there is one more person in Jesus' lineage that we need to examine.

III. Zerubbabel—the Temple builder (v. 12)

Read Matthew 1:12.

After King Jeconiah, there is no other man in the genealogy of Christ that we know anything about—*except* for one man. That man is **Zerubbabel**, the son of Shealtiel, and the grandson of King Jeconiah; and, believe it or not, Zerubbabel was a godly man! You see, sometime between Jeconiah and his grandson Zerubbabel, a spiritual transformation took place in the royal family of David. Perhaps, unbeknown to us, Jeconiah did repent and turn to God before the end of his life. (After all, 37 years in prison is a long time to think about where you went wrong, and about why you need the Lord!) Perhaps Jeconiah's son Shealtiel considered his father's evil ways, and, through the influence of godly prophets in Babylon such as Daniel and Ezekiel, turned to God, and passed on his faith to his children. However, regardless of how it happened, what we do know is that Zerubbabel was greatly used of God. In **Ezra 2**, he is called by the Babylonian name **“Sheshbazzar,”** which means “joy in tribulation”; but his Jewish name was Zerubbabel, which means “scattered in Babylon.” Sheshbazzar was put in the honoured position of captain of the guard of the king of Babylon.

God raised up Zerubbabel for a very special time in history. In 535 B.C., King Cyrus of Persia gave permission to the Jews who were scattered throughout Babylon and Persia to return to their homeland; and, under the leadership of Zerubbabel (whom Cyrus acknowledged as the *“prince of Judah,”* since he was a descendant of the Jewish kings), 42,360 Jews made their journey back to the land of Judah. Almost as soon as they got back to Judah, they began to lay the foundation for the Temple, to rebuild it. However, because of fierce opposition from their Gentile neighbours, who told lies about them to the kings of Persia, they were forced to stop the work. For 15 years, the Temple continued to lie in ruins—until finally, God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to prophesy to the people. Basically, their message was, “It’s time to rebuild, folks! Where’s your faith in God? Stop making excuses for not rebuilding God’s Temple. Stop saying that ‘It’s just not the time yet.’ You’ve built houses for yourselves; but you won’t rebuild God’s house. You wonder why nothing you do is prospering? It’s because you are neglecting God’s house!” This message cut the people to the heart; and it cut Zerubbabel to the heart, as well. The Bible says in **Haggai 1:14**, *“And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.”* Quickly, the Temple was rebuilt; and in 519 B.C., the work was finished. It wasn’t nearly as pretty as Solomon’s Temple had been; but it was still God’s House; and God was pleased.

As we’ve gone through the genealogy of Jesus Christ, we have learned about several men who were types of the Lord Jesus in one way or another. Isaac and Judah were types of Christ. So were Boaz, and David, and Solomon; and so was Zerubbabel! Zerubbabel is a type of Christ in that **he was the great Temple Builder**. Just as Zerubbabel rebuilt the Temple after Israel’s return from Babylon, so Jesus Christ will rebuild the Temple after Israel’s return from all the nations of the earth! After Christ returns to earth, He will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, and will sit upon His throne, in the Temple of God, as both **King and Priest!** He will be the *final* King of Israel; and He will reign over the whole earth for 1,000 glorious years!

Read Zechariah 4:6-10 and 6:11-13.

Conclusion: Isaiah 11:1 says, *“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”* For centuries, the royal family of David was like a mighty tree that had been cut down; and all that remained was the rotting *“stem,”* or *“tree stump,”* of Jesse. But then, a sapling sprang up from the rotting stump of the family of David; and His name was the Lord Jesus Christ. This Child conquered sin, death, and hell through His death on the cross for our sins, and His resurrection from the dead; and one day, He will return to earth to sit on the throne of David.

A “new world order” is coming, folks! Very soon, *rebellious man* will attempt to set up *his* “new world order,” under the rule of Antichrist; but it will be the most horrible time in earth’s history—so bad, that if God did not shorten it, no one would be left alive. But then, at the end of those seven awful years, Jesus Christ, the Son of David, will establish *His* “New World Order”; and in *His* new world order, He will rule as King and Priest over the whole world. It will be a time of peace, prosperity, and righteousness. This fabulous earthly Kingdom will then be followed by the countless ages of eternity, in the New Heaven and New Earth that God will create for all who love and trust in Him. The question is: “Will *you* enter that Kingdom? Or will you be cast into hell, with God’s enemies?” There is only one way to enter Christ’s Kingdom: you must have Christ’s righteousness. Remember that name for the Messiah in **Jeremiah 23**—*“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”*? That is Jesus’ name, because He *is* the Lord God, and He *is* “righteousness” to all who trust in Him! You cannot get into Heaven by your own righteousness. It won’t do! You need *Jesus*’ perfect righteousness to be put onto your account. The moment you repent of

your sin and believe on Jesus, God puts Jesus' perfect righteousness on your account; and on this basis, God can accept you into His royal family. If you have never done this, please do so today!

If you already know Christ as Saviour, I would close today's message with this thought: "Will you dare to be a Daniel, or an Ezekiel, or a Jeremiah, or Zerubbabel?" Will you courageously stand for Christ when the times get very dark? Will you joyfully accept suffering for Christ without complaint? Will you be a bright and shining light even when the world is falling down around you, and when it seems that you are all alone? Will you live your life as befits a child of the King? Anaesthesia