

An Exhortation to Repent

Key Verse: *“Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.”*
—**Jeremiah 22:3**

Selected Scripture:
Jeremiah 22:1-10

(Jer. 22:2) David was a man after God’s own heart, and a great example of how a king should rule. (Acts 13:22) Imitating such a course would surely reap the benefit of the many promises made to David.

With the high standard of king David set before the eyes of Jehoahaz, Jeremiah sets forth the king’s duty in our Key Verse. Executing “judgment and righteousness”

IN THIS CHAPTER OF JERE-

miah’s prophecy, we find the Lord sending him to preach to the rulers of Judah which preceded their last king, Zedekiah. These sermons delivered by the prophet make it clear that the two-tribe kingdom of Judah had both an opportunity to repent of unrighteous practices, and a fair warning long before the sentence of their impending captivity was pronounced.

Today’s Selected Scripture is a message sent to the royal family during the reign of Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, Judah’s last righteous king. Jeremiah reminds Jehoahaz that he is sitting upon the throne of David.

means, among other things, paying wages to whom they belong without respect to persons and without bribe or corruption. Withholding from anyone what is due for their work is sin. Unfortunately, Jehoahaz was guilty of this unrighteous behavior, as shown later in verse 13.

Ill treatment of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow is also mentioned by the prophet. Israel, as well as many other nations around them, were guilty of such practices. Jeremiah condemns such unrighteousness as contrary to God's command to care for the poor and needy, as further spoken of by the psalmist. (Ps. 82:3,4) Another great evil is the shedding of innocent blood. (Prov. 6:16,17) Such sins are even worse when committed by those who are set over the people to secure and protect their lives and property. Jehoahaz was guilty of these heinous deeds.—Jer. 22:17

While the rulers were the most accountable for the unrighteous behavior of Judah, the people were not held blameless. Jeremiah 22:4 indicates that these responsibilities lay not only with those "sitting upon the throne," but also with the "servants" and the "people." In a similar statement, the prophet had enjoined all the people throughout Judah to bring "offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and ... sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the LORD."—Jer. 17:25,26

When the law given at Mount Sinai was delivered to Israel by Moses, the people together said, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do." (Exod. 19:8) It was the general failure of the nation, both the rulers and the people, to honor this commitment that eventually led to their being cast off, as spoken of by Jesus, though he also said the time would eventually come when they would say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. 23:34-39) Let us learn from Israel's experiences, as these words of Paul express: "Let the man who feels sure of his standing today be careful that he does not fall tomorrow."—I Cor. 10:12, *J. B. Phillips New Testament* ■