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Marked for Death - Governmental Destruction

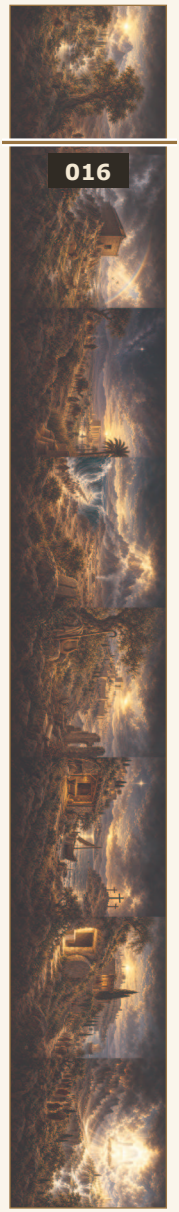
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



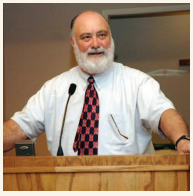
Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

PSALM 127:1, EXCERPT

Rulers and nations are accountable for the way they use authority. Drawing on biblical accounts of public corruption and judgment, John Weaver considers covenant-breaking, rejected warnings, and the need for repentance. These messages present national destruction as a serious moral question and insist that enduring restoration requires more than a change of appearances.

“God's Word is not simply good advice that men, governments, and nations may accept or reject at their pleasure.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Marked For Death Governmental Destruction

Part One of Two

Introduction: God Judges Nations

Our text is 2 Chronicles 36:10–17. The title of the message is "Marked for Death: Governmental Destruction," the first part of a two-part series.

"And when the year was expired, King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him"—that is, Jehoiachin—"to Babylon with the goodly vessels of the house of the Lord, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem. Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord. And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel. Moreover, the chief of the priests and the people transgressed

very much after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the Lord, which he had hallowed in Jerusalem."

"And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up at times and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with a sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age."

"He gave them all into his hand."

Around 1990, Steven Seagal, the martial artist, made a movie entitled "Marked for Death." It dealt with drugs, drug dealers, and drug running. As I read this passage in 2 Chronicles 36, the title of that old movie simply came to mind: "Marked for Death." It dawned on me that God, in His sovereignty, not only marks individuals for death, but also marks governments and nations for death.

The Rise and Fall of Empires

The rise and fall of empires have been observed and recorded throughout history. No matter how great and how glorious some empires were, they are now gone, diminished, dissolved, and destroyed. What has become of mighty Egypt? The Roman and Greek empires were magnificent, and yet they are no more. The Persian and the Assyrian empires have vanished. A few of the countries that still remain, which were great in times past, are now merely shadows of their greatness.

Have you ever wondered how empires, governments, and nations die? Historians will give many and varied reasons as to the death of governments and nations. However, from a biblical and theological standpoint, all nations dissipate, dissolve, and die due to their rebellion against God.

He is the judge of all the earth. Men are not only judged in time and history, but they are also judged in eternity. Nations are made up of individuals, but nations do not have souls per se. They are not

necessarily punished in eternity. Therefore, they are punished in time and in history. You have to remember that God is the judge of all the earth. Governments, empires, and nations are just as accountable and answerable to God as individuals are.

Psalm 22:28 says, "For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is governor among the nations." Notice that God is called the governor among the nations. Psalm 66:7 says, "He ruleth by His power forever; His eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves." God is not only the governor of the nations; His eyes behold the nations. God, then, is the sole judge in determining sickness or health concerning a nation, or determining life and death concerning a nation.

God's Sovereignty Over Nations

In Job 12:23, speaking about God, Job says, "He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: He enlargeth the nations, and straighteneth them again." God is the sole judge of the earth. It is God who increases and decreases nations, who brings them to largeness, or who straightens them.

The Bible declares in Psalm 147, verse 6, “The Lord lifteth up the meek: He casteth the wicked down to the ground.” Now let me give you an interesting passage. Did you know that God is called the King of nations? In Jeremiah 10:7, the Scripture says, “Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations? For to Thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto Thee.” But notice what He said: “Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations? For to Thee doth it appertain.” What appertains to God? Literally everything, especially the life and death of a nation.

Most of you can probably quote Psalm 75:5-7. Notice particularly the power that is ascribed to God, and how that power is applied. God says, “Lift not up your horn on high. Speak not with a stiff neck.” That is, do not be rebellious. Why? “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another.” So God is the judge. God is the One who puts down one and sets up

another. That is true individually. That is also true governmentally. It is also true nationally.

In Job 12, beginning with verse 13 and through verse 23, we are talking about God: “With Him is wisdom and strength, He hath counsel and understanding. Behold, He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again. He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. Behold, He withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also He sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. With Him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are His. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools.” He has done a mighty good job in that.

“ He looseth the bonds of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty.”

"He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: He enlargeth the nations, and straighteneth them again." I want you to note in the context, this is all the power of God, and it is all the doing of God. God is the one who is doing this.

Job 34:29 says, "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? And when He hideth His face, who then can behold Him? Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only." The answer is no one. Whether it is done nationally or individually, it does not matter. This is the same truth, whether applied individually, governmentally, ecclesiastically, or nationally.

Our founding fathers and those individuals who established this country understood that God is in absolute control, not only of individuals, but of governments and nations as well. You remember Benjamin Franklin was the oldest man at the Constitutional Convention. I think he was 81 if I remember correctly. Benjamin Franklin is always called a deist. A deist is someone that believes that God created the world and kind of wound it up like a clock and just sits back and never intervenes until the clock runs down. Yet Benjamin Franklin used to love to hear George Whitefield preach. In

fact, he would walk or ride, whatever the case may be, for miles just to hear Whitefield preach.

Historical Acknowledgment: Benjamin Franklin's Testimony

Listen to what Benjamin Franklin said at the Constitutional Convention, addressing George Washington and the convention: "In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of superintending providence in our favor. To that kind providence, we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity."

“And have we forgotten that powerful friend? I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. And I also believe that without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.”

“We shall be divided by our little partial local interests, our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down to future ages. And what is worse? Mankind may, hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing governments by human wisdom and leave it to chance, war, and conquest. Listen, I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessings upon our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of the city be requested to officiate in that service.”

Do you realize that from this request, down through the ages, there has been prayer every day before our Congress is in session? Unhappily, they have left the men of God and now have Muslims and

everyone else in there. But this principle was established at that particular time, because our founding fathers understood that God does build nations. He also destroys them.

When you look at our text in 2 Chronicles chapter 36, God is going to destroy the nation of Judah, the southern kingdom, and bring that kingdom to its knees exactly as He did the northern kingdom. Death, devastation, and destruction are going to reign over the land for 70 years because of Judah's rebellion against God. Second Chronicles 36:20-21 says: "And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years." For 70 years the land was desolate. Death and destruction reigned because thousands upon thousands had been killed, and the survivors were carried into Babylon into captivity, and just a

Judah's Destruction as a Case Study

Few, just a handful of the poorest of the people, were left in the land. Have you ever wondered how governments, empires, and nations die? Have you ever considered whether there are discernible marks upon a nation that is marked for death? How can we tell when a government or a nation is in its death throes?

You look at one of your family members who is dying. He gets weaker and weaker. Usually, a day or two before death, he gets what is known as the death rattle in his throat: difficulty breathing, fluid filling his lungs. When we hear that death rattle, we know it is just a matter of time.

There are marks that clearly indicate when a nation is marked for death. There are five marks given in our text; I am only going to cover two of them today. Remember this: God is immutable. He does not change, and neither do His judgments. They are the same from generation to generation; therefore, the marks of destruction are also the same. When you see these marks, you may know for a certainty that that government, that nation, is marked for death.

The First Mark of Death

Mark 1: Failure to Honor God's Representatives

The first mark of death for a government or for a nation is a failure to honor God's representatives.

We are reading in 2 Chronicles 36 about King Zedekiah. Verse 11 tells us that Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and that he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. Now watch verse 12: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord." Here it is: he did that which was evil and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet.

Like it or not, believe it or not, God does have His preachers and His representatives. Scripture teaches us that a true and faithful man of God represents the King of kings. He is an ambassador and a representative of God's eternal kingdom, an ambassador for the highest unto which all must be judged. The Apostle Paul said this concerning himself and the preachers of his time, in 2 Corinthians 5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Notice what he said: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ." Yes, diplomats and representatives of Christ. "As though God did beseech you by us," we are here in God's stead, as God's representatives. "We pray you in Christ's stead," representing Christ: "be ye reconciled to God."

Jeremiah, then, was God's representative, His ambassador, and His prophet. This is the first thing to notice from verse 12: King Zedekiah did that which was evil and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet. In order to repent and turn from evil, one must humble himself. The opposite of humility is pride. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Why would Zedekiah not humble himself before Jeremiah? The answer is pride. Zedekiah thought, I have the power, the prestige, and the throne. In his mind, his little, puny, finite kingdom, throne,

and power were far greater than Jeremiah's and far greater than the God whom Jeremiah represented. Consequently, Zedekiah disdained Jeremiah and paid no attention to his admonitions or to his preaching.

When God's preachers are mocked, ridiculed, despised, and rejected, it is a mark of destruction. You may ask, How is that a mark of destruction? Let me tell you what our Lord said in John 13:20: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." What did our Lord say? If you receive Him, you receive Him that sent Him, that is, the Father. If you receive whomever He sends, you receive Him.

The opposite is also true. We could aptly read this: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that rejecteth whomsoever I send rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me." The same truth applies. Truly, a nation's attitude, or a government's attitude, toward the preachers of the Most High God is indicative of the state of the nation, as well as being indicative of the state of the hearts of individuals. Thus, if you go back to 2 Chronicles 36 and look at verse 16, notice the first phrase: "But they mocked the messengers of God." They mocked the messengers of God.

If you read the book of Jeremiah, you will find that Jeremiah was mocked, ridiculed, and threatened. He was thrown into a dungeon and left to die. Yet God had sovereignly ordained Jeremiah to be a prophet to the nations.

Think about this, because it is very important in light of what is happening today. In Jeremiah 1:5, God tells Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee." God chose Jeremiah before he was ever born. Before he was ever conceived, God knew him and chose him. He says, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee," and then, "I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." God had set Jeremiah apart and ordained him before he came forth from the womb.

Now look at verse 10. God says to Jeremiah, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms," and then, "to root

out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."

Jeremiah had three times as much destructive work to do before he could begin any reconstructive work. What many people do not perceive is this: before any nation can be rebuilt, all that is contrary to God and His law must be pulled down and destroyed. Those who have erected their petty kingdoms upon humanism do not wish to have their little kingdom and work destroyed, yet it must be done in order to build on a solid foundation.

When you consider how far we in this country have traveled down the paths of rebellion, and how we have erected the kingdom of man and built our own little tower of Babel, it should not surprise us to comprehend the amount of work that must be done to restore ourselves in light of God's law and the totality of His word.

Every one of you has heard these slogans: "Reclaim America." "Let's take America back." "Let's restore America to her greatness." Let me tell you something: you can never take America back, restore her, or reclaim her unless you tear down all the humanistic edifices that have been built, come again, and build on the solid foundation of God's law and God's word. You must also consider that our nation as a whole despises God's preachers. It is also true that our nation as a whole despises God's chief preacher, prophet, and king, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you remember Isaiah 53 and verse 5? "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." He is still just as despised today as He was in Isaiah 53.

Hold 2 Chronicles, but turn to Matthew chapter 21. Remember that God destroyed Judah and Jerusalem in 2 Chronicles, and that He had already destroyed the northern kingdom and put them into Assyria. In Matthew 21, notice what our Lord says, speaking to the rulers in Jerusalem, beginning with verse 33: "Hear another parable."

Jesus said, "There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far

country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first. And they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" They said, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you," and it was, "and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. The light came on. What did he do in 70 AD? He wiped them out. The mark of destruction was that they rejected the chief prophet, priest, and king, the chief preacher, the Lord Jesus, and rejected those whom He sent. And He destroyed them.

The Father sent His Son, and the Son sends His preachers. In John 5:22-23, the Bible says, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Why has the Son been given authority to judge everything? "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

If it is true that, when you despise the Son, you despise the Father because the Father sent the Son, is it not equally true that, when you despise the preachers whom God the Son sends, you despise God the Son? Our Lord said in John 13:20, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He

that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."

One may read through the Bible and notice, throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, how governments and nations die when they persecute, prosecute, ignore, and disdain the preachers and representatives of the Most High God. I want to give you two examples. In Jeremiah 7:25-28, God says, "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them."

"Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction. Truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth."

What did God do to them? God judged them. Why? Because they received not his prophets. They did not humble themselves before the preachers of God. Jeremiah 26:4 says, "And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them."

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 26:4-11 (KJV)

> But ye have not hearkened: therefore I will make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth. So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they

> came up from the king's house unto the house of the Lord, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

"Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for a certainty, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears." They still did not listen to Jeremiah.

The very first mark that God gives us when a government or a nation is marked for death is the mark of disdain and despising of God's preachers and God's ambassadors. I am not talking about the hirelings, the men who are Mama called and Papa sent. I am talking about the ones that God has ordained to preach and teach His Word. The first mark of death is a rejection and refusal to hear God's preachers.

Mark 2: Failure of Civil Rulers to Humble Themselves Under God's Word

Secondly, go back to 2 Chronicles 36 and verse 12. Here is the second thing in this verse concerning King Zedekiah: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord." The second mark of death for a government or a nation is a failure of civil rulers to humble themselves under the word of God—not merely under the preacher of God, but under the Word of God. They did not humble themselves before Jeremiah the prophet.

Here is why it was such an atrocious offense: he was speaking from the mouth of the Lord. The words were not those of Jeremiah, and the commands were not those of Jeremiah. They were the words

of the sovereign God of heaven and earth. God's Word is not simply good advice that men, governments, and nations may accept or reject at their pleasure. They despise and reject His Word at their peril and at their destruction.

Isaiah 1:10 says, “Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.” He calls Judah and Jerusalem Sodom and Gomorrah. In Isaiah 28:14, he says, “Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.” What did God call the scornful men? They ruled the people in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 17:20 says, “And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates.” Notice what he said: “Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah.” He is talking to the civil rulers. Jeremiah 19:3 says, “And say, Hear ye the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.” Again, he is talking of civil rulers. Jeremiah 21:11 says, “And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the Lord.”

Do you realize that God not only expects, but demands and commands civil rulers to listen to Him? He ordained government. He established rulers. They are obligated to listen to Him. They are answerable to Him. They are accountable to Him.

Now go back to 2 Chronicles 36 and see how these two things work together. Verse 15 says, “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up at times and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place.” Whenever God is going to have compassion upon His people, what does He do? He sends them a preacher. He sends them His messengers. He is going to instruct them and teach them.

Put it down very pointedly in your mind and in your heart: God’s compassions are first demonstrated by sending His truth, by sending His Word.

“But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against

his people, till there was no remedy." There was no remedy. "Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with a sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand."

Consequences and Applications

Notice how this is tied together. "They mocked the messengers," plural, "of God, and despised his," singular, God's, "words, and misused his prophets," plural, "until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." What did Zedekiah do? He refused to humble himself before Jeremiah, speaking from the mouth of the Lord. He not only despised Jeremiah; he despised the Word of God. It is not the preacher's words; it is God's words. The Bible says they despised his preachers, mocked his messengers, and despised his words till there was no remedy. Therefore, he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with a sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, or old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hands. What did He do? He wiped them out.

Whenever you have a civil government, whenever you have a nation, that refuses to honor God's preachers and refuses to humble themselves before the Word of God, put it down: here are two marks for certain destruction. Ahab would not listen to Elijah. What happened to Ahab and Jezebel? What happened to Israel? Over and over in the Bible, this is true. Governments and nations are marked for death when they refuse to honor the men of God and humble themselves at the Word of God. The result in Judah and Jerusalem was total destruction for rebelling against God. It all began with despising their preachers and refusing to hear and obey the Word of God.

Now let me make some applications. First of all, you should know this and underline it in your heart: Atlanta, Georgia, the capital of the state of Georgia, is responsible to, accountable to, and answerable to God, and they will give an account—those politicians.

Washington, D.C., is answerable and accountable to God, and they will give an answer.

How big of an account many of our so-called politicians are going to give! Any civil ruler, I do not care how great, I do not care how small, will give an account to God. He is answerable. He is accountable. He is responsible. Stop and think of the millions of men and women and children who have been killed in wars that were useless and worthless except for the benefit of the military industrial complex and the oil companies. Are you talking about blood on politicians' hands? They will answer.

The second application is this: It is our responsibility to declare the truth. It is their responsibility to hear and heed the truth. One thing that is really a frustration for any true preacher is this: I can tell you the truth, but I cannot make you obey the truth. I cannot obey for you. I cannot do right for you. If you do not obey, if you do not hear, if you do not heed, God is going to destroy you.

I have seen countless numbers of divorces just because either one or both would not listen. I have seen young people thrown in prison because they would not listen. I have seen teenagers and children suffer. Why? They thought they knew more than mom and dad, the preacher, and everybody else. And they would not listen.

In Hosea 7:13, God says, "Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me." He is talking about Israel. Verse 1 says, "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria." God had redeemed them and brought them out of the land of Egypt, yet they had spoken lies against Him.

Let me ask you a question, folks. If God will bring destruction upon His own professing people for their rebellion against Him, how much more easily and readily and willingly will He destroy the wicked for their rebellion?

You can mark her down. There are evidences, manifestations, and signs when a government, when a nation, is marked for death. Look in your Bibles to Hosea 4 and verse 1: “Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the

inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land." God has a controversy, not just with the civil rulers, but with the inhabitants of the land. Why? Because most of the inhabitants of this country, just like Israel of old, are just as ignorant of God and His truth as are our civil rulers.

If you are not humbled, repentant, obedient, and bringing your life continually into conformity to the Word of God, you are part of the problem and not the solution. God requires obedience from you. God requires that you speak the truth, show mercy, and share the knowledge of God. He has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land because there is no truth, no mercy, and no knowledge of God in the land. And when you speak the truth, most people do not want to hear it. Most will despise it and reject it.

But one thing you must remember: some will hear, and some will heed. No matter how few or small that number is, it is still our responsibility to declare the Word. It is our responsibility to preach and teach the truth if no one ever hears, heeds, or obeys. But we must make sure that we hear, heed, and obey.

Is our government, is our nation, marked for death? Well, you just heard two of the marks. The other three will be next week, Lord willing. Unless we do as Jeremiah said—repent and amend our ways and our doings—certain destruction will fall.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We are so thankful for Your love, Your grace, Your mercy, Your goodness, and Your kindness. Help us, O Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, to repent, to be humble, to submit, and, once we learn the truth, to speak the truth. Lord, we pray for those on our prayer list. So many are in need. And Lord, we pray for our nation, for our country.

Lord God, open our eyes and ears, and grant us repentance. As David said, "Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned. Turn us, O God, and cause Thy face to smile upon us, and we shall be saved." Give us grace to honor Thee in all we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Marked For Death
Governmental Destruction

Part Two of Two

Introduction and Review

In 2 Chronicles 36, beginning with verse 10, we read:

"And when the year was expired, King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the Lord, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem. And Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord. And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel. Moreover, all the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the Lord, which he had hallowed in Jerusalem."

“And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with a sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age.” He gave them all into his hand.

The title of this message, “Marked for Death, Governmental Destruction,” came to mind while reading 2 Chronicles 36. It is also the title of an old Steven Seagal movie made in 1990, about drug runners and those fighting the drug dealers. That title is an excellent description of what God is teaching us here, because it is not only individuals who are sometimes marked for death; governments and nations are as well.

From Scripture, we see that God is in absolute, total control. He is the sovereign God of heaven and earth. In fact, the Bible teaches us that He is the Governor among the nations.

Job 12:23 says, "He," that is God, "increases the nations and destroys them: He enlarges the nations and straiteneth them." It is God who increases and destroys. It is God who brings them into straits and enlarges them. God is in absolute control.

Isaiah 40:15-17 says, "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." All the greatness that we conceive of and think about in our nations and nationalities, God says, is nothing compared to Him.

He is in absolute, total control. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "Men forget that all things are ordained in heaven. They see but the human force and the carnal passion, but the unseen Lord is far more real than these. He is at work behind and within the cloud. The

foolish dream is that He is not, but He is near even now and on the way to bring in His hand that cup of spiced wine of vengeance, one drop of which shall stagger all of His foes."

That is true not only of individuals, but also of governments and nations. When I began this message last week, I asked whether you had ever considered how governments or nations die, and whether there are discernible marks by which we can tell when a nation is in its death throes. The answer is yes. There are five marks given to us in our text. We covered two of those marks last week. When a nation or government is marked for death, the first mark is this: when a nation reaches the point that it fails to recognize and honor God's representatives.

For instance, if you look in verse 12 concerning King Zedekiah: “And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet.” In other words, Jeremiah was nothing to the king. The king thought he had all power, the position, and the prerogatives, and he refused to acknowledge Jeremiah. He would not humble himself. He mocked him, disdained him, and counted him as absolutely nothing.

I said this last week, and I want to say it again: a nation's attitude toward God's preachers is indicative of the state of that nation, as well as the state of the hearts of individuals. A quick perusal through the Word of God will demonstrate that very clearly. You remember even Elisha was mocked by young people. They said to Elisha, “Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.” Evidently, he didn't have much hair either, brother. What did he do? He turned around and cursed them in the name of the Lord, and two she-bears came out of the wood and tore forty and two of them. Make sure that you understand that an individual's and a nation's attitude towards God's representatives is indeed indicative of the state of their heart.

The second mark that I pointed out last week is also in verse 12: “And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet.” Note this: “speaking from the mouth of the Lord.” So the second mark of a government or a nation that's marked for death is a failure of the civil rulers to humble themselves under the Word of God. God's Word is not good advice that men may accept or reject at their

pleasure, but rather it is His command that they despise and reject at His peril.

Notice what the Word of God says concerning the civil rulers. The psalmist asks, “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” A vain thing is something useless, foolish, stupid, or worthless. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”

The Third Mark of Death

"Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." Here are all of these kings and rulers seeking to violate God's boundaries, break His chains, and loose His bonds; and God is going to laugh and have them in derision. Now look at verse 12 and God's admonition to the civil rulers: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

The Word of God teaches us very clearly that those who refuse to humble themselves at the Word of God shall indeed be destroyed by God and His righteous and just vengeance. The first two marks are, number one, a failure to honor God's representatives; number two, a failure to humble themselves under the Word of God.

Third Mark: Failure to Honor Oaths and Covenants

If you go back to 2 Chronicles chapter 36 and look at verse 13, you come to the third mark of death. The Bible says, "And he," that is Zedekiah, "also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel." The third mark of death is when a nation or a government fails to honor its oaths and covenants.

May I remind you that Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah king? Look back in verse 10: "And when the year was expired, King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him," that is Jehoiachin, "he

brought him to Babylon with the goodly vessels of the house of the Lord and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem." Zedekiah took an oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar as he was installed in his kingdom: "and he rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God."

Zedekiah had sworn fealty and constant obedience, by the name of God, to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar said, "You profess to be the people of Jehovah? You profess to serve and worship Him? Now you swear by Him to me that you're going to obey me." Zedekiah's rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar was aggravated by his perjury and his contempt of God. Zedekiah received his crown on the express condition of swearing a solemn oath of fealty to and serving the king of Babylon. What did he do? He rebelled. He revolted. He violated his oath and held God in contempt by disregarding his oath and joining in league with Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt.

So here is what has happened. Zedekiah's own pride, his own stubbornness, and his own rebellion, along with the incurable idolatry of the people and their constant disregard for prophetic warnings, have now brought them down to where Nebuchadnezzar is going to destroy them. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar became the executioner of divine vengeance, and he commenced a third siege of Jerusalem. Under this third siege, the temple is destroyed, the temple is looted, the walls are broken down, everything is burned, and Judah is overthrown.

Now consider the violation of Zedekiah's oath from God's perspective. In Ezekiel 17, God is speaking about Zedekiah and his violation of his oath, not only to Nebuchadnezzar, but to God, for he had sworn by God. Notice what the Lord says: "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean?"

"Tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; and hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land: that the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand." This means that the kingdom was to remain humble and not

exalt itself, but it could stand by keeping its covenant. "But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? Shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?"

Now remember, he was sworn by God. What had he done? He had sent down to Egypt for horses and an army. God asks, “Shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break that covenant, and be delivered?” Then verse 16 says: “As I live, saith the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die. Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons: 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 thus saith the Lord God: “As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.”

"And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it." God says, He gave His Word and swore by an oath to Me. Do you think I am going to let him get away with it? He has violated it. The one who made him king is going to take him to Babylon, and he is going to die there.

Now turn to 2 Kings chapter 25. I want you to see the judgment God brought upon Zedekiah for despising the oath and violating the covenant. Look at the first seven verses. This was a horrible judgment inflicted upon Zedekiah for the violation of his oath and covenant.

It came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon

came with all his host against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about. The city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. Thus, Zedekiah held out about a year and a half.

On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. The city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night. The army of the Chaldees pursued after the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; all his army were scattered from him. So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah.

They gave judgment upon him. They slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. The last thing Zedekiah saw was his sons being murdered, and then he was carried to Babylon, where he died.

The Sacredness of Oaths

It should be etched in our understanding that there are consequences to oath breaking. Zedekiah refused to make himself a servant to God; therefore, he became a servant and a slave to his enemies. Those who refuse to be humbled under the Word of God will ultimately be humbled by divine wrath.

Now stop and think how simple this really is. I tell people life can really be simple. All we have to do is obey. If Zedekiah had submitted himself and obeyed God, ruin would not have been brought upon him, his government, his people, and his nation. On the other hand, if Zedekiah had kept his oath and covenant that he had given to Nebuchadnezzar, all that ruin and desolation still would not have come upon him. What God is teaching us is that an oath is a sacred thing.

All who violate their oaths are considered the worst of men. They are considered men who have abandoned God; consequently, they are to be abhorred and avoided at all cost.

It is true that Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen and an enemy. Yet Zedekiah had sworn by an oath unto God to him. Scripture teaches us that God is the avenger of all such men who are covenant breakers

and oath breakers. This should teach us that we are required to keep our oaths, especially when we swear by the one true and living God.

God said in Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 12, “And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.” If you are not to swear by God’s name falsely, that means when you swear by His name, it is to be in truth. In Deuteronomy 6 and verse 13, we read, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.” Deuteronomy 10 and verse 20 says, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.”

In other words, oaths are sacred things. Especially when we give an oath and swear by God, God requires us to keep our oaths, unless, of course, an oath is made in violation of Him and His Word. I can give one illustration where it would have been right to break an oath. Do you remember how King Herod swore to his, I guess, adopted daughter, after she danced before them, “I’ll give you whatever you ask, up to the half of my kingdom”? She said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist in a charger.” The Bible said the king was sad, yet nevertheless for his oath’s sake.

So, is it all right to commit murder? No, it is not right to commit murder. He should not have violated his oath. He should have said, “I’ve sinned, I’ve spoken wrongly, I can’t do this. This is wicked and wrong.” But if an oath is not contrary to God and God’s Word, God requires us to keep it. Numbers 30:2 says, “If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.”

If a man will not keep his oath to God, what makes you think he will keep an oath to his fellow men? One of the problems in our country is unsaved and ungodly politicians who do not understand this simple fact. They have no allegiance to God, and consequently they have no allegiance to their people. They live for themselves alone. I almost laugh when I hear politicians who have been caught in adultery or sodomy say, “Well, my private life is my private business.”

I have news for you: If you will violate your oath to your wife, what makes me think you will not violate your oath to me?

Modern Politicians as Covenant-Breakers

Our Lord epitomizes the average politician in Luke 18. He says, "There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary." "And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

Our Lord then says, "Hear what the unjust judge saith." Did you hear what he said? "Though I fear not God, nor regard man." He said, "I'm going to avenge this little woman." Why? Not out of regard for justice, right and wrong, or truth, but "lest by her continual coming she weary me."

The Third Mark: Broken Oaths and Covenants

His oath meant absolutely nothing to him. The people meant nothing to him. Right and wrong meant nothing to him. Justice meant nothing to him. The only thing that mattered with this judge was his convenience. He lived solely for his own benefit and convenience.

Do you realize it is the same with modern-day politicians? Most of them—there may be a few exceptions—sing a good song. But when it comes to practicality, it is all about them: getting elected or re-elected, or establishing themselves or their party. Everything is for them, and they refuse and reject anything that is biblical and or constitutional.

The third mark of a government or nation marked for destruction is when that government fails to honor its oaths and covenants. Unhappily, our government has been known as a covenant breaker and an oath breaker for ages. Read and study a little history, and see how deceitfully our own government dealt with the American Indians.

Historical Examples of American Covenant-Breaking

You will find that most of their land was confiscated through fraud and deceit. Some of the land was confiscated because they got the Indians drunk and made them sign their names. Sometimes our government nominated certain Indians chief and leaders and got them to sign the paper, when those Indians had nothing to do with the tribe whose land they were signing away. It was all fraud and all deceit. Luther Standing Bear, an American Indian, said of the federal government, “They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one. They promised to take our land and they took it.”

“It was not hard to see that the white people coveted every inch of land on which we lived. Greed. Humans wanted the last bit of ground which supported Indian feet. It was land, it has ever been land, for which the white man oppresses the Indian and to gain possession of which he commits any crime. Treaties that have been made are vain attempts to save a little of the fatherland. Treaty is holy to us by the smoke of the pipe, but nothing is holy to the white man. Little by little, with greed and cruelty unsurpassed by the animal, he's taken all. The loaf is gone, and now the white man wants the crumbs.”

It was Chief Sitting Bull who said this: “What treaty that the whites have kept has the red man broken? Not one.” I was astounded because, as I was studying this, one author said, “Native Americans stood little chance against the surging white population. Eventually, the United States government would seize two billion acres of Indian territories.”

Two billion acres. One of my favorite westerns is The Outlaw Josey Wales. One of my favorite scenes is when Josey Wales rides to the camp of Ten Bears, the Comanche chief, and tries to have an honest agreement, an honest settlement, so that they can live on Comanche land. Wales tells them that they can either choose to live together or die together.

One critic said of this dialogue, “The exchange between the two men serves as a critique of the United States government policy from the perspective of both men. Wales notes that with governments you

don't always get a fair word or a fair fight. This recalls the massacre of his unarmed comrades by the Union Army," and, I might also add, the murdering of his wife and children by the Red Legs. "While Ten Bears remarks that it is sad that governments are chiefed by the double-tongued."

Josey is saying, "The government is bad. They slew our men. They slew my family." Ten Bears says they never keep their word. Later, in that same scene, Ten Bears says, "Paper cannot hold the words of iron." Understand something: paper is no better than the men who sign it. If men are not going to honor their oath or their covenant, the paper is absolutely worthless. It is a mere scrap of paper.

As a boy, I saw my father make multi-thousand-dollar deals with other farmers simply by shaking hands. No paper was signed. They kept their word and did what they said they were going to do. Today, you better get a man's word on paper, get it notarized, and that still does not mean anything, because the paper is no better than the men who sign it.

One of the characteristics of a godly man in Psalm 15:4 is this: "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Since Psalm 15:4 is true, where does that leave our own government?

Stop and think about this. I could tell you all day how our government has violated treaty after treaty and covenant after covenant with other nations and other people. But our government does not even keep its covenant with its own people. It disregards its own oaths. Look at the judges, presidents, cabinet members, politicians, lawmen, and a host of others who have taken an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States.

Article 6, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the United States Constitution says: "This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof; and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding. The senators and representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several state legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the

several states, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution."

The Fourth Mark of Death

What do they do? They do not even read it. They do not even know what it says. And 99.9 percent of everything that every judge, every politician, the president, and all of his cabinets do is in violation of the Constitution. Our government cannot keep its own word to its own people. So you could mark it down, folks: when a government violates its oath and breaks its covenants, it is marked for death. Why? Because it is transgression, it is perjury, it is rebellion. And as God said in Ezekiel chapter 17, "I will avenge such. I'll take care of it."

If you go back in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 36, look very quickly at the fourth point, the fourth evidence of being marked for death. You will find it in verse 13: "And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel."

Fourth Mark: Failure to Repent Despite Warnings

So the fourth mark of death is a failure to repent in the face of numerous warnings and admonitions. Notice what he did: he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning to the Lord God of Israel. He would not listen to Jeremiah. I do not care how many times Jeremiah taught him, preached to him, or warned him; he simply would not listen.

Do you realize that one of the clearest warnings in the Word of God is found in Proverbs 29 and verse 1? "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Do you remember that passage in 2 Chronicles 36? God sent the Chaldees and destroyed them all till there was no remedy. That is exactly what Proverbs 29:1 says.

Nebuchadnezzar, who exacted such a price from Zedekiah, also had a price exacted on himself. In Daniel 5:20 we read, "But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was

deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him." He was driven like a wild animal and for seven years ate grass like an ox.

The truth is this: this does not happen only to individuals; it happens to governments and nations as well. Listen to what Nehemiah said about Israel as a whole: "But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments." Did you hear that? "And hearkened not to thy commandments." How many of our civil rulers hearken to God's commandments?

Jeremiah 19:15 says, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words."

The problem is this: many people think that just because God does not smite a man, government, or nation instantly, somehow that man, government, or nation is going to get away with its sin. No. You have to remember that God is gracious, merciful, and long-suffering; that is for sure. But that does not mean judgment will never come.

Remember what God told Abraham in Genesis 15: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." Why? He said in the next verse, "For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

After four hundred years, God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, put a sword in their hand, and said, "Slay every one of them, kill them all." Four hundred years God waited, and yet He destroyed the Amorites. Look how many times Pharaoh was warned. Look at all the plagues that he saw. What did he do every time? He hardened his heart against God, and yet God brought him down.

It does not matter if men, governments, or nations are not smitten instantly. God moves in His time. God has a variety of ways of warning governments and nations.

SCRIPTURE READING - Amos 4:6-12 (KJV)

It is true that He warns through His preachers and through His Word, but He also warns through various judgments. Look carefully at Amos chapter 4, beginning with verse 6:

"And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." That is, He sent famine. It did not do any good.

"And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." God has not only used famine; now He has used drought.

"I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." These were supernatural judgments.

"And ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

What did God say? You just have not been listening. I have not only given you My Word; I have given you all of these judgments. Think of all the judgments that we have seen in this country: drought and famine, floods, tornadoes and hurricanes, and earthquakes. Yet we do not listen. You mark it down.

The Fifth Mark: Corruption of Religion

Fifth Mark: Corruption of Religion and the Ministry

When a government, when a nation stiffens its neck and hardens its heart and refuses to bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ, it is marked for destruction. The fifth mark of death is the corruption of religion and of the ministry. In 2 Chronicles 36:14 we read, “Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.”

The priests, even the chief of them, should have instructed the people in the duties of true worship and retained the pure worship of God. Instead, even the chief priests were ringleaders in idolatry. Instead of remaining faithful, they led the way in compromising and forsaking the Lord and emulated the wickedness of the heathen.

It would not take long to examine the churches in this country and find all kinds of compromise and wickedness and hatefulness. In Ezekiel chapter 8, God showed Ezekiel the corruption of the priests and the leaders. “And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.” They were speaking of the court of the temple. “Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.

“And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark?” Now watch: “every man in the chambers of his imagery.”

"For they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth. He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and,

behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here?" "For they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them." So what is God doing? He's showing Ezekiel all of the secret sins of the house of Israel.

As it was then, so it is today. Where are the preachers and teachers of the Word of God that are man enough, bold enough, and godly enough to call our government and its leaders to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ? When you stop and think of the ministry today, unhappily, many of the pastors and teachers are the worst adulterers, fornicators, compromisers, thieves, tricksters, and fraud artists, and they're all in the pulpit.

I just read of one church in Virginia that sacked its pastor and found out he was not only having multiple affairs with women in the church, but he raped two little girls down in Florida. All I'm trying to show you is this, folks: There is a corruption in the ministry. I want to show you something else. Go back in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles 36. We're talking about the corruption in the ministry now. Watch carefully.

The Rejection of God's Messengers

He says, “Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.” Not only the chief priests, but the people. The people liked it and wanted it. “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to

them," not only to the priests but to the people, "by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place." But they, that is, the people and the priests, "mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

Why do you think God's prophets were mocked and despised? The answer is because, number one, the false prophets and the corrupted ministry had the power and the politics and the positions. Moreover, the people were not interested in obeying God and following God. They wanted to follow the false leaders. You can stand up and preach the truth, and everybody will turn away and walk away from it. Yet some guy will stand up and preach contrary to the truth and contrary to Christ, and people will flock to him like everything. Look at all the cults that are flourishing that are absolutely contrary to Jesus Christ and contrary to His Word.

What is that telling us? There's a corruption. It's a mark of death. How many preachers do you know today that cry out against sodomy? How many cry out against aborticide? How many cry out against socialism, communism and Marxism and economic fraud? How many cry out against governmental abuse, martial law and even a military police force? How many cry out against the sins of our nation? So let's ask the question: where are our preachers?

The truth is, God's true preachers are probably few and far between and are hated and despised, ridiculed and mocked, listened to and isolated. Do you think those in control and power want to hear the truth? Do you think they want the people to hear the truth? The answer is no. What does that mean? It means that government, that nation, is marked for death. If we do not wish to die, we must repent and turn to the Lord.

Call to National Repentance

Turn to one last passage, Deuteronomy, chapter 4, beginning with verse 5, and see what God says. Look what God did for His people. Moses says, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it." Then he says: "Keep therefore and do

them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" The mark of God's people, government, and nation is a people, government, and nation that observes God's law and God's word.

I just read it, and it blows my mind. I think it was the Department of Parks and Recreation, the federal branch, that is now posting signs on Islam and how Islam has really elevated and honored women. Really? Really?

When a government and nation refuse to honor and recognize God's preachers, refuse to honor and humble themselves at His Word, refuse to keep their oath and covenant, and refuse to hear, be warned, and repent after repeated admonitions; when there is a corruption of the ministry and religion as a whole, the downtrodden truth of God, and the elevation of heresy and evil, mark it down: that government and nation is marked for death. What did God say?

He said He gave them up till there was no remedy. The only remedy left was destruction: "Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword... and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand." Our Lord said plainly in Luke 13: "Repent or perish." We must repent individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally.

If you read Ezra 9, and, I believe, Nehemiah 9, you will find that those two godly men not only confessed their sins; they also confessed the sins of their nation. It is time to confess and repent, or else there will be no remedy.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your love and grace. Lord, how gracious, longsuffering, and merciful You have been to us. Our being here today shows the mercy of God. It is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. For Thy compassions, they fail not. They are new every morning. Great is Thy

faithfulness. O Lord, awaken Thy people. Give us ears to hear, hearts to obey, minds to understand, and a will to follow Thee and Thy Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

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Chapter 2: Marked For Death Governmental Destruction - Part 2 of 2
JW01380 | YouTube

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