

Don't Put Your Trust in Princes

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Brethren, most of what is today considered the “Western world” -- the nations that comprise what's oftentimes considered “the West” -- typically have some type of electoral system where every few years they pick their national leader. Whether they call that person a president or a prime minister either way there's typically a cycle of every few years they hold an election to pick whoever the national leader will be. Oftentimes around that time of year and the months leading up to the time of that election, you'll see lots of passionate appeals to “We've got to elect this particular candidate or get this particular party in charge of the government so we can *save this country* and turn things around for the Western world. Get it back on track.”

Historically in the Church of God, we've typically taken more of the perspective of kind of staying out of politics and being involved in the political systems of this world. But particularly over the last several election cycles -- I know for where I live in the United States, about every four years we have an election for a president. The last several cycles of that, I've noticed a lot of Church of God members through like their Facebook pages and such kind of passionately campaigning for what they feel is the particular candidate that should be in charge. This is oftentimes going beyond just expressing an opinion of I think this particular candidate might be better for the nation than this other particular candidate. They're oftentimes making an appeal of we've got to get this guy in so he can “*save America*” and kind of trusting that that's somehow going to change the outcome of what we know prophecy tells us.

Well, there's a warning in all of this for us. Because the Bible repeatedly warns us that we should not put our trust in our national leaders. That we should not trust in man. We should trust in God and His plan and stay out of the politicking of this world and getting into the mentality that our national leaders are somehow going to solve all of our problems. That they're going to fight our battles for us, and we should trust in them. Instead, the Bible tells us we should be placing our trust in God. So, what we're going to do today is to look at this subject and see the lessons that the Bible teaches us about this. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

Don't Put Your Trust in Princes

Because what we're going to see, first of all, starting off in this sermon, is that the Bible specifically tells us exactly that several times. Referring to not putting our trust in our physical leaders. So, just to see a few scriptures that mention this. Turn over first of all, to Psalms 146. We'll start reading in verse 1.

Ps 146:1-7 *“Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! 2) While I live I will praise the LORD; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. 3) Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. 4) His*

spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish. 5) Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in the LORD his God, 6) Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever, 7) Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners.” (NKJV)

So, he's telling us we should place our trust in God because He's all-powerful and He's faithful and loving. He's not swayed by evil human nature. As we're going to see, that's kind of the futility in trusting in man. Because again, men are very swayed by our carnal human nature. Our selfish desires, our impaired judgment as a result. That inherently gets us in the ditch. You're going to see the Bible repeatedly warns us about this. So, turn over to Psalm 118. We'll see a very similar warning we're given here. Psalm 118, we'll start reading in verse 6.

Ps 118:6-9 *“The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? 7) The LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me. 8) It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man. 9) It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in princes.” (NKJV)*

So, you see, once again, it's specifically telling us don't put your trust in your physical leaders. As you notice, both of these scriptures that we've read here to start off with mention the word “princes”. As we're going to see here, when we look at the Hebrew word that's translated as “princes” here in English, it can have a variety of meanings. But as we're going to see here, one of the things it can mean is being of “noble birth” or “nobility”. Kind of like a king or a prince. Obviously in the context here, that's what this is referring to here. But just to share with you the meaning of this word. The Hebrew word here is transliterated into English as “nadiyb”. It's Strong's # 5081. The definition I'm going to give you comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter. They define this word as:

“An adjective meaning willing, generous, noble; as a noun, those of noble birth. The word often denotes an attitude of heart which consents or agrees (often readily and cheerfully) to a course of action. The Hebrews who were of willing hearts gave as offerings to the Lord jewelry and gold for the construction of the Tabernacle and its accessories.... In many other places, the term describes an individual as one of excellent moral character. Proverbs states that to punish the noble for their integrity is wrong.... At other times, the word signifies those born into lineages of nobility.”

So, that's how you would describe a king. Someone who's born into a “lineage of nobility”. Someone who would be a ruler as a result of their birth. At the time that Psalms was written, that is typically who would be the national leader of a nation. That would be a king, and his son would be a prince, and this would be the ruling class of a nation. So, as we're going to see here as we go through this sermon, even though today we typically have elected leaders, and we refer to them as presidents or prime

ministers. We're going to see the concepts are very similar. The same pitfalls apply. The same concepts apply, regardless of whether we call that leader a king, or whether we call that leader a president or a prime minister.

To see some of the lessons associated with this that the Bible teaches us, if we look at the history of ancient Israel, we can learn some very meaningful lessons regarding the pitfalls of even having a system of a national leader like a king. As we're going to see here, elected leaders like a president or a prime minister, oftentimes fall into the same types of traps and problems that the Bible describes here with kings. But we'll see that as we go through this.

Initially, when the nation of Israel left out of Egypt and got established into the promised land, after Joshua establishes them in the promised land and he dies. The system of government that they had for approximately 300 to 400 years was a system of judges. There wasn't a single national leader. That came about later. In fact, as we're going to see here, when Israel basically rejected the system of judges and wanted a king, they were literally replacing God as their King. Because as we're going to see here, the Bible literally tells us that God was their King, and they were rejecting God to trust in a physical leader. Because they wanted to be like all the other nations around them. They fell into the human nature pitfall of, "If we just get this strong leader, well, then we can trust in him, and he'll solve our problems." *That always ends badly.*

See, God tried to warn them to not do this. Turn over to Judges 8. We're going to notice here that fairly early into the period of the judges -- because if you look at the book of Judges, there's 21 chapters. It goes through lots of years of history. In fact, several centuries. But in Judges 8 here, you'll see the story of Gideon. You're probably familiar with Gideon's army. That's typically what people associate with Gideon. But I want to pick up here in chapter 8 in verse 22. This is after the story of Gideon's army. Gideon is kind of seen as a hero by the Israelites because he solved a problem for them. But notice the appeal that the people make to Gideon and what he resists here. Because again, at the time there were judges that God raised up to resolve certain issues and to help in the rulership of Israel. But there wasn't like a centralized king situation. We're going to see that that became inherently problematic. But just notice here in Judges 8 in verse 22.

Judges 8:22 *"Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, 'Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.'" (NKJV)*

Gideon had been instrumental in delivering them from the Midianites. So now the people are thinking, "He'll be our leader." They basically want to make him their king. Now, they don't specifically mention the word "king" here. But notice how they worded it. You'll rule and then your son after you and then your grandson after him. That's how the succession for a king works. But then notice in verse 23, what Gideon points out to them.

"23) But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you." (NKJV)

See, what he's trying to remind them is God is your King. You need to be looking to Him to solve your problems, and not trying to replace Him in your mind, in your heart with a physical leader. Because we're going to see that's what Israel was doing when they insisted on having a king. They basically rejected God's system that He had established when they requested a king. God gave them what they asked for. But we're going to see He specifically warned them that this is not going to go well. This is going to cause you problems in the long run. But just to see this story, turn over to 1 Samuel 8. We'll pick up here in verse 1.

1 Sam 8:1 *"Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. 2) The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba." (NKJV)*

Notice this was more of a regional kind of concept. It's how judges typically ruled and fulfilled their job. Again, you didn't have this one central leader who kind of built up his empire and created a ruling class over the people. That's not really how this worked. But you'll see later that's what God warns them about in regards to a king and what was going to happen. But continue on in verse 3.

"3) But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice. 4) Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5) and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." 6) But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7) And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. 8) According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also." (NKJV)

Notice God directly tells Samuel, "They're not rejecting you. They're rejecting Me." It's because God was their King. We'll see that directly stated here just a little bit later in the book of 1 Samuel. So then, turn over to 1 Samuel 10. We'll see this mentioned again of how this was just direct rebellion against God.

Just to also summarize what we just saw in chapter 8 there. Notice that Samuel's sons were misbehaving. The people had a legitimate right to complain that your sons are not behaving well. That's a problem we'd like addressed. But what they did is a typical problem of human nature. We see the middle of the road as we jump from one ditch to the other. So instead of just saying solve the problem with your sons, because they're misbehaving. It's we want to reject the whole system of judges that God has established. We want a king like other nations. They wanted to solve it their own way.

But then pick up here now in 1 Samuel 10 in verse 17. Because we're going to see here once again, God saw this as a direct rejection of Him and not just of Samuel and his family.

1 Sam 10:17 *"Then Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah, 18) and said to the children of Israel, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.' 19) But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, "No, set a king over us!" Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans." (NKJV)*

Notice again, he's directly stating here you haven't just rejected Samuel. You're rejecting your true King, which was God. That was the King they should have been looking to. But they wanted to trust in a physical leader to solve their problems. But now, turn over to 1 Samuel 12. We'll see here where he directly explains that God was their King. That is literally who they are wanting to replace with a physical king. This is 1 Samuel 12 in verse 6.

1 Sam 12:6 *"Then Samuel said to the people, "It is the LORD who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. 7) Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did to you and your fathers: 8) When Jacob had gone into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. 9) And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Habor, into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. 10) Then they cried out to the LORD, and said, "We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and Ashtoreths; but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.' 11) And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety. 12) And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, "No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the LORD your God was your king." (NKJV)*

So, they were literally rejecting God as their King and wanting a physical leader.

13) *"Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the LORD has set a king over you." (NKJV)*

So, God tells Samuel, "Give them what they want." But He also warned them specifically before you do this. "I'm giving you informed consent. This is not going to turn out well". If we turn back over to 1 Samuel 8, we'll see here the specific warning He

gave them. We're going to see how this absolutely came true because everything that God warned them was eventually going to happen if they set up a king to be the physical ruler of the nation, all of these things that would come about actually DID come about. Let's pick up here again in 1 Samuel 8 in verse 7.

1 Sam 8:7 *“And the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. 8) According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. 9) Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.” 10) So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. 11) And he said, “This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. 12) He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 13) He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. 14) And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. 15) He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. 16) And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. 17) He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. 18) And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day.” 19) Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, “No, but we will have a king over us, 20) that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”* (NKJV)

Notice they wanted a physical leader to solve their problems instead of looking to God to solve their problems.

“21) And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD. 22) So the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed their voice, and make them a king.” And Samuel said to the men of Israel, “Every man go to his city.” (NKJV)

Now, if you notice kind of the overall picture of what he's describing. Here's all the things that are going to happen if you set up a king. It's not all that different from a lot of what we see even in the nations that we consider to be democratic nations today. We have elected leaders. We have either presidents or prime ministers. But if you think about it, a lot of the same problems happen because what he's describing here is this king is going to set up his power and he's basically going to wind up establishing a ruling class that kind of lives off of the working class under them. There's going to be a

taxation system that's going to funnel the wealth upward and all the niceties are going to go up to the king and his buddies who are the ruling class and everybody else is going to suffer under this system. That's what He's describing. I think a lot of us, even in democratic western nations that don't technically have a king, that have a president or a prime minister, we kind of identify with these kind of issues. You see, regardless of what you call the physical leader who's placed in charge, human nature is still the same and it creates the same kind of problems. Over time this is absolutely what came about.

In fact, these very issues coming about ultimately resulted in the splitting of the kingdom. So, if you'll turn over to 1 Kings 12, we'll pick up the story kind of right after the death of Solomon. Because Solomon is a famous king of Israel and he was known for his wisdom. But he was also given great prosperity in his time and tremendous wealth was given to the nation. But as a result of this, Solomon winds up building palaces for himself. He takes this wealth and kind of pursues every desire, every lust that he has, and that creates its own problems.

But the way he did this was through a taxation system that funneled a lot of this wealth upward towards him and his family and the ruling class. This kind of got old for the people. So, when he dies and his son Rehoboam takes over, the people appeal for a break. They're like, "We'll follow you, but give us a break on all this taxation." His son has grown up in privilege being wealthy. He is totally out of touch with what the common man has experienced and doesn't respond to this well. He tries to make it even worse. So, just to read this account, let's pick up here in 1 Kings 12 and verse 1.

1 Kings 12:1 *"And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king. 2) So it happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard it (he was still in Egypt, for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon and had been dwelling in Egypt), 3) that they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, 4) "Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you." 5) So he said to them, "Depart for three days, then come back to me." And the people departed. 6) Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, "How do you advise me to answer these people?" 7) And they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever." 8) But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him." (NKJV)*

So, notice the older men, they had experienced life prior to this and were a little more in touch with the common man and their concerns and they gave him wise advice. But notice what Rehoboam does. He speaks to the young men who had been his buddies. In other words, those who grew up in a position of privilege who had had lots of wealth and had been served by this system. So, they too were totally out of touch with how this was affecting the common man. So, when you kind of look at it from that perspective,

you can see why the decisions that they make are completely out of touch, and it blows up in their face. So, now pick up here in verse 9.

"9) And he said to them, 'What advice do you give? How should we answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?'" 10) Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us'—thus you shall say to them: 'My little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist! 11) And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!' " 12) So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had directed, saying, "Come back to me the third day." 13) Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him; 14) and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!" (NKJV)

So, notice what happened. This is absolutely the fulfillment of everything God warned them about in 1 Samuel 8. If you place a king here, it's basically going to wind up creating a ruling class over the common man. There's going to be a taxation system that's going to funnel all the wealth up to the privileged and you're going to get crushed by the burden of this and you're going to regret this decision to have a king. That's exactly what DID happen.

As you can imagine, when the people hear these words of not only are we not going to lighten the burden on you we're going to double down and make it worse. That didn't go over well with the majority of people. So, what happens then is this creates a split within the kingdom. This is when Judah and Israel become separate nations because the northern 10 tribes basically break off and make Jeroboam their king because they're rebelling against this taxation. But notice what also happens.

Once again, we see here seeing the middle of the road as we jump from one ditch to the other. Because they basically are recoiling from one problem and it results in a whole set of other new problems because they're still looking to a king -- to a physical leader -- to solve their problems. You can understand the polarization of the people looking for some relief. Looking for some alternative to what Rehoboam was doing.

But notice what happens when they place Jeroboam in charge because this is going to reveal another inherent problem with this type of government. Because kings or even elected politicians as we're going to see are oftentimes more interested and more motivated by preserving their power and their wealth than they are in serving the people. Because you can see that's what was happening with Rehoboam. His buddies were basically advising him to just double down upon them so we can keep having all the wealth come to us and we can live in even greater prosperity. That's really kind of the motivation behind what they were doing.

But we're going to notice here that what Jeroboam does is lead the people into idolatry - basically worshipping idols. He perverts God's Holy Days. He creates fake Holy Days in the eighth month of the year. He even starts appointing priests that are not Levites, like God instructed. Basically, they wind up totally perverting all of God's instructions. He's basically just trying to preserve his own power.

But the people following him, what are they doing? They're looking to a physical leader. They want a king to solve their problems. Rather than looking to God for a solution for this, they basically jump from the frying pan to the fire. They as a nation wind up going into captivity even before the nation of Judah does, because of the idolatry and how they have rebelled against God. To see how this played out, jump down to verse 25 here of 1 Kings 12, and we'll see basically what happened with Jeroboam and the things that he instituted. But notice as we read through this, Jeroboam is more interested in preserving his power than he is in obeying God or serving the needs of the people. This is in verse 25.

1 Kings 12:25 *"Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Penuel. 26) And Jeroboam said in his heart, 'Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: 27) If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah.'" (NKJV)*

God had commanded that sacrifices take place at the temple, and His temple was in Jerusalem. But Jeroboam's not interested in leading the people in obedience to God. He's more motivated by preserving his power, and his wealth, his position, than he is in serving the people. So, you're going to see here, he totally leads them into idolatrous worship and totally perverts God's instructions. He leads the whole nation off track because he's more concerned in solving his problems than he is in solving the people's problems.

"28) Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" 29) And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30) Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. 31) He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi. 32) Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. 33) So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense." (NKJV)

Notice it keeps mentioning he did this on the fifteenth day of the eighth month. The Feast of Tabernacles starts on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. But what did the Israelites have to do for the Feast of Tabernacles? Journey to Jerusalem. See, this is what he's trying to prevent. He's basically giving an alternative, but he's not interested in keeping the people faithful to God and trying to lead them in the right direction. He's primarily interested in preserving his power and his position.

See, this is an inherent problem not just with kings, but with elected leaders as well. Human nature is human nature regardless of what we call an office. As I mentioned at the beginning of this sermon, a lot of what the Bible speaks about is princes and kings and the dangers of that. But today, more often we have presidents or prime ministers rather than kings. But if you just look at the overall lessons in this and the dynamics of what we're warned about, most all of this applies to elected systems as well. Just to illustrate this, I'd like to share with you a quote from one of my favorite authors, Dr. Thomas Sowell. He's a PhD economist. He was a professor at a number of Ivy League universities and has been a very famous author and conservative leader for quite a number of years. He's in his 90s today. But just to share with you one of his popular quotes.

"No one will really understand politics until they understand that politicians are not trying to solve our problems. They are trying to solve their own problems—of which getting elected and re-elected are number one and number two. Whatever is number three is far behind."

See, that's the reality of the political system. We have to keep that in mind when we look at political parties or political candidates and such. Everyone has carnal human nature. Oftentimes things aren't what they seem. Because they're oftentimes more motivated by what's going to benefit the leaders than it is really motivated by what's going to help the people. But another big thing that we need to realize in all of this is one of the big dangers in trusting in princes -- as the Bible calls it -- or in our physical leaders. Today, as I mentioned, in our Western nations, that's typically presidents or prime ministers.

As I mentioned earlier in the sermon, one of the observations I've made over the last decade or better -- over the last several election cycles in the U.S. -- is a lot of Church of God members kind of passionately campaigning on their Facebook pages and such from the perspective of we got to get this particular guy into office so he can "save America". There's a delusion that comes from this. Because prophecy tells us how this movie ends. The Western world is going to fall from the dominance that we've experienced in our lifetimes. That's just guaranteed to happen. But if we start trusting in physical leaders, we can get a delusional idea in our head that, somehow, we can "save America". We can turn this around, and we can change the outcome from something that God Himself has already told us how it's going to end.

To kind of learn a lesson from this, we can look at a historical example that's very similar to what I just described. It's the life of Jeremiah. You're probably familiar with or have at least heard of the prophet Jeremiah. There's a book in the Bible dedicated to his

story. Jeremiah was a guy that had a life that a lot of us would probably not want to sign up for. It's easy for us today to look back at Jeremiah and say he's a hero of the Bible, and there's a book in the Bible dedicated to him. There are other books of the Bible that refer to him and speak of him well. But to live Jeremiah's life would not have been a lot of fun. Because Jeremiah was called to be a prophet roughly around the age of 20. The Bible doesn't tell us exactly when it was, but the signs indicate he was probably somewhere around the age of 20. From the dates it gives us of when he started prophesying until the actual fall of Judah, that was about 40 years. Because God calls him to prophesy to the nation of Judah to warn them if they don't repent, they're going to get destroyed. They're going to wind up going into captivity and they're going to lose their comfortable status there in the promised land.

About 20 years into this God just has Jeremiah tell them, the decision's been made. You guys aren't listening. You're going to go into captivity. Jeremiah delivers this message. It's about another 20 years approximately before they absolutely fall and the Babylonians take them into captivity. But during all this time Jeremiah is basically just beating his head against the wall for about 40 years because he's doing what God asked him to do in preaching this message, but nobody's paying attention. But what we're going to see here is this teaches us a very valuable lesson because at the time that these prophecies were eventually fulfilled, the king at the time and all of his all of his buddies that work with him are totally ignoring Jeremiah and think that they're going to work it out some other way. They're going to solve the problem and they're going to work it out differently than the way God's determined that it's going to end. It was a futile effort.

So, to start off with, just turn over to Jeremiah 25. As I mentioned before, Jeremiah was called as a prophet approximately around the age of 20. A little over 20 years into this, he's given a prophecy just to conclusively tell Judah that God has made His decision and you're going to go into captivity with the Babylonians. That's just simply what's going to happen. Just to see this account, let's start here in Jeremiah 25 in verse 1.

Jer 25:1 *"The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), 2) which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying: 3) "From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the LORD has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened." (NKJV)*

Notice again, we're a little over 20 years -- he says 23 years -- into this about 40 year period from the time he started prophesying until the fall of Judah. And as he's saying no one's paying attention, no one's listening. So, God has determined, I'm just going to tell you now, how this is going to end. You're going into captivity. Let's pick up here in verse 4.

"4) And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. 5) They said, 'Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever. 6) Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you.' 7) Yet you have not listened to Me," says the LORD, "that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. 8) "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Because you have not heard My words, 9) behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the LORD, "and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10) Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11) And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12) "Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity," says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation. 13) So I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the nations. 14) (For many nations and great kings shall be served by them also; and I will repay them according to their deeds and according to the works of their own hands.)' " (NKJV)

So, see, he has directly told them, here's how it's going to end. *This is just simply how the movie is going to end.* But as he's mentioned throughout this prophecy, the people were just not listening. This remained true for the rest of this whole story. Multiple years later, King Zedekiah is now in power and he's not listening either. So, turn over to Jeremiah 37 here. We'll pick up the story here. Because again, we're now almost about 20 years later here. Zedekiah is in power, but he's not listening either. But notice that he and his buddies that are ruling together ignore Jeremiah and they think they're going to change the outcome. They think they're going to save the nation. So, pick up here in verse 1 of chapter 37.

Jer 37:1 *"Now King Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. 2) But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land gave heed to the words of the LORD which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah. 3) And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Pray now to the LORD our God for us." 4) Now Jeremiah was coming and going among the people, for they had not yet put him in prison."* (NKJV)

Because if you read through Jeremiah's story, he gets thrown in prison at one point. He gets beaten up at one point. He gets thrown in a dungeon, which we're about to read here in a minute. Because the people of Judah are just not paying attention to anything that he's saying.

"5) Then Pharaoh's army came up from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they departed from Jerusalem. 6) Then the word of the LORD came to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7) 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Thus you shall say to the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: 'Behold, Pharaoh's army which has come up to help you will return to Egypt, to their own land. 8) And the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire.' ' 9) Thus says the LORD: 'Do not deceive yourselves, saying, 'The Chaldeans will surely depart from us,' for they will not depart. 10) For though you had defeated the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you, and there remained only wounded men among them, they would rise up, every man in his tent, and burn the city with fire.' " (NKJV)

Notice he's directly telling them, don't deceive yourselves. You're not going to change the outcome. But what happened was King Zedekiah and those with him, they don't pay attention to this. In fact, as we're about to read here in a moment Jeremiah even tells them your best bet here is to just accept God's will and surrender to the Babylonians. Because resisting this, you're just going to get more people killed. They don't listen to this. In fact, they actually throw Jeremiah in a dungeon for telling them what they don't want to hear. To see that, pick up here in chapter 38 and verse 1.

Jer 38:1 *"Now Shephatiah the son of Mattan, Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, saying, 2) 'Thus says the LORD: 'He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes over to the Chaldeans shall live; his life shall be as a prize to him, and he shall live.' "* (NKJV)

In other words, if you guys just surrender to them and cooperate with God's will, more people are going to live and get through this. You're just going to get more people killed by resisting it and trying to change the outcome."

"3) Thus says the LORD: 'This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.' " 4) Therefore the princes said to the king, 'Please, let this man be put to death, for thus he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man does not seek the welfare of this people, but their harm.' 5) Then Zedekiah the king said, 'Look, he is in your hand. For the king can do nothing against you.' 6) So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king's son, which was in the court of the prison, and

they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.” (NKJV)

So, they persecuted him just for telling them what they didn't want to hear. But that did not change the outcome. Just turn over to chapter 39. We'll see here, everything that Jeremiah told them came true. Their efforts to try to save the nation and turn it around through physical efforts were just futile. As Jeremiah told them, they just got more people killed because they wouldn't listen and accept God's will and follow Him. Instead, they wanted to rally around physical means and a physical leader thinking they're going to change the outcome. This is chapter 39 in verse 1.

Jer 39:1 *“In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2) In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the city was penetrated. 3) Then all the princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sharezer, Samgar-Nebo, Sarsechim, Rabсарis, Nergal-Sarezer, Rabmag, with the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon. 4) So it was, when Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, that they fled and went out of the city by night, by way of the king's garden, by the gate between the two walls. And he went out by way of the plain. 5) But the Chaldean army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. And when they had captured him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced judgment on him. 6) Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah; the king of Babylon also killed all the nobles of Judah. 7) Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. 8) And the Chaldeans burned the king's house and the houses of the people with fire, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. 9) Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive to Babylon the remnant of the people who remained in the city and those who defected to him, with the rest of the people who remained. 10) But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left in the land of Judah the poor people, who had nothing, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.” (NKJV)*

So, you can see here, all of their efforts to save the nation and to basically bring about an outcome different than what God had predicted were all for nothing. They just wound up getting more people killed. That is what happened. Because the bottom line is trusting in physical leaders rather than God, that never ends well.

See, the big lesson in this for us in the Western world. If you're like myself and numerous other people, you get distressed seeing the status of the Western world as we see it today. It's kind of on self-destruct mode. We see it going downhill. Oftentimes we see our leaders -- they seem to be kind of on a mission to speed that up and to destroy the nation. So, you're kind of happy if we can have some leader that can do a better job. You'd rather see a good leader in office or at least the lesser of two evils, if nothing else. That's a natural thing for all of us to desire. We always want the lesser of

two evils to be in charge. The problem comes if we start thinking that we're somehow going to "save America". Or if you live in Canada or Europe or Australia saving those nations is the same type of sentiment. I focus on America because that's where I happen to live. But I've seen a lot of people kind of looking at it from the perspective of, "But if we get this guy in maybe we can save the nation and turn this around." That's ignoring that God has already told us how the movie ends.

To share with you a recent conversation I had with my brother. He was kind of pointing out conversations he has had with other Church of God members. He was kind of amused by the fact that some of the same people who talk about wanting to see the end come. They just want to see things to wrap up so Christ can return. The millennium can get set up. The resurrection can happen. It's a very understandable thing that we all look forward to. He said, "But the same people that are talking about how they just want to see the end come quickly are also talking about how they want to turn things around and *save America*." My brother kind of laughed and said, "I think you have to pick one because you can't have both".

Because from what prophecy tells us, for the end to come, the Western world as we know it has to lose their dominant position. Because the Bible directly tells us, it describes the end time as "the time of the Gentiles". If you look at this just from a world history perspective, it's not hard to figure out why the Bible makes that type of description. Because if you look back from about the 1400s all the way up to the present, the dominant force on the world scene throughout history is the nations of Europe. Around the 1400s, they start colonizing literally the majority of the planet and were a dominant force in world for most of the time since then. Then, even when Europe became not such a dominant power, the United States became kind of the superpower of the world.

These are the nations that descended from the tribes of Israel. It's because of the promises to Abraham that these nations have had such a dominant force upon the world. Again, that's been kind of the lesson of world history for several centuries now. For hundreds of years, in one way or another, you had the nations of Europe being dominant forces in the world. Then you had the British Empire, and even when that kind of declined, then the U.S. becomes a dominant force in the world. Even today, even though those nations are declining they're still kind of a dominant force and have a dominant influence in the world.

Prophecy tells us that that's going to go away. We're going to see the decline of these nations. And we're going to see -- at the end time -- the beast power being a Gentile empire, that is going to be the dominant power of the world. If you just think about it logically, for the beast power to rise up and to have that kind of dominance, logically, you would expect the Western Israelite nations to decline and to slip out of that dominance. Thus, allowing the opportunity for other nations to then fill that vacuum. So, you're obviously going to see that taking place here. That's just something we have to accept and realize that when the Bible tells us this is going to happen, it doesn't matter

what physical leader we get in charge of any Western nation. *They're not going to change that outcome.*

So, let's just notice here that the Bible, again, specifically calls the end time the "time of the Gentiles". That's because Gentile nations are going to be the dominant force in the world at that time. Prophecy directly tells us this. Turn over to Luke 21. We'll pick up here in the latter part of the Olivet Prophecy. It's Luke 21 and verse 20.

Luke 21:20 *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21) Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22) For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23) But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24) And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* (NKJV)

Notice that phrase, "the times of the Gentiles". Because we're going to see here the Bible uses this a couple of times to describe the environment at the end time. To see that, turn over to Ezekiel 30. We're going to see here a reference to the Day of the LORD which, as we know, is a major event that takes place at the very end time. That results in the return of Christ and then the setting up of the millennium. But notice how this is described again as "the time of the Gentiles", that time period. The reason being is because a Gentile empire and Gentile nations are the dominant force in the world. We're going to see that here in a minute. This is Ezekiel 30 in verse 1.

Ezek 30:1 *"The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, 2) 'Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Wail, 'Woe to the day!' 3) For the day is near, Even the day of the LORD is near; It will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles.'" (NKJV)*

Notice the Day of the LORD -- the end time -- is summed up with the phrase the "time of the Gentiles." In verse 4.

"4) The sword shall come upon Egypt, And great anguish shall be in Ethiopia, When the slain fall in Egypt, And they take away her wealth, And her foundations are broken down." (NKJV)

Now, as I mentioned, the Bible directly tells us at the end time, what it refers to as "the beast", it's going to be a powerful empire that's going to have world dominance. Turn over to Revelation 13. Now, I'm not going to go into all of the details covered here in this chapter. I've covered that previously in both a sermon and a study paper on my website. If you're watching this on YouTube, there's a link to the website just right below this video. It's SearchingTheScriptures.org. You'll see a link there. You can just click on it. It'll take you straight to the website.

But I did a recent sermon earlier this year, or either the end of last year or beginning of this year. I can't remember exactly when it took place. But it was called "A Fresh Look at the End Time Beast". There's also a study paper on my website called "The Beast of Revelation". It'll go into a lot more detail connecting together Revelation 13 and 17 and also the book of Daniel, and tying together all the details there.

But what you'll see, if you go through all of that, is I mentioned that the seven heads of the beast, the different empires that are referred to here, what they have in common is they're all Gentile nations that one time or another throughout history have had the Israelites in captivity and have tried to force pagan religions upon them. So, by definition, this is obviously a Gentile empire. So, let's just read through the first half of chapter 13 here. Notice that this is going to be the dominant force on the world scene at the end time. So, it's obvious why you would refer to it as the "time of the Gentiles". It's the time when the Israelite nations are not the dominant force in the world. A Gentile empire is. This is Revelation 13 in verse 1.

Rev 13:1 *"Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. 2) Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. 3) And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. 4) So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' 5) And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months."* (NKJV)

So, obviously we're speaking about the end time here.

"6) Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. 7) It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation." (NKJV)

Notice at the end time this is going to become the dominant force on the world scene.

"8) All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 9) If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10) He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (NKJV)

Now as I mentioned, I've got a study paper and a sermon on my website that will go through all of this in a lot more detail. We're not going to delve into all the finer details today.

But just to follow what we've been covering here, obviously we are going to have a Gentile empire here at the end time that's going to be the dominant force in the world. Now if you just think of this in terms of kind of the global economic and political scene. Today even though the U.S. has certainly declined from the superpower that it has previously been in prior decades, and a lot of the nations of Western Europe and the associated nations like Australia and New Zealand, Canada and such. I think all of them, we could agree, have been significantly on a decline over the last couple of decades from the status that they had previously been. But they're still obviously significant on the world scene. The U.S. is still kind of considered a superpower.

Obviously, if things are going to shift to the point that you have a Gentile empire that becomes the dominant force across the world, things have to change for that to take place. Obviously, we're going to have a point where the Western world, as we know it. It's going to lose its dominant status that we've experienced throughout all of our lifetimes. That's simply how this movie is going to go and we're not going to change that outcome because God himself has foretold the outcome. I mean for us to think that if we get this guy in or this political party in or if this happens, well then we can "save *America*" and it's going to turn things around. That's as futile as King Zedekiah thinking he can ignore Jeremiah and he's going to save Judah, and the Babylonians are not going to take them into captivity. No, that didn't work out so well for King Zedekiah and all of his buddies. They just got a lot more people killed because they wouldn't accept God's will.

See there's a lesson for all of us in this as well. God has told us how this movie ends. It doesn't matter who gets into power, who wins what election, it's not going to change the outcome. Don't get me wrong, I'm like everybody else. If I see an election for president, I'd rather see a president that I think kind of cares about the average American and could make my life a little more comfortable than another. I'd rather see that person get elected over the other as well. That's different from placing our hope in a politician. Putting our hope in princes. In our modern world, it's more often an elected politician than it is a prince or a king, but it's the same concept and we have to learn the same lesson from it. We can't put our hope in any elected leader or in politics.

We have to just trust in God because, yes, that means rough times are ahead and we have to trust in God to get us through whatever those times throw at us. Will that happen in our lifetimes? Will that happen after we're all dead and pushing up daisies? We don't know. We just have to hang on for the ride to see how this is going to go. But again, we need to be putting our trust in God and not trusting in a politician or in a political system. Because if we get all wrapped up in that, we wind up falling into the same pitfalls that the Israelites fell into. Because even as we saw with the story of King Zedekiah, even as this is playing out, he's asking Jeremiah, "Have you gotten word from God?" So, I'm sure in his mind he thinks he's inquiring of God, but Jeremiah tells him the answer, and he refuses to accept it. We can allow ourselves to fall into that same delusion as well if we start trusting in a political process or in any political leader or any political party. We have to step back from all of this and put our trust in God and trust in Him to carry us through whatever is ahead and whatever happens.

Because one thing we can definitely trust in is that God will get us through it and the movie does end well. Because if you turn over to Daniel 7, it describes for us here ultimately how all of this ends. Daniel 7 is one of the chapters that we look at in discussing the subject of the beast. Again, we won't go into all the details of the four different kingdoms that are talked about here. But we know that the fourth kingdom in Daniel is associated with the end-time beast. The description makes that pretty obvious. But let's just pick up here in Daniel 7 and verse 23. Not only does it tell us about this Gentile kingdom dominating the world. It tells us how it ultimately ends.

Dan 7:23 *"Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. 24) The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings. 25) He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time. 26) "But the court shall be seated, And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy it forever. 27) Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him."'* (NKJV)

You see, what it's getting at here is ultimately Christ returns in the story in Revelation 19. He defeats the beast power. The resurrection takes place, and then we become God beings, and can rule with Christ. The millennium is set up, and it all ends well. But we today, living in the end time, need to put our trust in that. We need to put our trust in God. We'd like to see our physical lives be more comfortable, and things to be more peaceful and prosperous in our physical lives. We all desire that. I do too. But we have to accept the fact that the Western world as we know it is not only on decline, it's going to significantly decline. Whether that happens in our lifetimes, or years later, that's debatable. We don't know exactly when it's going to happen. But from what prophecy tells us, that's going to happen. There's no administration, there's no political party, there's no political leader, that's going to change any of that, and save America, or save Canada, or Europe, or Australia. That's just simply not going to happen. Because God has already told us how it's going to end.

So, brethren, as we go forward from this Sabbath, let's make sure as we look at the world scene, and even as it's distressing for us at times to see the things that are going on. Let's make sure we're putting our trust in God and trusting in Him to get us through whatever it throws at us. Because the important thing for us is being in His Kingdom.