**King “Take-it-on-the-Chin”**

Few of us have ever heard of Jehoiachin. But we could relate to him after the relentless lockdowns of 2020 extended into 2021.

Jehoiachin hardly had a chance. Most politicians get at least a year or two in office, but Jehoiachin lasted only three months (598-597 BC). He was still deemed evil at age 18 (2 Kings 24:8-19), and before he could do much of anything—good or bad—the cruel Babylonians attacked Jerusalem and took the 18-year-old king captive to Babylon.

So, how does that relate to us? Most of us haven’t been forcibly wrenched from our homeland and thrown into prison. But during COVID-19, we couldn’t go to our workplace, governments closed businesses, and anti-social requirements distanced our relationships with loved ones.

So, how did the young King Jehoiachin end up? Scripture sounds a rather sad note:

“Why is this man Jehoiachin like a discarded, broken jar?

Why are he and his children to be exiled to a foreign land?

O earth, earth, earth!

Listen to this message from the Lord!

This is what the Lord says:

‘Let the record show that this man Jehoiachin was childless.

He is a failure,

for none of his children will succeed him on the throne of David

to rule over Judah’” (Jer 22:28–30 NLT).

Yet, he had a hopeful end. “In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, Evil-Merodach ascended to the Babylonian throne. He was kind to Jehoiachin and released him from prison on April 2 of that year. 28He spoke kindly to Jehoiachin and gave him a higher place than all the other exiled kings in Babylon. 29He supplied Jehoiachin with new clothes to replace his prison garb and allowed him to dine in the king’s presence for the rest of his life. 30So the king gave him a regular food allowance as long as he lived” (2 Kings 25:27-30 NLT).

It may sound like Jehoiachin lived alone. But he went to Babylon with his wives (2 Kings 24:25), and, in prison, he had seven sons: Shealtiel, Malkiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah (1 Chron 3:17-18). So he certainly did not live in solitary confinement! In fact, through him, God preserved the Messianic line to Jesus (Matt. 1:11-12).

So what can we learn from all this? Even if quarantines are God’s judgment, God is still at work!

In a sense, Jehoiachin *took it on the chin*—an English idiom from boxing, meaning to take punches like a man. So I call him King “Take-it-on-the-Chin.” He lived in prison from age 18 to age 55, but it didn’t defeat him. He didn’t let despair lead him to commit suicide in jail. Instead, he fathered Shealtiel and was grandpa to Zerubbabel, the key man God used to restore the people to Israel two generations later.

Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” These thoughts have helped us consider what God tried to teach us in 2020. Did we listen and learn? My wife and I saw three of our parents turn 90 in 2020—two of whom passed into God’s presence within months later. Going through their possessions led us to want fewer things and more spiritual riches.

Susan and I lived in relatives' homes most of 2020 in a somewhat homeless state instead of our expected sabbatical in Jordan, but the Lord opened the door for us to fly back to Singapore in January 2021. We suffered a 14-day quarantine in our prison—if you can call the Marriott a prison! It was a slow re-entry with time to process the past year and look ahead, though I began teaching my preaching courses online since we couldn’t even leave our hotel room without a $10,000 fine (helpful motivation). But is the gospel quarantined? Hardly! So let’s live like it.