

Kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah

2 Kings 24

2 Kings 24: 1-7 - *"In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him. And the Lord sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon. He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that He had spoken by His servants the prophets. Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD would not pardon.*

Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? So Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.

And the king of Egypt did not come out of his land any more, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook of Egypt to the River Euphrates."

Background Notes

In 605BC, soon after Babylon defeated Egypt at the battle of Carchemish, Babylon made its first invasion of Judah. It's important to realize that three major invasions of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians are described in these last two chapters of 2 Kings. The first invasion was in 605BC, during King Jehoiakim's reign (v1). The second invasion was in 597BC, during the reign of Jehoiachin (v10). During this second invasion the prophet Ezekiel was taken to Babylon, along with many other captives. The third and final invasion of Judah and Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians took place during the reign of Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:1).

The city of Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586BC. The city was destroyed and the beautiful Temple of the Lord that Solomon had built was destroyed by fire. So there were three invasions of Judah and Jerusalem by the armies of the Babylonian Empire.

2 Kings 24:8-16 - *"Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done.*

At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, as his servants were besieging it. Then Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his princes, and his officers went out to the king of Babylon; and the king of Babylon, in the eighth year of his reign, took him prisoner.

And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said. He carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. All the valiant men, seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all who were strong and fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon."

Doctrinal Points

1. Past prophecies of judgment were fulfilled, just as the Lord had said.

Throughout this sad record, it must be emphasized that all these invasions of Jerusalem and Judah were not by chance. They happened **just as the Lord had said**. *"And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said" (v13).* And, *"And the Lord sent against him raiding bands.... against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord which He had spoken by His servants the prophets" (v2).* And, *"Surely at the commandment of the Lord this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done" (v3).*

And notice - these prophecies of judgment were not recent. The Lord didn't suddenly begin to pronounce judgment without warning! No! Over many years the prophets had predicted judgment if God's people would not turn from their wicked ways. From the time of Moses, all the way down to the time of the Babylonian invasions, God's Law and His prophets had foretold the coming judgment - that the Lord would have to remove His people from the land for their sins of idolatry and immorality.

Jeremiah pronounced this prophecy during the siege of the third invasion. Jeremiah 10:17-18: *"Gather up your wares from the land, O inhabitant of the fortress! For thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will throw out at this time the inhabitants of the land.'"*

What a vivid description of what God had to do in His righteous judgment. He had to throw, or sling, the people out of the land. And of course, all these prophecies of judgment, from the time of Moses down to the time of Jeremiah - **all** were fulfilled in **every detail**. The past prophecies of judgment were fulfilled just as the Lord had said.

2. Future prophecies of judgment would be fulfilled, just as the Lord had said.

When we say "future" here, we don't mean "future" to us, but "future" to the people of Judah and Jerusalem who were facing the Babylonian invasion - and they still didn't think that the kingdom would fall.

2 Kings 24:17-20 - *“Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. He also did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. For because of the anger of the Lord this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, that He finally cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.”*

Since Zedekiah was Jehoiachin’s uncle, he was also his brother Jehoiakim’s uncle, and Jehoahaz’ brother. All were sons or grandsons of Josiah. In fact, verse 18 says that Zedekiah had the same mother as Jehoahaz, according to 2 Kings 23:31. (Remember, the Jeremiah mentioned here was not the same man as Jeremiah the prophet.)

“For because of the anger of the Lord this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, that He finally cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon” (v20). Notice the phrase *“He cast them out of His presence.”* We need to remember the dire conditions in Judah at the time of Zedekiah. Two invasions by the Babylonians had already taken place, and many people had already been taken into captivity - in line with the prophecies of judgment, as we’ve seen.

But the city of Jerusalem had still not fallen, and the Temple was still standing. Many of the people in Jerusalem (as well as the captives in Babylon) thought that even though Jerusalem was under siege, God would never let the city of His Temple fall. After all, 100 years earlier, during the reign of Hezekiah, God had miraculously delivered Jerusalem from the siege of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. But Ezekiel was prophesying in Babylon, and Jeremiah was prophesying in Jerusalem, and in essence both prophets said, “I’m so sorry! The prophecies of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem that are not yet fulfilled will be fulfilled. They will be fulfilled just as the Lord had said.”

Listen to Jeremiah’s rebuke of the people in Jeremiah 7: *“Do not trust in these lying words, saying, ‘The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord... For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings... then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever... Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house?’”* And in a series of dramatic object lessons in Babylon, Ezekiel warned the captives in Babylon not to have false hopes that Jerusalem wouldn’t fall to the enemy. It was just a matter of time.

The prophecies of the destruction of the Temple as part of God’s judgment go all the way back to the time of Solomon, who built the Temple. In 1 Kings 9:6-9, the Lord said to Solomon, *“But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, ‘Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?’ Then they will answer, ‘Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their*

fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore the Lord has brought all this calamity on them.”

So, as the past prophecies of judgment were fulfilled just as the Lord had said, so in 2 Kings 24, the future prophecies of judgment would be fulfilled just as the Lord had said.

Practical Application

Remember: Judgment begins with the household of God.

If you were just a casual onlooker at the time of the Babylonian invasions, you would scarcely have thought that Israel was God's favorite nation - His "chosen people" - the "apple of His eye." It would have looked like the pagan Babylonians were more blessed! But from the divine perspective, this was God's discipline of His chosen people.

Why weren't the Babylonians being judged? Well, eventually God did indeed judge the Babylonians, but "judgment begins with God's people."

This is a divine principle, and it is stated explicitly in 1 Peter 4:17, *"For the time has come for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"* So God will discipline believers to accomplish His good plans and purposes in our lives.

So if you ever wonder why God seems to be coming down hard on you while all your unbelieving friends and neighbors and colleagues seem to be getting away with all kinds of things, remember – *"judgment begins with the household of God."*