

The Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians

2 Kings 25

2 Kings 25:1-21 - *"Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around. So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.*

Then the city wall was broken through, and all the men of war fled at night by way of the gate between two walls, which was by the king's garden, even though the Chaldeans were still encamped all around against the city. And the king went by way of the plain. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his army was scattered from him. So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they pronounced judgment on him. Then they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon.

And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month (which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire. And all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls of Jerusalem all around.

Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive the rest of the people who remained in the city, and the defectors who had deserted to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude. But the captain of the guard left some of the poor of the land as vinedressers and farmers. The Chaldeans broke in pieces the bronze pillars that were in the house of the LORD, and the carts, and the Bronze Sea that were in the house of the LORD, and carried their bronze to Babylon. They also took away the pots, the shovels, the trimmers, the spoons, and all the bronze utensils with which the priests ministered. The fire pans and the basins, the things of solid gold and solid silver, the captain of the guard took away. The two pillars, one Sea, and the carts, which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these articles was beyond measure. The height of one pillar was eighteen cubits, and the capital on it was of bronze. The height of the capital was three cubits, and the network and pomegranates all around the capital were all of bronze. The second pillar was the same, with a network.

And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest, and the three doorkeepers. He also took out of the city an officer who had charge of the men of war, five men of the king's close associates who were found in the city, the chief recruiting officer of the army, who mustered the people of the land, and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city. So Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, took these and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. Then the king of Babylon struck them and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive from its own land."

Background Notes

In our Talk from 2 Kings 24 we mentioned that the Babylonians invaded Judah on three occasions. The third invasion is covered in 2 Kings 25. This invasion included the final siege of Jerusalem that lasted for 1 ½ years - from 588BC to 586BC. This lengthy siege resulted in a very severe famine, because many people from Judah took refuge within the walls of Jerusalem. In fact, the book of Lamentations says that conditions were so horrible that many people resorted to cannibalism in order to survive.

At the end of the 18-month siege, the wall of Jerusalem was breached. The Babylonian armies broke into the city. King Zedekiah and his defending army tried to escape, but the Babylonians (Chaldeans) captured them. Then Nebuzaradan, the Babylonian military commander, broke down Jerusalem's walls and burned down the city, including the beautiful Temple of the Lord (v9).

The Temple treasures were seized and taken to Babylon and the people taken into captivity in Babylon. Nebuzaradan, the Babylonian commander, took many of the Jewish political, military, and religious leaders, and brought them to Nebuchadnezzar's field military headquarters at Riblah, north of Damascus (v18-21). Nebuchadnezzar had all of these leaders killed to prevent any uprising and rebellion in the future (v21).

Doctrinal Points

1. "The way of the transgressor is hard."

That doctrinal point is found in Proverbs 13:15, and we see it in Zedekiah's life. In Ezekiel 17 the Lord gave Ezekiel a parable about two eagles. The eagles represented the king of Babylon and the king of Egypt and their dealings with the last kings of Judah, especially King Zedekiah. Notice what the Lord said about King Zedekiah.

Ezekiel 17:13-21: 'The king of Babylon... took a member of the royal family and made a treaty with him, putting him under oath. He also carried away the leading men of the land, so that the kingdom would be brought low, unable to rise again, surviving only by keeping his treaty. But the king rebelled against him by sending envoys to Egypt to get horses and a large army.

Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Will he break the treaty and yet escape? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, he shall die in Babylon, in the land of the king who put him on the throne, whose oath he despised and whose treaty he broke. Pharaoh with his mighty army and great horde will be of no help to him in war, when ramps are built and siege works erected to destroy many lives. He despised the oath by breaking the covenant. Because he had given his hand in pledge and yet did all these things, he shall not escape. Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: As surely as I live, I will repay him for despising my oath and breaking my covenant... I will bring him to Babylon and execute judgment on him there because he was unfaithful to me. All his choice troops will fall by the sword,

and the survivors will be scattered to the winds. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken.

When Zedekiah broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar that he had made before God in essence **he broke a covenant with God** - and thus he **transgressed against the Lord**. Look what happened to King Zedekiah as a result of his transgression. *"They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out his eyes, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon" (v7).* The way of the transgressor is hard.

Don't play games with God, as King Zedekiah did. The way of the transgressor is hard.

2. The way that seems right may end in death.

This doctrinal point is taken from Proverbs 14:12 and Proverbs 16:25. This truth is emphasized in the life of King Zedekiah. He thought he was doing "the right thing" by breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar and appealing to Egypt for help - but it ended in death. In verses 22-26 this truth is emphasized once again.

2 Kings 25:22-26 - *"Then he (Nebuchadnezzar) made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, governor over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left. Now when all the captains of the armies, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan the son of Careah, Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.*

And Gedaliah took an oath before them and their men, and said to them, 'Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.' But it happened in the seventh month that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men and struck and killed Gedaliah, the Jews, as well as the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. And all the people, small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans."

After King Zedekiah was taken captive, Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah to be his governor over Judah. Gedaliah was a good governor who told the truth to the people who were left in the land. He told them that if they submitted to Nebuchadnezzar, they have nothing to fear from Babylon, and everything would go well with them. But the people of Judah, including the army captains who had escaped capture and had come back into town – none of these people would believe Gedaliah. A man named Ishmael, who was of royal blood, was obviously jealous that Gedaliah had been installed as governor. He and ten other men assassinated Gedaliah, and killed all his staff (v25).

Then, in direct opposition to Gedaliah's good counsel, the people decided to leave Jerusalem and go into Egypt (v26). Why? Because it **seemed right** to them - but it **ended in death** in Egypt! These rebellious people not only ignored Gedaliah's good counsel, but they directly disobeyed the word of the Lord that was given to them through the prophet Jeremiah, who was still in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 42). The people piously came to Jeremiah and asked for advice, and the

Lord said they should stay in Judah. Why did they disobey the Lord and go to Egypt? Because they wanted to go to Egypt. It **seemed right** and safe to them - but it **ended in death**. These rebellious people died by the sword when the Babylonians invaded Egypt. The way that seemed right ended in death.

The same is true today. The obvious application here would be in reference to salvation. Many people try to work their way to Heaven because that **seems like the right way** to them. But it **ends in death**. There is a way that **seems** right, but it ends in death.

Practical Application

Look for “light at the end of the tunnel.”

2 Kings 25:27-30 - *“Now it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life. And as for his provisions, there was a regular ration given him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life.”*

1 Kings began with King David’s death, and 2 Kings closed with Judah’s destruction. The nation had utterly failed under the kings. Its decline and captivity was a long dark tunnel. But at the end of 2 Kings, there’s some encouraging light at the end of the tunnel. After 37 years in the darkness of captivity, Jehoiachin was released from prison! What encouraging news! It was a foretaste of the future release of the Jews from captivity and their return to Jerusalem. And because Jehoiachin was in the royal lineage of the coming Messiah, there was a great light ahead at the end of the tunnel.

Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon: *“I have good plans for you, says the Lord”* (Jeremiah 29:11). And God has good and encouraging plans for all believers! Even though our way may sometimes be difficult and unpleasant, and even as dark as the valley of the shadow at times – we can look ahead to the light at the end of the tunnel!