

### The Fall of Jerusalem

#### Jeremiah 39

**Jeremiah 39:1-3** - *“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. <sup>2</sup> In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the city was penetrated. <sup>3</sup> Then all the princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sharezer, Samgar-Nebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris, Nergal-Sarezer, Rabmag, with the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon.”*

#### Background Notes

As we've mentioned before in our studies, Jeremiah is a difficult book to outline, either thematically or chronologically. Although there are some exceptions to this two-part outline, in general it's a good mini outline of the book of Jeremiah:

Chapters 1-39 - Prophecies before the fall of Jerusalem

Chapters 40-52 - Prophecies after the fall of Jerusalem.

In any case, Jeremiah 39 was a turning point in the book, because it recorded of the fall of Jerusalem, just as Jeremiah had predicted. Putting the chronological data of verses 1-2 together, the siege of Jerusalem lasted for eighteen months. The book of Lamentations described some of the horrible conditions in Jerusalem during the siege. Some people even practiced cannibalism in order to survive.

The Babylonians breached the wall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, on the ninth day of Av, the fourth month of the Jewish calendar. (By the way, did you know that on the same day of the same month, the ninth of Av, in AD 70, the Romans conquered Jerusalem?) The “middle gate” (v3) was probably a gate in the center of Jerusalem, and the Babylonian officials used it as their new headquarters for decisions about the captives. This was a direct fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy in Jeremiah 21:4.

#### Doctrinal Points

##### 1. The fall of Jerusalem was recorded.

From God's perspective, the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC was a major event in Old Testament history. In fact, the Lord emphasized this by recording this event four times in the Old Testament - here in Jeremiah 39, Jeremiah 52, 2 Kings 25, and Ezekiel 24.

**Jeremiah 52:4-6** - *“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. <sup>5</sup> So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. <sup>6</sup> By the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.”* Continue on to read the rest of the account in Jeremiah 52.

**2 Kings 25:4-9** - *“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. The king went by way of the plain. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they pronounced judgment on him. <sup>7</sup> Then they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. They put out Zedekiah’s eyes, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon.*

*<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.”*

**Ezekiel 24:1-2** - *“Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Son of man, write down the name of the day, this very day—the king of Babylon started his siege against Jerusalem this very day.”*

Why did God consider the fall of Jerusalem so significant that He had it recorded four times in Scripture? I can think of three good reasons why the fall of Jerusalem was an important event:

**a. This was the fulfillment of God’s sure word of prophecy.**

God means what He says. Ezekiel in Babylon and Jeremiah in Jerusalem both belabored the fact that because of Judah’s sin, the Babylonians would conquer Jerusalem. The beautiful Temple would be destroyed, the people would be taken away as captives, and the nation and its kings would come to an end. It happened - because **God’s word is sure.**

**b. This was the beginning of “the times of the Gentiles.”**

In Luke 21:24, the Lord Jesus said that Jerusalem would be “trampled underfoot by the Gentiles” until “the times of the Gentiles” were fulfilled. The times of the Gentiles will not be completely fulfilled until the Lord returns. No human “peace solution” will end the times of the Gentiles. The time of the Gentiles and Jerusalem’s problems will only end when the Lord returns.

When did the times of the Gentiles begin? We believe it was in 586 BC, when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem. In the prophecy of Daniel 2, Babylon was the head of gold in the statue that represented the times of the Gentiles.

**c. There are prophetic implications in this historic fall of Jerusalem.**

The prophetic Scriptures predict that, in the future, there will be a time of great tribulation on this earth. During that time, Jerusalem will once again be under siege. Zechariah 14 predicted that all nations will gather together against Jerusalem. The city will be conquered, and many people will be taken captive – but then the Lord will return to earth!

**2. The fate of Zedekiah was realized.**

**Jeremiah 39:4-10** - *“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. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> Moreover he put out Zedekiah’s eyes, and bound him with bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. <sup>8</sup> And the Chaldeans burned the king’s house and the houses of the people with fire, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem.*

*<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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.”*

King Zedekiah and his nobles and armies tried to escape Jerusalem down the Kidron Valley to the Arabah, but the Babylonians captured them on the plains of Jericho, before they were able to cross the Jordan River. Zedekiah was taken to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, north of Damascus, where the Babylonian military headquarters was located. There Zedekiah’s nobles and sons were killed before his eyes, and there Zedekiah was blinded. He was taken as a prisoner to Babylon, where he died.

This was a fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy, which said Zedekiah would be taken as a captive to Babylon - but he would never see Babylon. Ezekiel 12:13: *“I will also spread My net over him, and he shall be caught in My snare. I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there.”* Because he failed to trust the Lord, the fate of Zedekiah was realized.

**3. The faith of Ebed-Melech was rewarded.**

**Jeremiah 39:11-18** - *“Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, <sup>12</sup> “Take him and look after him, and do him no harm; but do to him just as he says to you.” <sup>13</sup> So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard sent Nebushasban, Rabsaris, Nergal-Sharezer, Rabmag, and all the king of Babylon’s chief officers; <sup>14</sup> then they sent someone to take Jeremiah from the court of the prison, and committed him to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, that he should take him home. So he dwelt among the people.*

<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile the word of the Lord had come to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, <sup>16</sup> “Go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be performed in that day before you. <sup>17</sup> But I will deliver you in that day,” says the Lord, “and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid. <sup>18</sup> For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your trust in Me,” says the Lord.”

In Jeremiah 39, Ebed-Melech was rewarded for his courageous faith in showing kindness and compassion to Jeremiah (chapter 38). With courage, and at some risk to his own life, Ebed-Melech pled for Jeremiah’s life before the king, and he rescued Jeremiah from imprisonment in the muddy cistern. As a reward for his faith and courage, Ebed-Melech was not killed or taken as a captive to Babylon.

In the prophetic implications of Ebed-Melech, who was a Gentile Ethiopian man, I think there is a prophetic glimpse of the faithful Gentiles of the End Times who will care for the faithful remnant of the Jewish believers during the Tribulation period. In the “Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats” in Matthew 25, the Lord will reward the Gentile nations (the “sheep”) for their faith, as demonstrated in their compassionate treatment of the remnant of godly Jewish believers during that awful time. (Read Matthew 25:31-40 in this connection.) The faith of Ebed-Melech was rewarded.

## Practical Application

### Don’t be lukewarm, like King Zedekiah!

In Revelation 3:15-16, the Lord told the apathetic church of Laodicea that they were lukewarm: *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.”*

The Christians of Laodicea were a lot like King Zedekiah, who also was *“neither hot nor cold.”* King Zedekiah didn’t reject God outright, but he lacked the faith and courage to do the right thing. Sometimes he listened to reason, but normally he was wishy-washy and spineless.

Just as King Zedekiah paid a terrible price for being lukewarm, the blind church of Laodicea eventually paid a terrible price for their apathetic state of being neither hot nor cold.

Don’t be lukewarm, like King Zedekiah!