

Fall of Judah to Babylon

Lesson 3

2 Kings 23:30 - 25:30

In our last lesson, we talked about King Josiah. King Josiah repaired the temple Solomon had built. He tore down the idols that were being used for worship. He restored the true worship of God.

During the time of Josiah, God chose a young prophet named Jeremiah. Jeremiah served the Lord for a very long time. Some of the people of Judah were worshipping idols. Jeremiah worked hard telling people they should love and obey God. They should not worship idols.

One time, God sent Jeremiah to a potter's house. A potter made things out of clay. Jeremiah watched the man work with a wet piece of clay. The potter shaped it into a jar. The potter had to work very carefully with a gentle touch. When the potter looked at it, he saw that the shape was not right. The potter started over on the jar. He worked until the jar was just right. (Jer. 18:6)

God told Jeremiah the Israelites were like the potter's clay. If the Israelites would ask God to forgive them for worshipping idols, He would shape them into a great nation. But as long as they prayed to idols, He could not help them. God wanted the Israelites to repent. God wanted to forgive them.

After Josiah died, Jehoahaz became king. (2 Kings 23:32) Jehoahaz did not follow his father, Josiah. He was an evil king. Jehoahaz was king for only 3 months. Then Pharaoh Necho, the ruler of Egypt, took him to Egypt and put him in prison. Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the next king. Eliakim was another son of Josiah. Pharaoh Necho changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. (2 Kings 23:34) Jehoiakim was also a very wicked king.

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at a battle at Carchemish. After King Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians, he took over Jerusalem. The Babylonians carried many people away to Babylon as prisoners. This was the first invasion of the Babylonians into Jerusalem.

Jehoiakim was king for 3 years. After King Nebuchadnezzar took over Jerusalem, King Jehoiakim did not get to make decisions himself. He was a vassal king. That means that he was king, but he had to do what Nebuchadnezzar told him to do. After 3 years, Jehoiakim went against Nebuchadnezzar. Things got very bad for Jehoiakim.

King Jehoiakim hated Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. He also hated Jeremiah and the word of God.

God spoke to Jeremiah. He told Jeremiah to write all the words He had given to him concerning Israel and Judah. (Jer. 36:2) Jeremiah called for Baruch. Jeremiah told Baruch what to write on the scroll. It told about the judgment of God that was coming on Jerusalem. Jeremiah sent Baruch to read the words of God written on the scroll to the people of Judah in hopes they would turn from their evil ways. (Jer. 36:6)

Some of the men who heard the words of God went to King Jehoiakim and told him. King Jehoiakim sent Jehudi to bring the scroll to him. Jehudi read it to the king. Jehoiakim used the knife of the scribe to cut up the scroll and he threw it in the fire. The words of God were burned up. (Jer. 36:27) Jeremiah did not give up. He sent another scroll to King Jehoiakim with the same words on it.

King Nebuchadnezzar's army went into Jerusalem a second time. More people were taken to Babylon as prisoners. Nebuchadnezzar took more treasures from the Temple. King Jehoiakim was killed. (2 Kings 24:6) Jehoiakim's son became king. His name was Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin was king for only 3 months. (2 Kings 24:8) Then he was taken to Babylon as a prisoner.

Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah the new king. Zedekiah was under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar. (2 Kings 24:17) Zedekiah did not obey the words Jeremiah spoke from the Lord. But he sent a message to Jeremiah saying "Pray now to the Lord our God for us". (Jer. 37:3) Jeremiah was going out talking to the people. He was trying to warn them about the Babylonian captivity. Some of the officials went to the king. They said Jeremiah was scaring the people. The king turned Jeremiah over to those officials to do whatever they wanted with him.

The men took Jeremiah and threw him in a pit and left him to starve. One of the king's servants begged him to save Jeremiah. The king decided his servant was right. King Zedekiah sent him to save Jeremiah from the pit. The servant took others with him. The men pulled Jeremiah out of the pit to safety.(Jer. 38:13)

King Zedekiah did not want to continue to do what King Nebuchadnezzar told him. (2 Kings 24:20) He tried to overthrow the Babylonian control. King Nebuchadnezzar went into Jerusalem again to fight. Zedekiah was captured and taken to Babylon. (2 Chron. 36:10-11) This was the third invasion into Jerusalem.

King Nebuchadnezzar took away all of the vessels that were left in the Temple. (2 Kings 25:13-17) Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem. They burned the Temple of the Lord. They burned most of the city of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25:9) The beautiful city of Jerusalem was ruined. The walls were broken down and the city was a pile of ashes.

King Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. King Nebuchadnezzar chose a man named Gedaliah to be governor of Judah. Judah was then part of Babylon. Gedaliah was a good man. Since Jerusalem had been destroyed, Gedaliah moved to Mizpah. A group of men led by Ishmael went into Mizpah. Ishmael and his army killed Gedaliah. (2 Kings 25:22-25) They captured the prophet Jeremiah and took him to Egypt. (Jer. 41-43)

The prophet Jeremiah had tried to warn the people this would happen. God told his people to repent of their wicked ways or He would allow them to be captured. The people did not listen to God. Everything happened just as God had warned them.