

Week of July 18-24

Jehoiakim	reign	11 years (Placed on the throne by Egyptian Pharaoh Neco)
Jehoiachin (Jeconiah)	reign	3 months (Taken captive to Babylon)
Zedekiah	reign	11 years (Last king of Judah)

Destruction of Jerusalem and second Babylonian Captivity 586 B.C.

Jeremiah 37 Jeremiah's Arrest and Imprisonment and Questioning by The King

Over 30 years of ministry have gone by for Jeremiah. Now he is in prison, and the Babylonian army is outside the gates of Jerusalem. The year is 587 BC.

This and the two following chapters contain the history of the siege up to the capture of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was free at the beginning of this chapter. Zedekiah occupied the throne but had rejected the messages of God. Pharaoh's army had come out of Egypt to help Jerusalem, and, believing that it was headed to Babylon, the Babylonians stopped their siege against Jerusalem and left the city to fight the Egyptians.

Then Jeremiah delivered a message to Zedekiah, charging him not to be deceived by the appearance of what was happening, declaring the ultimate victory of the Babylonians over Jerusalem. With the Babylonian army chasing the Egyptian army, Jeremiah left Jerusalem and went to the land of Benjamin to check on the land he had purchased. He was arrested on the charge of defecting to the Babylonians. His constant prophecy of their victory was interpreted as proof of his sympathy with them. From the prison, Zedekiah brought him to his palace to see if he had anything to say. He immediately answered by declaring the certainty of the victory of the Babylonians. At the same time, he protested against the treatment he had received and asked that he might not be sent back to the dungeon from which he had been brought. This request was granted by Zedekiah, but Jeremiah was kept a prisoner in the court of the guard and given daily rations of bread.

Jeremiah 38 Jeremiah Is Cast into The Well and Rescued, then Gives Advice to Zedekiah

Jeremiah is still in prison and continued to tell of the victory of the Babylonians. The anger of the princes was stirred against him, and he was put into a well and left to die. He was released through the intercession of Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian eunuch, who was in favor with Zedekiah. Again the king sought an interview with him, charging him to tell the truth about the future. Jeremiah told him earnestly to submit to Babylon, warning him that if he did not, the women of his household would be given to the enemy and they would taunt him with bitterness.

Nothing is more marked throughout all this account than the absolute and unswerving loyalty of Jeremiah to the message of judgment which he was called to deliver. In the hour when it seemed as though it could not be fulfilled because the Chaldean army had temporarily left the neighborhood, in spite of the angry opposition of the princes and his suffering, and all the temptations created by his access to the king, he never swerved. His vision of an ultimate restoration of the people by Jehovah was clear to him but he knew that punishment was the purpose of God from which there could be no escape, yet not for one second did he attempt to hide it.

Jeremiah 39 The Fall of Jerusalem

Jeremiah had proclaimed God's Word for 40 years. This is a lesson about the faithful and the faithless. This chapter records the fall of Jerusalem. The carnage begins. After a long siege lasting from January of the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign until July of the eleventh year, at last, "they breached the wall and the

city fell, and all the officers of the Babylonian army came in and sat in triumph at the middle gate. Zedekiah immediately fled, but he was arrested and brought before Nebuchadnezzar. His sons were killed before his eyes, and then his eyes were gouged out. He was bound in chains and sent away to Babylon as a slave. This was followed by the sack of the city. It was burned along with the palace, and the walls were torn down. The king of Babylon charged his captain of the guard, Nebuzaradan, to protect Jeremiah. This was done by committing him to the care of Gedaliah, who was appointed to be governor. Jeremiah was taken out of prison and back to his home, where he lived among his people who were left in the land.

The last paragraph tells how, before the fall of the city, Jeremiah was charged by God to visit Ebed-melech, through whom he had been delivered from the well, and to promise him protection in the day of calamity. It shows that when the judgment of God comes, those who put their trust in Him are remembered and delivered.

Jeremiah 40 Jeremiah Is Released, and Gedaliah Is Appointed Governor

Chapters forty and forty-one constitute Jeremiah's last messages to the chosen people. They fall into two parts - first, prophecies against going into Egypt, and, second, prophecies in Egypt.

Jeremiah was taken with the captives but was released, and Nebuzaradan offered him his choice between going to Babylon or settling anywhere in Judah he chose. Jeremiah chose to go to Gedaliah, the governor appointed by the king of Babylon over the cities of Judah. Gedaliah sought to restore order. Many of the Jews who were scattered in the surrounding countries returned to Jerusalem. It was reported to the governor by Johanan that Ishmael was there as the emissary of the king of Ammon, and to take his life. Gedaliah refused to believe the story and refused to allow Johanan to take the life of Ishmael. This chapter gives us some idea of the appalling condition of Jerusalem. All the rulers and leaders had been carried captive to Babylon. Only the poorest were left to tend the fields.

Psalms 74 An Appeal to God to Aid His People against The Babylonians

This psalm was probably written shortly after the Babylonian exile began. The people mourned the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. They prayed for God to defeat the enemy that conquered them and to restore the order of the temple. The Israelites were his people, and the Temple was his sanctuary.

Psalms 79 A Cry of Distress as Judah's Enemies Have Overrun The City

There is a cry of distress. The country and Jerusalem are overrun by their enemies. The people have been killed. The writer prays for pardon, for help, and deliverance.

There is no praise in this psalm, but there is an undertone of confidence in God. In distress, the heart seeks to find its way back to God.

2 Kings 24 The Death of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah Reigns as Jerusalem is Besieged

This is about 598-597 BC. Jehoiakim became a subject of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. The sins of Jehoiakim are accredited to Manasseh's fifty-five-year reign of evil. The fate of the nation was sealed. His successors continued in his evil way, with no hint of repentance or reformation.

Finally, Jehoiachin, who had succeeded Jehoiakim, was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, with all the men of war and the rulers who were likely to rebel. In place of Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah his puppet king. Zedekiah held this position eleven years, during which he continued his evil conduct and ultimately rebelled against the Nebuchadnezzar.

2 Kings 25 The Fall of Jerusalem

The rebellion was easily crushed by the Babylonian army, and Zedekiah was captured and taken to Babylon. His fate is tragic and awful as the last thing he saw was his two sons killed. With both eyes put

out, and bound in chains, he was carried to the court of his conqueror as the type and symbol of the people who had rebelled against God.

This chapter describes the burning of the Temple, the palace, and all of the other houses that had any value. The wall was torn down and those who had declared their allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar were taken in exile to Babylon.

A poor remnant remained in the land over whom Gedaliah was appointed governor for a brief period. After his murder, the remnant fled to Egypt, and the Israeli nation became a scattered people, losing all their privileges because of their failure to obey God. So Judah was exiled from its land.

Lastly, the guerrilla forces killed Gedaliah, then fled to Egypt.

2 Chronicles 36

The last chapter of 2 Chronicles records the final movements of the downward spiral of Judah and her leaders. First Jehoahaz reigned for three months and was deposed by the king of Egypt. Jehoiakim was then appointed by the Pharaoh, and after eleven years of continued evil was carried prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon.

In turn, he was succeeded by Jehoiachin, who continued with the same evil for three months and ten days, and in turn, was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar.

Zedekiah, appointed by Nebuchadnezzar to succeed Jehoiachin, rebelled against him and continued the same evil history for eleven years, during which corruption became universal as the priests and the people participated in evil. Through all these dark days, God still patiently waited, sending His messengers because of His compassion. The people rebelled against God and rejected His mercy until the Babylonians, a people without compassion, swept down upon them like a terrible plague and carried the remnant captive to Babylon.