

2 Kings 21-23a • Chapter Study

INTRO

Ch20 ends with the death of Judah's good king Hezekiah.

In ch20, the prophet Isaiah went to him with word to set his house in order because he was going to die.

But it was a dangerous time for the Kingdom & Hezekiah worried for its wellbeing once he was gone.

He pleaded with God for more time.

Before Isaiah had even made it out of the palace grounds, God sent him back with the word Hezekiah'd have another 15 years.

Then, *sadly*, the humility that had marked the king for yrs, slipped with a feeling of invincibility.

He made some poor decisions during those last yrs that set a poor course for the Kingdom.

One of them was to father a son who *literally* erased all the good Hezekiah had done.

Erased, & then some

Ch21

¹ Manasseh was 12 years old when he became king, and he reigned 55 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah.

At 12, that meant he was born during the 15 yr life-extension Hezekiah had.

If he'd known how this son would turn out, he may have prayed to be taken sooner.

Manasseh had one of the longest reigns of Judah's kings; a wonder in light of his wickedness.

BTW: There's archaeological evidence for Manasseh in Assyrian annals. He paid them tribute.

² And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. ³ For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.

IOW: Whatever deity was out there, he adopted it, using the resources of the State to promote it.

He was a true religious **pluralist**; an eager spiritualist.

⁴ He also built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." ⁵ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the 2 courts of the house of the Lord.

As the religious center of the kingdom, Manasseh turned the temple into a pantheon of gods and goddesses.

Let's pause for a moment and think about all this from God's perspective.

We need to because note how this is phrased ...

⁴ He also built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." ⁵ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the 2 courts of the house of the Lord.

We've mentioned it many times before; God's covenant with Israel was like a marriage. Israel was His wife.

This is an idiom the prophet Hosea makes quite clear.

That's why *idolatry* is reckoned as spiritual *adultery*.

The temple in Jrz was the unique place their special covenant with God was to find its ultimate expression.

Yet here Manasseh fills it with idols and all the accoutrements that go along with their, at best, *profane* and at worst, *abominable*, devotion.

So imagine: You have a friends; a couple = William & Janet.

William is a good and faithful husband. A great provider and diligent in loving & serving his wife.

One day, after several years of marriage, Janet brings home with her 25 people, both men and women who she tells William she's having an affair with.

She wants them all to now live together in the same house.

Does William have a right to say, "Uh, NO!" Of course he does.

And we all know how he feels about Janet's betrayal.

We're ALL outraged by her behavior. It's simply absurd! Ridiculous! Insane!

That's Judah under Manasseh.

By setting up all these idols in God's house, he does what Janet did.

But it get's worse ...

⁶ Also he made his son pass through the fire,

Ritual human sacrifice.

practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke *Him* to anger.

These occult practices were all forbidden in the Law of Moses.

Indeed, God commanded those who practiced such things were to be put to death.

The king's job primary responsibility was to enforce God's Law.

Manasseh was it's chief transgressor.

⁷ He even set a carved image of Asherah that he had made,

Remember from previous studies what that was – a huge phallic symbol.

As blatant a piece of pornography as one can imagine.

Keep that in mind now as we read what comes next because that's precisely the way the Holy Spirit WANTS us to juxtapose these things.

Manasseh set that image up

in the house of which the Lord had said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; ⁸ and I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers—only if they are careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them." ⁹ But they paid no attention, and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel.

You would not tolerate pornography playing on the screen & video monitors at church.

If you walked into the sanctuary one Sunday and saw porn on the screen, you wouldn't just leave; you'd find the computer playing it and smash it to smithereens = And good one you for doing so!!!!!!

Well, that's what God's eventually going to do to the temple.

First, He does leave, but when the perversion continues, He destroys the temple.

¹⁰ And the Lord spoke by His servants the prophets, saying, ¹¹ "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations (he has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who *were* before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols), ¹² therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Behold, I am bringing *such* calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle. ¹³ And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as *one* wipes a dish, wiping *it* and turning *it* upside down. ¹⁴ So I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become victims of plunder to all their enemies, ¹⁵ because they have done evil in My sight, and have provoked Me to anger since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day.' "

Manasseh's wicked reign was the proverbial straw that broke the back of God's forbearance.

The evil of those days simply could not go unanswered.

The judgment to come would be even more severe than that which befell Israel at the hands of the Assyrians.

Throughout Manasseh's reign, the prophets Hosea, Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk, & Isaiah all spoke & warned of impending judgment.

Though Judah's political leaders abandoned God, a faithful remnant loved & served the Lord.

The prophets' message went from call to repent to an announcement ***of judgment***.

Even when others no longer listen, God's people must never stop announcing the truth.

As if Manasseh's rank idolatry wasn't enough

¹⁶ Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the Lord.

Manasseh's religious ***pluralism*** didn't allow for those who disagreed.

For all its boast of moral superiority, pluralism allows no room for disagreement.

In the demand for tolerance, there's ***no*** toleration for those who believe in absolute truth.

With no fixed center for right & wrong, it wasn't long before might made right in Jerusalem.

Justice was abandoned as the rich and powerful took advantage of the poor and weak.

Blood flowed and there was no one to stop it.

¹⁷ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh—all that he did, and the sin that he committed—are they not written in

the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ¹⁸ So Manasseh rested with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza. Then his son Amon reigned in his place.

In vs19-26, Amon's brief reign of 2 yrs is given.

He aped his dad's evil and was assassinated by a palace conspiracy

²⁶ And he was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza. Then Josiah his son reigned in his place.

After 2 exceedingly evil rulers, we get a glorious reversal in Josiah.

But the judgment set loose by Manasseh cannot be turned aside.

It is a runaway train Josiah manages to slow but not stop.

Ch22

¹ Josiah was 8 years old when he became king, and he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ² And he did *what was* right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

While Josiah was himself a good king who loved & served Yahweh, the evil implanted in the nation had irrevocably infected the heart of the people.

Josiah is a king who will try to effect revival, but it doesn't take.

The faithful remnant comes out of hiding because official persecution is removed.

But the average citizen of Judah is an idol-worshipping pagan now & not interested in Josiah's reforms.

³ Now it came to pass, in the 18th year of King Josiah,

He's 26 years old --

that the king sent Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the house of the Lord, saying:

⁴ "Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest, that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the Lord, which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people.

² Chr34 says some yrs before this, Josiah dedicated himself to the Lord and embarked on a series of reforms.

One of them was a renovation of the temple so abused for decades.

They set out a special donation box at the gate to help fund the project.

Now they make an accounting to start the work.

The high priest mentioned here, *Hilkiyah*, was the father of the prophet Jeremiah.

Josiah's instructions for restoring the temple continue ...

⁵ And let them deliver it into the hand of those doing the work, who are the overseers in the house of the Lord; let them give it to those who *are* in the house of the Lord doing the work, to repair the damages of the house— ⁶ to carpenters and builders and masons—and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. ⁷ However there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand, because they deal faithfully."

Josiah knew there was no need to add more bureaucracy to the project by insisting on auditors because the people involved were solid men of God who worked with integrity.

So the work began.

The first stage was to clear away the refuse & rubble that had collected over the yrs.

When they did, they made an important discovery . . .

⁸ Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord." And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. ⁹ So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the Lord." ¹⁰ Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king. ¹¹ Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes.

We looked at this Sunday.

¹² Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, ¹³ "Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great *is* the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us." ¹⁴ So Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the

prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the 2nd Quarter.)

One of Jrz's neighborhoods.

And they spoke with her. ¹⁵ Then she said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, ¹⁶ "Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read— ¹⁷ because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.'"¹⁸ But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, in this manner you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "*Concerning* the words which you have heard— ¹⁹ because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard *you*," says the Lord. ²⁰ Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.'"²⁰ So they brought back word to the king.

You may remember, when **Hezekiah** heard judgment was delayed, he said, "Phew! Ducked that bullet. Too bad judgment's coming, but at least not in my day."

Josiah's response to the message of delayed judgment was quite different.

He used what time he had to press his reforms even further // Ch23 is the record of those reforms.

We noted this Sunday but it bears repeating

While **NATIONAL** judgment was certain, Josiah's & his supporters' godliness carved out a delay that allowed **individuals** to repent.

Doom was determined for the nation-state. Justice had to come.

All Josiah could do was hold open the door for individual men and women to flee it by repenting and turning back to God.

One of two options lie before us = Revival or Judgment. It's one or the other.

Revival will come only in response to fervent, concerted, sincere, prevailing prayer.

If *national* judgment is what's coming, then let's be like Josiah, rejecting the Manasseh-spirit that's filled the land with idolatry, perversion, & gross debauchery.

That's shed the blood of the innocent in buckets through the abomination of abortion.

Let's pray for a mercy, that individuals may still repent before it's too late.

Ch23

¹ Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. ² The king went up to the house of the Lord with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord.

Josiah knew the first step in a return to God was to share His Word.

Heb 11 says, without faith it is impossible to please God,

Rom 10 says, faith comes by hearing God's Word.

So the king read them God's Word and let the Spirit ignite the spark of faith.

³ Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all *his* heart and all *his* soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant.

Josiah stood by the pillar where kings were crowned.

Then he publicly renewed his covenant with God.

The idea he wanted to cement was that his role as king was to make sure the kingdom was ruled by God.

The people followed his example. // But take note *how* the author describes it

They took a stand for the covenant; not in it; a subtle but important difference.

Josiah's **reforms** never lead to **revival** among the people.

Too many were infected with the moral & spiritual decadence of Manasseh.

Like a dog that's tasted blood & is forever ravenous for more, they'd been incited by the vile passions that marked Manasseh's reign.

Under Josiah, the **political** winds shifted to a conservative, moral agenda.

They went along with the king because he was – the king. // They went along to get along.

But it wasn't a genuine conversion. // **Policy**, Not hearts, returned to the Lord.

We know this because as soon as Josiah's out of the picture, they went right back to their old ways.

Josiah genuinely loved God & wanted to do what was right.

He did what he could to turn the spiritual & moral collapse of Judah around.

Those who shared his faith rejoiced in his leadership.

The rest went along because it was politically expedient to do so.

As we pray for God to raise up a Josiah-like leader for our time & nation, we can't stop there.

We must pray for a deep sense of spiritual conviction for our entire land; beginning with the Church.

⁴ And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the 2nd order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. ⁵ Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven.

Josiah not only removed the idolatrous items, he removed those who were an influence **FOR** evil.

⁶ And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the Lord, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground *it* to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people. ⁷ Then he tore down the *ritual* booths of the perverted persons that *were* in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image.

The temple had been turned into a brothel.

Ritual prostitution was a standard fare in pagan worship.

They'd set up booths divided by richly colored curtains in the courtyard where both men & women could go to visit male & female prostitutes.

This helps us understand God's wrath & why Josiah was so urgent & strong in his reforms.

When prostitution happens at church, you don't deal with it by negotiation, giving them a week to move out.

You **tear it down, now!**

⁸ And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the gates which *were* at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which *were* to the left of the city gate. ⁹ Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren.

Priests who'd uses the high places to serve Yahweh were brought to Jrz for discipline.

¹⁰ And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech.

Topheth was a shrine dedicated to Molech where parents burned their infants alive.

It was located in the Hinnom valley S of Jrz.

They called it Topheth = drum, for the beating of drums used to drown out the screams of infants.

Josiah defiled Topheth by turning it into Jerz's dump.

The fires of lit there continued to smoulder ever after.

From that the Bible takes the term Gehenna = Ge-Hinnom; a synonym for hell.

¹¹ Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the officer who *was* in the court; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

We get a feel for how far Manasseh went in his devotion to idols.

Chariots & their specially-trained horses were expensive.

Some cults believed the sun made it's daily journey in a golden chariot.

So ancient kings, casting themselves **as** gods, made themselves golden chariots.

Manasseh aped this – presenting himself as a god.

Josiah didn't look at that chariot as a precious artifact of Judah's history. // It wasn't for a museum.

It was a 3D-piece of blasphemy good for nothing but to be melted down.

¹² The altars that *were* on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the 2 courts of the house of the Lord, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron. ¹³ Then the king defiled the high places that *were* east of Jerusalem, which *were* on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon.

300 yrs before, Solomon covered the S'n slope of the Mt. of Olives with shrines & altars to the idols worshipped by his many wives.

They'd lasted 3 Cs; not dismantled by **any** of the good kings of Judah How's that possible?

As Josiah looked across the Kidron Valley and saw those pagan altars, he saw why idolatry kept a lingering toehold; why it was so hard to eradicate.

Each of those altars, historic as they were, were a source of spiritual infection.

Previous kings may have justified keeping them because the great Solomon had made them.

But Josiah didn't care if *The Society for the Preservation of Antiquities* protested his demolishing them.

They were malignant tumors that had to be cut out.

¹⁴ And he broke in pieces the *sacred* pillars and cut down the wooden images, and filled their places with the bones of men.

He desecrating these places so they couldn't be rebuilt.

¹⁵ Moreover the altar that *was* at Bethel, *and* the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place *and* crushed *it* to powder, and burned the wooden image.

Bethel was *outside* Judah's territory.

But Josiah saw it as a source of trouble for his realm and led an expedition just over the border to end it.

¹⁶ As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that *were* there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned *them* on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

The tombs next to Bethel were of priests that served the golden calf erected by Jeroboam 300 yrs before.

Josiah had their bones disinterred & spread over the site.

He was fulfilling a prophecy given Cs before in 1 Kings 13:1-2.

An anonymous prophet rebuked Jeroboam when he first set up the altar at Bethel

¹ And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. ² Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, "O altar, altar!

Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.' "

An amazing prophecy; fulfilled literally.

¹⁷ Then he said, "What gravestone *is* this that I see?" So the men of the city told him, "*It is* the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel." ¹⁸ And he said, "Let him alone; let no one move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.

We'll stop there & pick it up at v19 next Wednesday.

¹⁹ Now Josiah also took away all the shrines of the high places that *were* in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the Lord to anger; and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel. ²⁰ He executed all the priests of the high places who *were* there, on the altars, and burned men's bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem.

Though Samaria was technically under the rule of Assyria at this time, they were so weak and preoccupied with their own problems they had no ability to stop Josiah's campaign to eradicate idolatry.

And Josiah, informed as he was by God's word, understood that the territory of Israel didn't stop at Judah's northern boundary with the northern Kingdom.

The whole split that took place between the 2 nations was wrong so he determined to extend his reforms throughout the length & breath of the territory given them by God.

²¹ Then the king commanded all the people, saying, “Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as *it is* written in this Book of the Covenant.” ²² Such a Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. ²³ But in the 18th year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the Lord in Jerusalem.

The Passover was a holiday that commemorated Israel’s unique covenant with God.

As the covenant was now something everyone was talking about because it was the focus of all national policy, Passover became a major deal.

²⁴ Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of the Lord.

Josiah’s reforms weren’t limited to demolishing major pagan sites.

They went all the way to the banning of little things like the little household idols and charms people had. Anyone who practiced any form of the occult was exiled.

In other words, if they had had a daily newspaper, there would have been no more astrology section.

²⁵ Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did *any* arise like him.

Just a really solid guy!

D. Impending Judgment 23:26-27

²⁶ Nevertheless the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. ²⁷ And the Lord said, “I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, ‘My name shall be there.’ ”

God was not pushed over the edge by Manasseh alone.

If that were the case, he would have poured out his fury on Manasseh himself.

What we’re seeing here is that AFTER Josiah’s excellent reign, the SINS of Manasseh were still embedded in the people’s hearts.

His reforms had not brought about a genuine revival.

They were enough to delay judgment, but not reverse it.

Know this – if the spiritual cancer of Manasseh had been removed by their sincere repentance, God would have put off this judgment.

E. Josiah’s Death 23:28-30

²⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ²⁹ In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And *Pharaoh Necho* killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him.

At this point in history the Babylonians were finally moving to throw off the Assyrian dominance that had kept them down for generations.

They’d already taken 2 key Assyrian cities, including the capital at Nineveh.

Egypt had just begun the 25th dynasty & was once again rising as a major power.

They did not want to see either Assyria or Babylon gain prominence, so they threw in their lot with the weaker Assyrians hoping to crush the emerging Babylonian threat.

Josiah knew that Judah’s recently gained independence could only be maintained by seeing all 3 powers kept weak, so he mobilized his forces and set up in the Plain near the fortress of Megiddo.

His plan was to meet the Egyptians as they emerged from the narrow valleys of the Carmel range & use the hillsides as an anvil to smash them against.

If things started going badly, they could retreat to Megiddo, knowing it would be Necho’s plan to hurry on to meet up with the Assyrians before it was too late to stave off the Babylonians.

What Josiah wasn’t counting on was a stray arrow that found & killed him and ended the battle.

But his delay worked. The Egyptians didn’t arrive in time and the Assyrians fell to the Babylonians who

become the undisputed power in the north.

³⁰ Then his servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.

Jehoahaz was not the heir to the throne. 3 other sons were older, but Jehoahaz was picked by popular vote.

The people felt he'd be more pliable & subject to their desires.

His real name was Shallum; *Jehoahaz* was his throne name.

XXIV. JEHOAHAZ & ELIAKIM (Judah) 23:31-24:7

A. Jehoahaz 23:31-33

³¹ Jehoahaz *was* 23 years old when he became king, and he reigned 3 months in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ³² And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done. ³³ Now Pharaoh Necho put him in prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold.

With the Assyrians defeated & the Babylonians not yet moving south, the Egyptians took control of both Syria & Israel.

Necho set up a base in Syria at Riblah and ordered the new king of Judah to appear.

When he arrived, he was arrested and thrown in prison.

Later he was carted off to Egypt where he eventually died.

In his place, Necho installed his older brother Eliakim who was supposed to be more amenable to Egyptian rule.

B. Eliakim (Jehoiakim) 23:34-24:7

1. Vassal of Egypt 23:34-37

³⁴ Then Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim.

The name means "Yahweh has established."

And *Pharaoh* took Jehoahaz and went to Egypt, and he died there. ³⁵ So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from every one according to his assessment, to give *it* to Pharaoh Necho. ³⁶ Jehoiakim *was* 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Zebudah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. ³⁷ And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.

The prophet Jeremiah was very active during this time & had a lot to say about the reign of this guy Jehoiakim.

He wasn't content to merely return to the practices Josiah sought to erase, he WAS hostile to the whole direction of his reforms.

In Jer. 36 we're told that he burnt a scroll of God's Word!

For this & his other sins, God declared that none of his descendants would ever sit securely on the throne.

2. Vassal of Babylon 24:1-7

¹ In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal *for* 3 years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.

The reason the Babylonians invaded was because the Egyptians attacked them first at the Battle of Carchemish.

They pursued the retreating Egyptians all the way to Egypt.

On the way back the young prince Nebuchadnezzar asserted his authority over Judah.

Judah's vassalhood switched from Egypt to Babylon. It was 605 BC.

All of this is well documented in the Babylonians chronicles housed in the British Museum.

Nebuchadnezzar may have planned to stay at Jerusalem longer but word reached him of his father's death so he hurried home to take the throne.

When he returned, he took with him only a few captives.

Daniel & his friends were among them.

After only 3 years, when the Egyptians managed to push back on Babylon in a minor victory, Jehoiakim thought he possessed the strength to assert independence & refused to send the tribute that was due Nebuchadnezzar.

² 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 which He had spoken by His servants the prophets.

Part of the genius of Nebuchadnezzar was to unite several nations under one banner.

The bands referred to here were this multinational force that now fought for Babylon.

³ 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, ⁴ 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.

There were many in Judah at this time who thought it was good & right to try & assert their independence by resisting Babylon.

But Jeremiah & the other true prophets were making it clear that – No! it was time for them to surrender & submit to their judgment.

⁵ 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? ⁶ So Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place. While he gained the throne, his hold on it was tenuous – lasting only 3 months.

So Jeremiah's prophecy came true. None of his descendants ever did secure the throne and after Jehoiachin, the royal line departs from this branch of David's family altogether.

⁷ And the king of Egypt did not come out of his land anymore, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook of Egypt to the River Euphrates.

After the previous minor push-back victory by the Egyptians, the Babylonians came down & conquered Egypt. XXV. JEHOIACHIN: The Fall of Jerusalem 24:8-16

⁸ Jehoiachin *was* 18 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem 3 months. His mother's name *was* Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. ⁹ And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done. ¹⁰ At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. ¹¹ And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, as his servants were besieging it. ¹² 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 8th year of his reign, took him prisoner. The siege was so harsh Jehoiachin finally had to surrender & according to the terms, came out with the entire royal court..

¹³ 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.

While much of the decoration of the temple had been looted over the years, the main furniture & fixtures of the temple had managed to remain intact.

It was now that they were taken.

The one thing that may have been preserved was the ark of the covenant which ancient tradition says was hidden by the prophet Jeremiah.

When God told him Jerusalem would fall, it's said he moved to hide the ark to keep it from falling into enemy hands.

¹⁴ Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, 10,000 captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ All the valiant men, 7000, and craftsmen and smiths, 1000, all *who were* strong *and* fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

Like the Assyrians, it was a Babylonian policy to shuffle populations between their conquered peoples.

The Babylonian chronicles refer to Jehoiachin as "Yaukin" king of the Judeans & lists the amount of provisions that were allocated for him & his family's support there in Babylon.

XXVI. MATTANIAH/ZEDEKIAH 24:17-25:21

A. A Wicked King 24:17-20

¹⁷ Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, *Jehoiachin's* uncle,

Jehoiakim's brother.

king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

The name means "Yahweh is my righteousness."

¹⁸ Zedekiah *was* 21 years old when he became king, and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ¹⁹ He also did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. ²⁰ 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.

Both Jeremiah & Chronicles tell us that Zedekiah's evil lay in his refusal to listen to God's Word, and returned Judah to the practices Josiah had sought to remove.

B. End of Judah 25:1-21

¹ Now it came to pass in the 9th year of his reign, in the 10th month, on the 10th *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. ² So the city was besieged until the 11th year of King Zedekiah.

A 2½ year siege! Hideous!

³ By the 9th *day* of the 4th month the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. ⁴ Then the city wall was broken through, and all the men of war *fled* at night by way of the gate between 2 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they pronounced judgment on him. ⁷ 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.

Imagine the horror of watching your children tortured to death, then your own eyes put out so that the last thing you ever see is that!

⁸ And in the 5th month, on the 7th *day* of the month (which *was* the 19th year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ And all the army of the Chaldeans who *were with* the captain of the guard broke down the walls of Jerusalem all around.

The city was totally razed.

¹¹ 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, with the rest of the multitude. ¹² But the captain of the guard left *some* of the poor of the land as vinedressers and farmers. ¹³ 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, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried their bronze to Babylon. ¹⁴ They also took away the pots, the shovels, the trimmers, the spoons, and all the bronze utensils with which the priests ministered. ¹⁵ The firepans and the basins, the things of solid gold and solid silver, the captain of the guard took away. ¹⁶ The 2 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. ¹⁷ The height of one pillar *was* 18 cubits, and the capital on it *was* of bronze. The height of the capital was 3 cubits, and the network and pomegranates all around the capital were all of bronze. The 2nd pillar was the same, with a network. Any & all metal was carted off as plunder.

¹⁸ And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the 2nd priest, and the 3 doorkeepers. ¹⁹ He also took out of the city an officer who had charge of the men of war, 5 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 60 men of the people of the land *who were* found in the city. ²⁰ So Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, took these and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²¹ 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.

These men were executed because they'd been the main trouble-makers & resisters to Babylonian hegemony. Because the prophet Jeremiah was well known to the Babylonians as telling the last 3 kings of Judah to submit to Nebuchadnezzar, he was left behind to help lead the few who were left to tend the fields.

XXVII. GOVERNOR GEDALIAH 25:22-26

²² Then he 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.

Gedaliah seems to have been a good guy who was somethign of a pal to Jeremiah.

²³ 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. These men of war had high-tailed it nto hiding til the Babylonians withdrew to their headquarters in Syria, then they came out of the woodwork.

²⁴ 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.”

These guys made an oath to not resist the Babylonian rule.

²⁵ But it happened in the 7th month that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with 10 men and struck and killed Gedaliah, the Jews, as well as the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. ²⁶ 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.

They had every reason to believe this assassination would result in strong reprisal from the Babylonians, so they all fled to Egypt, even though they were told by the prophets not to do this.

History tells us that a substantial colony of Jews was planted in Egypt at this time.

XXVIII. JEHOIACHIM RELEASED 25:27-30

²⁷ Now it came to pass in the 37th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the 12th month, on the 27th 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. ²⁸ He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who *were* with him in Babylon. ²⁹ So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life. ³⁰ 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.

A new regime often meant a change in policy.

This new king decided to treat some of the political prisoners with greater kindness.

The king of Judah was one of them to benefit from this.

Some see this positive turn around as a foreshadowing of God's return of the Jews to Judea after 70 years in exile. As we conclude, let's just quickly review the Babylonian campaigns against Jerusalem.

- 605 bc Nebuchadnezzar's initial subjugation
- 601 to 598 bc Destruction from Nebuchadnezzar's marauding bands
- 597 bc Siege & fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar's main army
- 586 bc Babylonians return to completely destroy & depopulate Jerusalem