

II Kings 25 Handout

In chapter 24 we saw Judah, under King Jehoiakim, initially become a vassal of Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar, but then he later rebels. This leads to Babylon coming in and the eventual exile of Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin and the elite of Jerusalem to Babylon. Treasures from the temple and palace are also taken off to Babylon. By the end of the chapter, we see Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah whose name gets changed Zedekiah get placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, and we see him rebel.

One thing you are going to notice in this chapter is references to dates. This is to mark precisely the timeline of the Babylonian siege and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Verses 1-3

In the ninth year of Zedekiah what does Nebuchadnezzar do?

He encamps there and builds siege works all around it.

It was kept under siege until the 11th year of Zedekiah - so Judah was under siege here for about 18 months.

By the ninth day of the fourth month, what became so great?

There was no food for the people to eat. This is exactly what this type of warfare is intended to do. A siege was intended to surround a city and prevent all business and trade from entering or leaving the city. This would eventually lead to the starvation of the people and their surrender.

Verses 4-6

Zedekiah makes a desperate attempt to escape the Babylonians who have nearly succeeded in their siege of Jerusalem. They break through the city wall and the whole army flees.

What does the Babylonian army do?

His soldiers are separated from him and scatter. There seems to be some irony here as they are at the spot where they first entered the Promised Land all those years ago. This is where they experienced their first victory as the walls of Jericho fell before unarmed men who trusted God. Now it is the scene of capture and defeat of the last king of Judah.

Where is Zedekiah taken?

A sentence is pronounced on him. Riblah was in the land of Hamath. It was located on the main road between Egypt and Mesopotamia and it served as a strategic location for both Egyptian and Babylonian armies.

Verse 7

What did they do to Zedekiah's sons?

They put out his eyes and bound him in shackles and took him to Babylon. They made sure that the last thing that Zedekiah saw before they took his eyes was the murder of his sons.

This was a fulfillment of a word God gave through the prophet Ezekiel regarding Zedekiah shortly before the fall of Jerusalem.

In Ezekiel 12:13 it says, *"I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare; I will bring him to Babylonia, the land of the Chaldeans, but he will not see it, and there he will die."*

Jeremiah had spoken to King Zedekiah multiple times during the Babylonian siege both publicly and privately, urging him to surrender and avoid destruction, but he refused to listen to Jeremiah's counsel.

In Jeremiah 21:8-10 the Lord gives this word to Jeremiah:

"8 Furthermore, tell the people, 'This is what the LORD says: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death. 9 Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians who are besieging you will live; they will escape with their lives. 10 I have determined to do this city harm and not good, declares the LORD. It will be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire.'"

Verses 8-10

Nebuzaradan sets fire to:

- the temple of the Lord - Solomon's great temple now lay in ruins and would stay that way for many years. It won't be rebuilt until the exiles return in the days of Ezra.
- the royal palace
- all the houses of Jerusalem.

Every important building was burned down.

What else did the Babylonian army do? _____

Verses 11-12

What happened to the rest of the people who remained in the city?

This was the third and last deportation of the people to Babylon.

Once again some of the poorest people are left behind to work the land

Verses 13-17

Just as the remaining people were taken captive to Babylon, so were the remaining valuables from the temple. Jerusalem was now left completely plundered and desolate. God's promised judgment has been brought upon Judah. The people would remain in exile for the next 70 years before being allowed to return to their land.

Verses 18-21

The commander also took prisoner:

- The chief priest
- The priest next in rank
- Three doorkeepers
- Office in charge of the fighting men
- Five royal advisors
- Secretary - chief office in charge of conscripting
- 60 conscripts - these were people who were drafted or required to serve in the military or other forms of labor by a governing authority.

All of these people were taken to the king of Babylon in Riblah.

What did he have done with them? _____

These were the last leaders of Jerusalem that were put to death. The king of Babylon had what seemed to be complete rule over the former kingdom of Judah.

Verses 22-24

Who did Nebuchadnezzar appoint to be over the people left in Judah? _____

It seems that Gedaliah was a godly man, who was a friend of the prophet Jeremiah.

A group of army officers and their men come to Gedaliah.

What does Gedaliah do? _____

He tells them not to be afraid of the Babylonians officials, but to settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon and all will go well for them.

At this point there was really nothing they could do but accept God's judgment and do the right thing under the rule of the Babylonians. In this situation, to resist them would be to resist God as He was the one who used the Babylonians to bring judgment on Judah. It was better to humble oneself and submit to the judgment God brought through the Babylonians.

Verses 25-26

What does Ishmael do? _____

They also killed the men and officials that were with him in Mizpah.

What did all the people and the army officers do? _____

They feared what the Babylonians would do.

Verses 27-30

Who gets released from prison? _____

The Babylonian king -

- Speaks kindly to him
- Gives him a seat of honor (higher than those of other kings)

- At at the king's table for the rest of his life
- Gave a regular allowance to him as long as he lived

We get this small kindness at the end of this book. Some see this as a way to end the history of the kings on a hopeful note. Jehoiachin was still in Babylon as the representative of David's dynasty. God still preserved His people.

Judah has been carried away out of the land God had given them about 468 years after David began to reign over it.

There were three Babylonian invasions of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar.

- The first occurred in 605 B.C., during Jehoiakim's reign, when Nebuchadnezzar took many of the nobles captive, including Daniel and his three friends.
- The second invasion and deportation occurred in 597B.C., during the reign of Jehoiachin, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, and about 10,000 other Jews into exile.
- The third invasion and deportation took place in 586B.C., during the reign of Zedekiah, when Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and took Zedekiah and all but the poorest of the remaining Jews captive.

Ezekiel and Daniel both ministered in Babylon during the captivity: Ezekiel to the exiles in their settlement, and Daniel to the Babylonians and Medo-Persians in their capitals. The context of the Book of Esther is also the Babylonian captivity and the Persian capital.

So to review the book of II Kings during the divided monarchy:

Israel:

- Nine dynasties and 20 kings
- Seven were assassinated
- All were evaluated as bad
- Ahab was the worst and Jehu was the best

Judah

- Only one dynasty
- 19 kings plus one queen who usurped the throne
- Five of these kings were assassinated
- 12 were bad, 8 were good
- Four of the good kings were reformers (very good)
- Manasseh was the worst
- Josiah was the best

An emphasis was put on how the ultimate deportation and captivity were the inevitable consequences of persistent sin and a departure from God and His will for His people.

Some takeaways from the book of II Kings:

- Disobedience and Judgment
 - We saw many of the kings of both Israel and Judah, disobey God's laws and worship other gods.
 - This disobedience led to God's judgment on both the Northern and Southern kingdoms which was exile and destruction.
- God's faithfulness and mercy
 - Despite the wickedness of God's people, He remained faithful to His covenant with David.
 - God sent many prophets to try to call the people to repentance and bring them back to Himself.
 - Even in judgment, God demonstrates His mercy, offering chances for repentance and restoration.
- The role of the prophets
 - Many prophets played a crucial role in challenging the kings and the people to return to God.
 - Their messages of warning and hope highlight the importance of listening to God's voice through His messengers.
 - The actions and miracles demonstrated by the prophets show God's power and authority.
- Examples of good and bad kings
 - The book contrasted the reigns of good kings like Hezekiah and Josiah with wicked kings like Ahab and Manasseh.
- The promise of a future king
 - Despite how the book ends with exile and destruction, it hints at a future hope for Israel, foreshadowing the coming of a messianic king. It does this by highlighting the failures of the Davidic kings and the need for a future, divinely appointed ruler. It emphasizes the need for a king who will bring true justice and righteousness, unlike the kings who led Israel into sin.

What do you see as the overall message from this book?

How can the lessons of II Kings be applied to our lives today? What are some modern-day parallels to the challenges faced by the Israelites?

How does II Kings challenge us to consider our own actions and their consequences, both individually and collectively?