

Bible Study • By Faith – An In-depth look at Hebrews 11**Lesson #50 • Hebrews 11:35b-38****“Some Died by Stoning”****Life & Times of Jeremiah • Part 3****• H A N D O U T •**

► We pick up Jeremiah's story after the scroll had been destroyed and the King ordered the arrest of Baruch and Jeremiah. However, the two are hiding with the Lord giving them His protection.

Jeremiah 36:27-32 • After the king had burned the scroll on which Baruch had written Jeremiah's words, the Lord gave Jeremiah another message. He said, "Get another scroll, and write everything again just as you did on the scroll King Jehoiakim burned. Then say to the king, 'This is what the Lord says: You burned the scroll because it said the king of Babylon would destroy this land and empty it of people and animals. Now this is what the Lord says about King Jehoiakim of Judah: He will have no heirs to sit on the throne of David. His dead body will be thrown out to lie unburied – exposed to the heat of the day and the frost of the night. I will punish him and his family and his attendants for their sins. I will pour out on them and on all the people of Jerusalem and Judah all the disasters I promised, for they would not listen to my warnings.'"

So Jeremiah took another scroll and dictated again to his secretary, Baruch. He wrote everything that had been on the scroll King Jehoiakim had burned in the fire. Only this time he added much more!

Q: Did Jehoiakim really think that destroying the scroll would stop the fulfillment of the prophecies?

Q: What was added to the second scroll?

The Fourth Year of Jehoiakim's Eleven Year Reign was a very chaotic year ...

- In the year 597 BC, the combined Medo-Babylonian armies conquered and destroyed the last of the Assyrian Empire.
- In the year 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar won his great victory at the Battle of Carchemish against the armies of Egypt who had given aid and support to the remnants of the Assyrian Empire.
 - That meant Judah and Jehoiakim were no longer a tributary vassals of Egypt.
- But, in the year 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and established their first siege.
 - To avoid destruction of Jerusalem, King Jehoiakim agreed to swear Judah's allegiance to Babylon, pay them tribute from the treasury, and give Nebuchadnezzar Temple artifacts. Jehoiakim also agreed to allow many of the young men from the royal family to go to Babylon for training in the Babylonian culture, which Nebuchadnezzar believed was an honor.
 - Daniel and his three friends were among those chosen.
- In the year 597 BC, the record of Jehoiakim's reign ends, in both scripture & secular history.

Q: So, what do we know about Jehoiakim's final year of his 11 year reign and the circumstances of his death?

Here is what we know for sure:

► From 2 Kings 24 we learn that Jehoiakim only paid the tribute to Babylon for three years. Although, outwardly, the King seemed to be complying with Nebuchadnezzar's control over Judah, Jehoiakim began to secretly arrange an alliance with Egypt based on the Pharaoh's ability to overthrow Nebuchadnezzar. Thinking the alliance with Egypt was secure, Jehoiakim stopped paying the tribute. That was the year 597 BC.

This angered Nebuchadnezzar and he set up a second siege. He also traveled from Babylon to Judah to deal personally with the rebellion. This time Nebuchadnezzar began to deport, to Babylon, anyone who might have been involved in the Rebellion, or who might persuade others to become in a future Rebellion. That is why he chose to deport the royal Nobles and the military. Also included in the second deportation was the Priest Ezekiel. [Ezekiel was the first prophet to be called by the Lord outside of Israel. He foresaw both the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC and also the Restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple 70 years later.]

Jehoiakim disappeared from the records in 597 BC and his son, Jehoiachin, ascended the throne.

Q: How can we figure out what happened to Jehoiakim, especially regarding his death?

Jeremiah 36:29-30 · Then say to the king, 'This is what the Lord says: You burned the scroll because it said the king of Babylon would destroy this land and empty it of people and animals. Now this is what the Lord says about King Jehoiakim of Judah: He will have no heirs to sit on the throne of David. His dead body will be thrown out to lie unburied – exposed to the heat of the day and the frost of the night.'

Q: How does this passage help us figure out what happened to Jehoiakim?

It is still the year 597 BC

Next up on Judah's throne is Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim ...

► Jehoiachin's rule was almost as short as Jehoahaz. Nebuchadnezzar was on an anger-roll and he wasn't done punishing Judah for their rebellion. After reigning for three months and ten days, in an attempt to mollify and lessen Nebuchadnezzar's rage, the young king, along with his mother, and his royal officials, surrendered to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar took him and his royal entourage as prisoners and they were deported to Babylon where he was imprisoned. [He remained in the Babylonian prison for 37 years, until the reign of King Evil-Merodach. Evil-Merodach felt pity on Jehoiachin and gave him a seat of honor at his table and a daily allowance. According to 2 Kings 25, **“Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table.”**]

► Note: The tragedy that befell Jehoiachin had been predicted by Jeremiah in Chapter 22. God revealed, through Jeremiah, that Jehoiachin would be removed from the throne and be taken to Babylon, where he would eventually die.

Q: Why was Jehoiachin imprisoned in Babylon when the others who were exiled were allowed to live and serve in Babylon without being imprisoned?

► Overall, one of the biggest concerns Jeremiah had during these years was the influence and message the royal-appointed prophets were uttering. Basically, their message contradicted everything Jeremiah was preaching. When Jeremiah told them God was displeased with them because of the idolatrous behavior, these false prophets would say: *'nonsense – Judah is God's chosen people.'* When Jeremiah told them disaster and destruction was coming and it was God who was sending Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylon to carry it out, the false prophets said: *"do not fear – all is well, and it will be Babylon who will be broken, not Judah."*

Q: Why would these false prophets give the people of Judah such a contradictory message?

► Thoroughly frustrated, Jeremiah unleashed a blistering attack against the false prophets, after which he wrote a letter to those in Babylonian Exile. This letter contained the prophetic Word of the Lord spoken through Jeremiah. Jeremiah gave the letter to Elasah, the son of Shaphan and to Gemariah, the son of Hilkiah, with the instruction to deliver it, in person, to those in Exile. The year was 598 BC. Not only does this letter correct the lies the false prophets have been uttering, but Jeremiah doesn't try to sugar-coat the situation. He gives them the Lord's instructions on how they are expected to conduct themselves as Captives in a foreign land, and he urges them not to forsake their trust in the Lord.

Also embedded in this letter is an encouraging promise that is still, today, carrying Believers through the tough times in life.

[Note: The letter Jeremiah wrote is found in its entirety in Jeremiah 29:1-23. what follows has been condensed and highlighted for purposes of this study.]

Jeremiah 29:1; 4-8a; 9-14; 20 • This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

• This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

• Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. ...They are prophesying lies to you in My Name. I have not sent them," declares the Lord.

• This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.

• For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

• Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, all you exiles whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon.

- Q: It is quite unusual for the Lord to designate a specific time limit for His prophecy. Why would He do that here?
- Q: What is significant about the fact that the Lord address this letter to *“those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon?”*
- Q: Why would the Lord tell those in Babylonian captivity to settle down and *“make Babylon your home?”*
- Q: Why does the Lord specifically say to seek the peace and prosperity of Babylon?
- Q: Why was it important that they increase in number?
- Q: In this letter Jeremiah sent to the Exiles what are 3 key promises made by the Lord?
- Q: What is the warning given by the Lord?

The next Judean King is selected by Nebuchadnezzar It will be Zedekiah – Judah's last king before Jerusalem's destruction ...

► So, Nebuchadnezzar selected Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, [the third son of Josiah,] to be Judah's next puppet king. Nebuchadnezzar immediately changed his name from Mattaniah to **Zedekiah**. Sadly, Zedekiah ultimately chose to follow in the footsteps of his nephew and brothers, continuing in their evil and idolatrous practices. Scripture says he did evil in the sight of the Lord.

Zedekiah was 21 years old when he ascended the throne. He took the throne just after the second deportation had taken place. As long as Zedekiah acted with loyalty, paid the tax-tribute, and carried out the edicts of Nebuchadnezzar, those still in Jerusalem would be allowed to live their lives without interference.

Surely Zedekiah had learned something from the kings who preceded him. Both his brothers were dead and his Nephew was in a Babylonian prison. It would be logical and prudent for Zedekiah not to rebel, but choose to function under Babylon's authority. And for nine of the eleven years he reigned, he seems to have done just that.

Q: Why would Nebuchadnezzar change Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah? Both were Hebrew names. This was not the usual change from Hebrew to Chaldean, to honor one of Babylon's deities.

After Zedekiah ascends to Judah's throne, he does a surprising thing ...

Jeremiah 37:1a; 2-4 • Zedekiah son of Josiah was made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; Neither he nor his attendants nor the people of the land paid any attention to the words the Lord had spoken through Jeremiah the prophet. King Zedekiah, however, sent Jehucal, son of Shelemiah, with the priest Zephaniah, son of Maaseiah, to Jeremiah the prophet with this message:

"Please pray to the Lord our God for us." [Now Jeremiah was free to come and go among the people, for he had not yet been put in prison.]

Q: Zedekiah had been selected to be the Vassal King by Babylon. He has sworn his loyalty to Babylon. Why does he ask Jeremiah to pray for him and those in leadership with him?

Q: What is significant about the scripture adding the note in parenthesis that Jeremiah had not yet been put into prison?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

The Lord answered Zedekiah's request to Jeremiah ...

Jeremiah 37:5-10 • Pharaoh's army had marched out of Egypt, and when the Babylonians who were besieging Jerusalem heard the report about them, they withdrew from Jerusalem.

Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet: "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of me, 'Pharaoh's army, which has marched out to support you, will go back to its own land, to Egypt. Then the Babylonians will return and attack this city; they will capture it and burn it down.'

"This is what the Lord says: Do not deceive yourselves, thinking, 'The Babylonians will surely leave us.' They will not! Even if you were to defeat the entire Babylonian army that is attacking you and only wounded men were left in their tents, they would come out and burn this city down."

Q: What does this passage tell us about what Zedekiah was really thinking when he asked Jeremiah to pray to the Lord for him?

Q: How does the Lord answer Zedekiah's request for Divine support?

▶ But, Zedekiah chooses to once again ignore God's warnings. Instead he listens to “*his prophets*” and rejects Jeremiah, God's prophet. These decisions will lead to disaster for the Nation of Judah, pain and suffering for Jeremiah, and utter disgrace and dishonor for Zedekiah, and his family. The Lord has spoken!



Next Time ♦ Lesson #51
“Jeremiah – Part 4”

