

Bible Study • By Faith – An In-depth look at Hebrews 11
Lesson #52 • Hebrews 11:35b-38
“Some Died by Stoning”
Life & Times of Jeremiah • Part 5 of 6
• H A N D O U T •

► As we open Part 5 of Jeremiah's life, it is January and it is cold. The Lord has judged both the City of Jerusalem and King Zedekiah and both had fallen short of God's commands. Zedekiah has now reigned for nine years and ten months. The first two deportations had been accomplished and now Jerusalem was under full siege. Nebuchadnezzar's army was fully encamped about the City. Food had become pitifully scarce. The City remained in this deplorable, pathetic state of starvation for another 2½ years. Then, on July 18th, in Zedekiah's 11th year of reign, the Babylonian army used battering rams and broke down a section of the city wall and invaded the City.

Jeremiah 39:3-4 • “All the officers of the Babylonian army came in and sat in triumph at the Middle Gate. When King Zedekiah of Judah and all the soldiers saw that the Babylonians had broken into the City they fled. They waited for nightfall and then slipped through the gate between the two walls behind the king's garden and headed toward the Jordan Valley.”

Q: The scripture states the: “Officers of the Babylonian army sat in triumph at the Middle Gate. What is the implication of them sitting in the “Middle Gate?”

Q: Why would Zedekiah and his military men flee? Jeremiah's Prophecies had proven true so what did they expect to accomplish by running?

Jeremiah 39:5 • But the Babylonian troops chased them and overtook Zedekiah on the plains of Jericho. They captured him and took him to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who was at Riblah in the land of Hamath. There the king of Babylon pronounced judgment upon Zedekiah.

Q: Where was Zedekiah and his men captured?

Q: Where was King Nebuchadnezzar holding court and directing the operations of his armies?

Q: What is significant about Zedekiah's capture?

Jeremiah 32:4 • Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape out of the hands of the Babylonians but will certainly be handed over to the king of Babylon, and will speak with him face to face and see him with his own eyes.

Jeremiah 34:2b-3 • "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says [to Jeremiah]: Go to Zedekiah king of Judah and tell him, 'This is what the Lord says: I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will burn it down. You will not escape from his grasp but will surely be captured and handed over to him. You will see the king of Babylon with your own eyes, and he will speak with you face to face. And you will go to Babylon.

Q: Why does the Lord emphasize the fact that Zedekiah will “see him [King Nebuchadnezzar] with his own eyes?

Zedekiah's fate fulfills Jeremiah's prophecy in a chilling manner ...

Jeremiah 39:6-10 • The king of Babylon made Zedekiah watch as he slaughtered his sons at Riblah. The king of Babylon also slaughtered all the nobles of Judah. Then he gouged out Zedekiah's eyes and bound him in bronze chains to lead him away to Babylon. Meanwhile, the Babylonians burned Jerusalem, including the royal palace and the houses of the people, and they tore down the walls of the city.

Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, took as exiles to Babylon the rest of the people who remained in the city, those who had defected to him, and everyone else who remained. But Nebuzaradan allowed some of the poorest people to stay behind in the land of Judah, and he assigned them to care for the vineyards and fields.

Q: Was this terrible event inevitable and unavoidable? Was there nothing that Zedekiah could have done to change his course?

*Jeremiah 38:17-18 • Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "This is what the Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: **If** you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared and this city will not be burned down; you and your family will live. **But if** you will **not** surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, this city will be handed over to the Babylonians and they will burn it down; you yourself will not escape from their hands."*

Q: Why is it significant that the Captain of the Guard allowed the poorest people to remain behind and assign them responsibility for tending the vineyard and fields?

Q: By this point in time, what prophecies were fulfilled that totally vindicated Jeremiah?

PROPHECIES:	REFERENCES:
1	Jeremiah 1, 14; 4:6; 6:22; 13:20
2	Jeremiah 5:15
3	Jeremiah 4:17; 6:3; 6:6
4	Jeremiah 14:1-6; 14:16-18; 18:21
5	Jeremiah 25:11
6	Jeremiah 1:10
7	Jeremiah 9:21; 15:7-9; 18:21
8	Jeremiah 1:15
9	Jeremiah 21:10, 21:15, 32:29, 34:2, 34:22,37:8; 38:18; 38:23
10	Jeremiah 10:17-18; 13:17-19; 15:14; 17:4

THE LORD PROTECTS HIS FAITHFUL SERVANTS ...

Jeremiah 39:11-12: 14-18 • King Nebuchadnezzar had told Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, to find Jeremiah. "See that he isn't hurt," he said. "Look after him well, and give him anything he wants." [He] sent messengers to bring Jeremiah out of the prison. They put him under the care of Gedaliah son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan, who took him back to his home. So Jeremiah stayed in Judah among his own people.

The Lord had given the following message to Jeremiah while he was still in prison: "Say to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, 'This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: I will do to this city everything I have threatened. I will send disaster, not prosperity. You will see its destruction, but I will rescue you from those you fear so much. Because you trusted me, I will give you your life as a reward. I will rescue you and keep you safe. I, the Lord, have spoken!'"

Q: Why did the Lord show such protection toward the Ethiopian?

Nebuzaradan, the Captain of the Guard carried out Nebuchadnezzar's command regarding Jeremiah ...

► The story continues with the Captain of the Guard finding Jeremiah in chains along with the other captives who are being sent to Babylon in Exile. He removed his chains and then proceeded to have an interesting discussion with Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 40:2-6 · The captain of the guard called for Jeremiah and said, "The Lord your God has brought this disaster on this land, just as he said he would. For these people have sinned against the Lord and disobeyed him. That is why it happened. But I am going to take off your chains and let you go. If you want to come with me to Babylon, you are welcome. I will see that you are well cared for. But if you don't want to come, you may stay here. The whole land is before you – go wherever you like. If you decide to stay, then return to Gedaliah son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan. He has been appointed governor of Judah by the king of Babylon. Stay there with the people he rules. But it's up to you; go wherever you like." Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, gave Jeremiah some food and money and let him go. So Jeremiah returned to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah, and he lived in Judah with the few who were still left in the land.

Q: What does the Captain's words to Jeremiah tell us?

Q: Why was Jeremiah given the option to choose where he would live?

Q: Why would Jeremiah choose to stay in Judah where he could have gone to Babylon and be honored?

GEDALIAH BECOMES THE NEW GOVERNOR OF JUDAH ...

Jeremiah 40:7-8a; 9-10a · The leaders of the Judean military groups in the countryside heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah, son of Ahikam as governor over the poor people who were left behind in Judah – the men, women, and children who hadn't been exiled to Babylon. So they went to see Gedaliah at Mizpah. Gedaliah vowed to them that the Babylonians meant them no harm. "Don't be afraid to serve them. Live in the land and serve the King of Babylon, and all will go well for you," he promised. "As for me, I will stay at Mizpah to represent you before the Babylonians who come to meet with us.

Q: Who is Gedaliah?

► The fact Gedaliah was sympathetic to Jeremiah's political views, and because his message mirrored Jeremiah's message that the Remnant of Judah who were left behind were to submit to Babylon, Gedaliah was unpopular, even to the surrounding nations.

Within the first few weeks of his reign he was told that the Ammonites had arranged for his assassination. He refused to believe that and rejected their offer of protection.

After only two months on the throne, during the month of Av [our July-August] while they were sharing a meal together at Mizpah, Gedaliah was murdered by a group of fanatical zealots under the leadership of Ishmael, who was hired by the Ammonites to act as their Assassin. This was considered especially grievous because Ishmael was part of Judah's royal family who had survived the deportations and the fall of Jerusalem.

Q: Why would Ishmael do such a thing?

But, more murder and mayhem was just a day away ...

Jeremiah 41:4-5 • The next day, before anyone had heard about Gedaliah's murder, eighty men arrived from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria to worship at the Temple of the Lord. They had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes, and cut themselves, and had brought along grain offerings and frankincense.

Q: Who were these people?

Q: What is significant about the fact that these people had shaved off their beards and cut themselves?

Q: If they knew the Temple had been destroyed, why would they come to worship at the Temple with offerings?

Jeremiah 41: 8; 10 • Ishmael left Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went. When he reached them, he said, "Oh, come and see what has happened to Gedaliah!" But as soon as they were all inside the town, Ishmael and his men killed all but ten of them and threw their bodies into a cistern.

- The other ten had talked Ishmael into letting them go by promising to bring him their stores of wheat, barley, olive oil, and honey that they had hidden away.
- Then Ishmael made captives of the king's daughters and the other people who had been left under Gedaliah's care in Mizpah by Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard. Taking them with him, he started back toward the land of Ammon.

Q: Who were the "king's daughters?"

Q: Why would Ishmael run to Ammon?

Q: If he is running why would he take the time to transport the king's daughters and the other people left under the care of Gedaliah in Mizpah to Ammon?

► As soon as word circulated about **Ishmael's evil deeds**, the captains of the forces, led by Johanan, son of Kareah, pursued Ishmael. They met him at the pool of Gibeon, which was about six miles northwest of Jerusalem. Unfortunately Ishmael, along with eight of his men, escaped from Johanan and they made it to the Ammonites.

Johanan returned to Mizpah and took all of those who had survived Ismael's massacre to Chimhand, which was near Bethlehem. From there they planned to flee to Egypt. But before they actually left for Egypt, they found Jeremiah and asked him for guidance. Ultimately, this will be a turning point for Jeremiah.



Next Time ◆ Lesson #53
“Jeremiah – Part 6 of 6”

