

into the care of Gedaliah who had been appointed as governor of the land (40:5). Gedaliah was instructed “to carry him home” (v.14). Many believe that Jeremiah was physically infirm at the time of his release from confinement. His age coupled with the deprivation and hardship which he had suffered during those last few months had left this great man of God frail and weak.

So Jeremiah was free at last to dwell among his people.

SOME LESSONS

1. “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people*” (Proverbs 14:34, NASV). Jerusalem had no one to blame for her troubles but herself. God would have spared her had she repented and returned to Him.

2. It is important that we keep our word, whether given to God or someone else (Deut. 23:21; Eccl. 5:5). It may be that the kind of oath Zedekiah made before Nebuchadnezzar is what is prohibited Christians in Matthew 5:33-37.

3. The Lord will take care of those who are His.

Question: How many different ways can you recall the Lord protecting and caring for Jeremiah?

QUESTIONS:

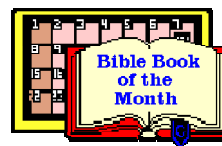
1. What was Jerusalem’s only hope of averting destruction?
2. How long did the siege of Jerusalem last?
3. How did Zedekiah try to escape?
4. What happened when he got caught?
5. How could Zedekiah’s tragedy have been avoided?
6. Who was Ezekiel?

What had he prophesied about Zedekiah?

7. What did Nebuzaradan do after he arrived in Jerusalem?
8. What became of the poor?
9. What order did Nebuchadnezzar give with regard to Jeremiah?
10. Where was Jeremiah at the time of the city’s fall?
11. How does Gedaliah figure into this story?

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JEREMIAH – The Fall of Jerusalem



Lesson # 4

Text: Jeremiah 39:1-14

Collateral Reading: Jeremiah 52

2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36

Introduction:

For years Jeremiah had been preaching that Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians (Chaldeans). Only through national submission to Nebuchadnezzar was there any hope of averting destruction. Jeremiah suffered much because of his message but he never compromised it.

Jeremiah 39:1-14

1 In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2 In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the city was penetrated. 3 Then all the princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sharezer, Samgar-Nebo, Sarsechim, Rabсарis, Nergal-Sarezer, Rabmag, with the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon. 4 So it was, when Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, that they fled and went out of the city by night, by way of the king’s garden, by the gate between the two walls. And he went out by way of the plain. 5 But the Chaldean army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. And when they had captured him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced judgment on him. 6 Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah; the king of Babylon also killed all the nobles of Judah. 7 Moreover he put out

Zedekiah’s eyes, and bound him with bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. 8 And the Chaldeans burned the king’s house and the houses of the people with fire, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. 9 Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive to Babylon the remnant of the people who remained in the city and those who defected to him, with the rest of the people who remained. 10 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left in the land of Judah the poor people, who had nothing, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

11 Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, 12 “Take him and look after him, and do him no harm; but do to him just as he says to you.” 13 So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard sent Nebushasban, Rabсарis, Nergal-Sharezer, Rabmag, and all the king of Babylon’s chief officers; 14 then they sent someone to take Jeremiah from the court of the prison, and committed him to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, that he should take him home. So he dwelt among the people.

NKJV

Thought Question-1: What makes a prophet like Jeremiah so loyal and uncompromising?

The fall of Jerusalem to the Chaldeans was one of the monumental events of Old Testament history. The account in Jeremiah 39 is one of four accounts of the events surrounding the fall of the city and the destruction of the temple.

Question-2: As the people saw what Jeremiah warned of coming to pass, what thought must have gone through their minds?

Question-3: Do you think they even recognized it or remembered what he had said or put two and two together? Why not?

THE COLLAPSE OF THE CITY – 39:1-3

The siege of Jerusalem had begun in the 9th year of Zedekiah and was concluded in the 11th year of his reign (July, 586 BC). After some 18 weary months the people of Jerusalem were at the point of starvation.

Nebuchadnezzar himself was not present when the city fell. He had made Riblah in Syria his headquarters for his western campaigns but the actual military operations were in the hands of subordinates.

As soon as the outer areas of Jerusalem fell the Chaldeans established a military government for the city and waited the arrival of Nebuzaradan, the captain of Nebuchadnezzar's personal guard.

THE CAPTURE OF THE KING – 39:4-10

When a breach was made in the wall Zedekiah knew that within a matter of hours he would be captive in the hands of his enemies. Under cover of night he and what was left of his army made a desperate dash for safety.

The king fled through the gate between the two walls, i.e., where the inner and outer walls came together. The "king's garden" was on the southeastern slope of the city near the junction of the Hinnon and Kidron Valleys. It must have been his intention to cross the Jordan River (v. 4) just as David had escaped from Absalom.

But in the plains around Jericho the Babylonian army overtook him. The king and his staff were taken in chains to the headquarters of Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah some 200 miles north. There Zedekiah was forced to stand in judgment before the king who had appointed him to his position and to whom he had sworn an oath of allegiance (Jer. 37:1).

Many vassal oaths have come to light in recent years. In swearing fidelity to Nebuchadnezzar Zedekiah had probably uttered something like "Let my sons and my officials be slain before my eyes and my eyes blinded and let me die in fetters in a foreign land if I forsake my allegiance to thee." For that is exactly what happened.

The tragedy of Riblah is that all of this could have been avoided had Zedekiah only heeded the word of God spoken through the prophet Jeremiah (32:4,5; 34:3).

The prophet Ezekiel (who had been taken captive to Babylon in the second wave of exiles when Zedekiah has been appointed king in 597 BC) had also predicted the course of events though his words may have seemed vague and contradictory at the time he uttered them. "I will bring him (Zedekiah) to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not SEE it, though he shall die there." (Ezekiel 12:13). "As I live, saith the Lord, surely in the place where he dwells that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die" (Ezekiel 17:16).

THE CAPTIVITY OF THE PEOPLE – 39:8-10

After the breach in the wall and Zedekiah's attempted escape other pockets of resistance must have taken 3 or 4 weeks to mop up. Nebuzaradan did not arrive on the scene in Jerusalem unto a month after the city fell (52:12). When he arrived he put the city to the torch and broke down the walls which had defied the Chaldeans for months.

More of the citizens were prepared for deportation to Babylon (v. 9) and only the very poor were left in the land and given the vineyards and fields to care for. (See 52:16 and 2 Kings 26:12).

THE CHARGE REGARDING JEREMIAH – 30:11-14

Nebuchadnezzar had given specific orders to his captain with regard to the welfare of Jeremiah (v. 11). At some point the king had learned of Jeremiah and must have regarded him as a true prophet of God and not an enemy to Babylon. He ordered that Jeremiah be given special treatment.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem Nebuzaradan consulted with the Chaldean officials on the scene probably to prevent any possible harm to Jeremiah by conflicting orders or ignorance of the royal decree (v.13).

Jeremiah was liberated from the court of the guard where he had been Zedekiah's prisoner (perhaps in protective custody, 38:28) and committed