

Where Judgment Begins

Jeremiah 52:1 - 16

Nutshell: Jeremiah is about Jerusalem's fall. God judges all nations, but Jeremiah is in the Bible mainly to warn *God's people* that He is an impartial Judge, 1 Peter 1:17; thus, the book ends with a recap of God's judgment on Jerusalem.

I. Context: God judging the nations around Israel.

II. Text

Jer 52:1 Zedekiah [*is*] a son of twenty-one years in his reigning, and he has reigned eleven years in Jerusalem, and the name of his mother [*is*] Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. **2** And he undertakes *what is* wrong in the eyes of YHWH, according to all that Jehoiakim undertakes. **3** For on *the basis of* the anger of YHWH, *that anger is present* in [or "He is in"] Jerusalem and Judah until He has cast them from before His face.

And Zedekiah rebels against the king of Babylon.

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. Review

1. Jer 1-38 is mainly prophecies of Jerusalem's coming fall
2. Jer 39-45 shows the depth & stubbornness of man's sin, as the few remaining Judeans ask for God's counsel, *then spurn it!*
3. Jer 46-51 are prophecies against *other* nations: Egypt (46), Philistia (47), Moab (48), Ammon (49:1-6), Edom (49:7-22), Damascus (49:23-27), Kedar (49:28-33) Elam (49:34-39), and, finally, Babylon (50-51), who conquered Jerusalem and nearly all the nations listed above.
4. Jer 52 is a recap of Jerusalem's fall

B. We are now in the last chapter of Jeremiah!

1. We have been counting it as part of the last section of the book,

- chaps 46-52: judgments pronounced against *other* nations
- a. If we keep chap 52 in this section, we recognize it as a RECAP and Epilogue of Jerusalem's fall
 - b. For clarity, we separated it in the outline above
2. This chapter is God's way of saying that He wasn't finished with Israel. Their fate in captivity was still relevant, because *they would return and He would continue His covenant dealings with them*
 3. The very last paragraph, 52:31-34, is the bigger picture in miniature: a hint of God returning His favor to His people
- C. Jer 52 is largely the same as 2 Kings 24:18-25:30
1. Except Jer 41:1-3 has the Gedaliah section included in 2 Kings (some rabbis thought Jeremiah wrote Kings)
 2. Jer 52:28-30 has deportation counts not included in 2 Kings. Jer 52:6 has some additional data.

Kid-speak: We are (finally) in the last chapter of the longest book in the Bible. What's the book called?

- D. The downfall of Judah and Jerusalem is here counted from its last king, Zedekiah
1. (Though he was not the cause of the downfall. That distinction is more Manasseh's, 2 Kings 21:11-12.)
 2. He would be their last legitimate king until Messiah (the Herods were Roman implants)
 3. Zedekiah ("Righteousness of Yah") was renamed by Nebuchadnezzar from Mattaniah ("Gift of Yahweh")
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar knew, as his captain Nebuzaradan did (Jer 40:2-3), that Yahweh had brought this calamity on His own people
 - b. He therefore saw Yahweh's righteousness prevailing, and that Zedekiah had *not* been a gift to his subjects
 4. Good Josiah was Zedekiah's dad. Zed is listed under his mother's name partly because Josiah had other wives.
 5. Zedekiah acted the same as Jehoiakim his 1/2 brother in doing wrong before God
 - a. But we felt a little sorry for Zedekiah, as he sought Jeremiah's counsel secretly, but he had no resolve to comply, Jer 38 (Next chapter is Jerusalem's fall)
 - b. At that late date, God *still* gave Zed the opportunity to lessen his punishment by surrendering to Neb

c. But he was a “bad fig,” Jer 24:8

◆ E. God’s anger is always presented as a moral good in Scripture, without embarrassment

1. The only way to acquire this perspective is to 1) leave judgment in God’s hands and 2) know that it will be fair to the nth degree

Kid-speak: When you and I get mad, are we doing right? Hardly ever. But when God gets mad, is he being selfish like us? No, He only gets angry at sin.

2. Jeremiah, ‘the weeping prophet’ (9:1), was not *happy* about God’s judgments, but he ultimately conceded that they were just

a. He could see the princes and peoples responding real-time to God’s message

b. He knew that their response was on them. It hurt him, but he helped them all he could.

c. Jeremiah helps us size up our own feelings about God’s judgments

3. Once evil was lodged in Jerusalem, God’s anger (or He Himself) lodged alongside it until the people were expelled

F. Why would Zedekiah be dumb enough to rebel vs. Neb?

Jerusalem was pretty defensible, 2 Sam 5:6.

Jer 52:4 And it comes to pass, in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has come—he and all his force—against Jerusalem, and they encamp against it, and build against it a fortification all around; **5** and the city comes into siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

G. When conditions were good, they thought they could use the city’s continuous water supply to grow food during a siege; but not much has to go wrong to upset that plan

H. The tenth month fast mentioned in Zech 8:19 was apparently a fast commemorating the initiation of this siege

1. The first two fasts in that verse were apparently for Jerusalem’s fall and the Temple’s fall

2. The seventh month fast was apparently the Day of Atonement

Kid-speak: Jerusalem was built on a mountain. It had strong walls. Nebuchadnezzar brought the best army in the world, and they couldn't get into Jerusalem. But why did the Jews in Jerusalem have to give up? They ran out of food.

- I. For Neb to bring “all” his army to Jerusalem shows the great defensive situation Jerusalem was in, including food. 18 months is a long time to hold out against an all-out siege.

Jer 52:6 In the fourth month, on the ninth of the month, when the famine is severe in the city, and there has been no bread for the people of the land,

- J. Again, whatever plan they had for perpetuating a food supply had gone awry. “People of the land” apparently = farmers.
- K. We saw the severity of this famine prophesied in Jer 19:9,
 1. but it had been prophesied long before in the Torah, Lev 26:29; Deut 28:53-57 (Yuck!)
 2. And was afterwards lamented in Lam 2:20; 4:10
- L. You don't know who you can become until you're hungry. It's a basic of our existence.
 1. This is one reason for fasting: to become partially acquainted with your true, weak self
 2. Why do I need to know that? Well, what can the continuously fed truly know of dependence on God? Until you feel it- you haven't *felt* it. It's just *words*.

Jer 52:7 then the city is broken up, and all the men of war flee, and go forth from the city by night, the way of the gate between the two walls that [*is*] by the king's garden—and the Chaldeans [*are*] by the city all around—and they go the way of the plain.

- M. The natural reading of this is that the Jews broke the walls from within, for if the Babylonians had broken the walls, no one could have escaped
 1. The Jews knew where to undo their defensive seal to best escape
 2. It is described as a double-wall defense by the king's garden. It was either the easiest place to unblock, or the best place to break out undetected, or both

Kid-speak: The Jewish army knew they had to get out of Jerusalem to get food, so they broke through their own wall at night and sneaked through all the Babylonians around Jerusalem, and they ran as far away as they could.

- N. The city was encircled, but the Jewish army had reconnoitered the Babylonians' encampments well enough to figure out a way through them. This was, in its own right, a bold move.
1. They headed east, toward the Jordan river plains
 2. The soldiers had enough organization among themselves to pull this off, but it might have become every man for himself once they were clear of the Babylonian lines

Jer 52:8 And the forces of the Chaldeans pursue after the king, and overtake Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, and all his battalion has been scattered from him,

- O. Zedekiah made it about 20 miles northeast
1. "All his battalion was scattered from him" may mean they'd already fled *or* a scattering when the Chaldeans came into view
 2. How many of them may have escaped we are not told

Jer 52:9 and they capture the king, and bring him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, and he speaks judgments with him. **10** And the king of Babylon kills the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and likewise he killed all the officials of Judah in Riblah. **11** And he has blinded the eyes of Zedekiah, and he yokes him in irons, and the king of Babylon brings him to Babylon and gives him into the house of requital to the day of his death.

P. Riblah was about 200 mi. N of Jerusalem, apparently Babylon's official judicial seat for the region; partway back to Babylon

- Q. It's interesting to read of regal, earthly judgments
1. We understand the right of judgment that is part of the right of conquest
 2. Neb had dealings with men based on his own sovereignty. They had defied him; there were consequences.

Kid-speak: The Babylonians caught the king of Jerusalem, Zedekiah, who had gotten away. They killed all his children and put out his eyes. They took him to prison, where he stayed the rest of his life. God had given Zedekiah a way for his family to live and Jerusalem not to be burned (chap 38), but he didn't listen.

3. Yet God is a king, and we give Him *less* latitude for judgment. We expect Him to act based on *our* interests rather than His own (which happen to be simple justice).
 - a. *This shows man's degree of unreasoning animosity towards God*
 - b. Our personal sovereign streaks allow for humans (our kind) what we deny to God, and this from our depths
- R. The last thing Zed saw was his sons killed: no heirs, no hope. Zed was in Neb's power from then on: more effective in a way than simple execution, testifying to Neb's *ongoing* dominance.

Jer 52:12 And in the fifth month, on the tenth of the month—it [*is*] the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon—Nebuzar-Adan, chief of the executioners, has come; he has stood before the king of Babylon in Jerusalem, **13** and he burns the house of YHWH, and the house of the king, and all the houses of Jerusalem—even every great house he has burned with fire, **14** and all the forces of the Chaldeans that [*are*] with the chief of the executioners have broken down all the walls of Jerusalem.

- S. This rebellious and troublesome people were to be left with nothing with which to start over as they had been
- T. We met Nebuzaradan back in chap 39. He treated Jeremiah well in Nebuchadnezzar's name. We deduce that the Babylonians knew from defectors that Jeremiah had prophesied their victory and warned the king to surrender.

Kid-speak: What's worse, having your house burn, or *you* burning forever in the Lake of Fire? Duh. How do we NOT go to the Lake of Fire? We say, "Jesus, I sinned. I deserve to die. Thank You for dying in my place! Write me in Your book!" **Rev 20:15**

- U. The houses are all burned, from God's to the king's to the nobles'. No temptation left to live there.

- V. We have read of God's vengeance for the Temple, 50:28; 51:11; but was it for the burning and stealing or for the eventual mocking misuse of its implements, Dan 5:2-5?
- W. Nebuzaradan must have had a large, well-equipped contingent (probably builders of the siegeworks) to level the city's walls
 1. The walls would be Nehemiah's main task in 70 yrs.
 2. The city had been without *spiritual* walls for some time

Jer 52:15 And of the destitute of the people, and the remnant of the people who are left in the city, and those who are defecting, who have defected to the king of Babylon, and the remnant of the multitude, Nebuzar-Adan, chief of the executioners, has exposed/deposed; **16** and of the destitute of the land, Nebuzar-Adan, chief of the executioners, has left for vinedressers and for farmers.

- X. There seems to be a difference between the "destitute of the people" and the "destitute of the land." ("Destitute," rare word)
 1. Presumably, the destitute of the *land* lived off of the land itself, just barely. They had no stake in Jerusalem itself. They probably owned no land.
 - a. Maybe they were the slaves who were temporarily released, Jer 34:8-11. They were left behind to farm.
 - b. If Neb's army needed to cut through Judah again, there would be some provisions for them
 2. But the destitute of the *people* apparently were *not* farmers and would not fare well if left behind
 3. These were shipped off to Babylon (and therefore not killed) accompanied by defectors and, it seems, nondescript or uncategorized people. But since they still had roots in or around Jerusalem, they couldn't be allowed to stay, since they might try to resettle within the city.

Kid-speak: What happened to almost all the Jews?

Nebuchadnezzar took them to Babylon, and they stayed there for 70 years. Only the young children (and children born in Babylon) lived long enough to come back.

- Y. As we found out in Jer 39-44, even these poor farmers had imbibed enough of the Jewish spirit to continue to rebel against God, even having seen the awful consequences of rebellion

IV. How does this relate to Christ?

Christ was the covenant Head of Israel, always desiring their good, Matt 23:37

V. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, “Uphold the strengthless”)

If your conscience is tender, and you can only imagine God’s justice disposing Him against you, realize that this holy fear is exactly what Israel lacked (Jer 6:15).

VI. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong?**

How have I lost righteousness?

Do I gauge God’s judgment of sin as a positive dynamic in cleansing me of sin?

VII. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):

How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?

I will recognize God’s unfailing righteousness and my solid, desirable guarantee that I will one day be without sin.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?**

“Purify me, Pure One, by the sight of You,” 1 Jn 3:3; 2 Pet 1:4

Wrap-up: Judgment begins at the House of God, meaning His people, 1 Peter 4:17. In the OT, God had a people with whom He made a covenant. His eternal mercies were manifested to them, but most of them did not enter into those mercies.

In the NT, Christ established the promised New Covenant. It is a covenant with the elect, but the structure of Christ’s body still allows for unbelievers to meet with the elect in their gatherings (or take them over). The natural functioning of Christ’s body is to expose unbelief through the Word, convicting and correcting believers, and converting some of the unbelievers present.

Some unbelievers will always eventually work evil. This, too, is part of God’s perfecting of His chosen ones, 1 Cor 11:19. But this is often the ‘bridge too far’ that finally exposes the true colors of many, unwilling to separate from evil words/works.