

Journey through Jeremiah Part 43, Jerusalem Falls

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2017

† Jeremiah 39:1-18

1 In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. 2 And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up.

Our text starts out by giving us a timeline. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the 9th year and 10th month of Zedekiah's reign. Then in the 11th year and 4th month of Zedekiah's reign mayhem ensued.

You will recall in our last lesson we talked about how Nebuchadnezzar was the one that actually placed Zedekiah on the throne as King of Judah. He did that the first time that he invaded Jerusalem. He removed the reigning king which was Jehoiachin.

Since Nebuchadnezzar was the one that placed Zedekiah upon the throne, then Zedekiah was to be a puppet to him. Of course, it turned out that Zedekiah thought he was smarter than Nebuchadnezzar and had plotted with the Egyptians to overthrow the Chaldeans but that plan was spoiled when Nebuchadnezzar found out and went and met the Egyptians on the battle field and defeated them.

We also studied last week how Jeremiah had warned Zedekiah of the prophecies of the LORD and that if he would give himself up to Nebuchadnezzar then he would live and Jerusalem would not be burned down. But if he didn't turn himself over to them then he would be taken and Jerusalem would be burned to the ground.

3 And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergalsharezer, Samgarnebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris, Nergalsharezer, Rabmag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon.

Now we start to see the LORD's prophecies being fulfilled. Since Zedekiah refused to give himself up to Nebuchadnezzar then everything that Jeremiah warned him would happen is going to happen. It starts by the princes of Babylon occupying the city. These princes were the chief captains of the Chaldean army. By sitting in the middle gate they are blocking off access and travel through the city of Jerusalem.

4 And it came to pass, that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain.

Zedekiah looks out his window or from the top of his palace and sees that the Chaldeans are setting up armies against them. So, he hatches a plan to escape through an access gate behind the palace garden. He along with his army make their way through the gate which led out the plains of Jericho.

5 But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him.

Zedekiah wasn't as smart as he thought he was. It didn't take very long for the Chaldean army to catch up to him and take him as prisoner and carry him off to Riblah to stand trial. Riblah was about half way between Babylon and Palestine. Nebuchadnezzar had some sort of base there and this is where they bring Zedekiah and others to be judged.

6 Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah.

Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar had invaded the king's palace and taken his sons as prisoners. Remember, Zedekiah is only 32-years old at this time so his sons would have been very young, some may have been infants. Nebuchadnezzar has all of Zedekiah's sons slain in front of him. This is exactly what Jeremiah warned Zedekiah about as we read last week in **Chapter 38:23** So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

Then Nebuchadnezzar takes all the "nobles" of Judah and slays them as well. The nobles are people of important rank. We read about this event over in 2 Kings:

2 Kings 25:18-21

18 And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

19 And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land that were found in the city:

20 And Nebuzaradan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah:

21 And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.

7 Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon.

More prophecy fulfilled. Just as we studied in **Jeremiah 32:4-5** And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; 5 And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper.

What an awful thing to do to a person. I can't imagine having to watch someone kill my children and that be the very last thing that I saw. How that image must have haunted him the rest of his life. I'm sure he would have rather have been killed himself instead of the punishment that they doled out on him. His last days will be a literal hell upon earth.

We know from reading ahead in Chapter 52 that Nebuchadnezzar would die in prison in Babylon: **Jeremiah 52:10-11** And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. 11 Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

The Prophet Ezekiel also mentions it in **Ezekiel 12:13** My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

The sad part is, Zedekiah could have avoided all of this if he had obeyed the Word of God. He is not different than the lost sinners of today. There are millions of people in this world today that will slip off into hell and the last thing they see will be the ones that they loved. What a haunting memory to spend eternity with.

8 And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

Again, the Words of the LORD being fulfilled. Just as Jeremiah prophesied, the Chaldeans then burnt down the city of Jerusalem.

9 Then **Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard** carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained. 10 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

We are introduced to another character, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard. He was Nebuchadnezzar's chief executioner. You could call him "***The Butcher of Babylon.***"

I want to paused right here for a moment and discuss something concerning the spelling of King Nebuchadnezzar's name. Someone asked me about this last week and I thought maybe others were wondering.

In our King James Bible we find two different spellings of this king's name. 29-times it is spelled with an "N" NebuchadNezzar. But 31-times it is spelled with an "R" NebuchadRezzar.

Let me give you the simple answer. Both of these spellings are correct. Both names come from the same root name but when it is spelled with an N – NebuchadNezzar, it is the Hebrew spelling. When it is spelled with an R – NebuchadRezzar, it is the Aramaic spelling. This is a common thing in Semitic languages. So, there is no "mistake" in your Bible. Why the King James Translators did it that way? You will have to wait and ask them when you see them.

Okay, so let's get back to our text. Nbzuzaradan begins a mass rounding up of the citizens of Jerusalem and the rest of Judah except for the poor people. It is interesting that they allowed the poor to stay behind. The poor was of no use to them. They couldn't get money from them and they didn't have the means to rebel against Babylon so they were harmless to leave behind. Besides, if they were taken into Babylon then they would have to be fed and kept up.

The poor folks were given the lands of the rich people to grow vineyards and tend to the fields. No doubt Nebuchadnezzar would require them to pay tribute or taxes on this land.

11 Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, 12 Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.

Notice that special attention is given to the Prophet Jeremiah. No doubt Nebuchadnezzar has heard of him and how he tried to get the king to surrender and the people as well. The LORD is watching out for Jeremiah and has given him a soft spot in king Nebuchadnezzar's heart and he sends the Butcher of Babylon to find Jeremiah and take care of him.

Nebuchadnezzar gives instructions to not harm Jeremiah, look upon him with kindness, and give him anything he asks for. Wow! Here an evil, pagan, sadistic, tyrant is treating the man of God better than his own king. My friend, that just goes to show you how the LORD can accomplish whatever he pleases through whomever he pleases.

13 So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushasban, Rabsaris, and Nergalsharezer, Rabmag, and all the king of Babylon's princes; 14 Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people.

The Babylonians really go out of their way to protect Jeremiah. They send several people to the prison to get Jeremiah out and then they escort him home. We can only assume his home refers to Anathoth where he is from. It says that he dwelt among the people. That would be the poor folks that were allowed to stay behind.

15 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

Do not let the rest of these verses confuse you. For whatever reason this is inserted at this place in the Book of Jeremiah. But it happened sometime after Jeremiah had been pulled out of the dungeon due to this man Ebedmelech, going to the king to ask him to not let Jeremiah die in the dungeon. We studied it last week in chapter 38:

Jeremiah 38:7-9 Now when Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin; 8 Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, 9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for *there is no more bread in the city.*

So, the LORD is protecting this faithful man, Ebedmelech, because of how he helped Jeremiah. Ebedmelech wasn't even a Jew, he was an Ethiopian slave but apparently a Jewish proselyte or at least a man that feared and honored the LORD God Jehovah.

16 Go and speak to Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be *accomplished* in that day before thee.

17 But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou *art* afraid.

18 For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

Obviously Ebedmelech feared the Babylonians and what they might do to him. But the LORD instructs Jeremiah to tell him not to fear that he would not allow any harm to come to him.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible