

Message #56**Jeremiah 52:1-34**

When the Apostle Paul wrote his last letter before he died, he said there will be a time that will come when people will not want to hear the word of God. They will want their religious itch scratched and they will hire teachers based on their own desires to scratch that itch. Paul told Timothy your job is to preach the word of God and not scratch itches (II Tim. 4:1-4).

When the Apostle Peter was nearing the end of his life, he said that judgment will begin in the family of God and in the church (I Peter 4:17).

What both of these Apostles were teaching was that God's people need to hear the truth that God is a Sovereign God who analyzes what His people are doing and if they persist in rebellion and sin, He will judge them and the ministers' job is to communicate that.

That is exactly what Jeremiah did. Jeremiah was called by God to take a very simple message to Israel. It was a message that offered grace forgiveness, but it warned of serious judgment if God's people did not turn from evil.

Now Jeremiah was living in a world when almost all the ministers were telling the people they had nothing to fear and that everything was good. Jeremiah said things are not good. And you are on the verge of judgment disaster. He warned God's people that if you don't obey the word of God and don't turn from evil, God will bring on His people one negative disaster after another.

That is basically what this final chapter reveals:

ALL OF THE HORRIBLE THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO JERUSALEM AND GOD'S PEOPLE WHO LIVED THERE WERE DUE TO THE FACT THAT SHE WOULD NOT LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD, SHE WOULD NOT OBEY THE WORD OF GOD, AND SHE WOULD NOT TURN FROM HER SIN.

Time and time again God stood ready to forgive her and start blessing her if she turned from evil. Jeremiah proclaimed that but time and time again she refused and finally God had enough.

There are nine concluding supplemental facts brought out in this final chapter:

SUPPLEMENTAL FACT #1 – King Zedekiah was evil like his brother Jehoiakim. **52:1-2**

Zedekiah had an eleven year reign as king in Jerusalem. When he was 21-years-old, Nebuchadnezzar made him king after he had deported his nephew Jehoiachin. The year was 597 BC (II Kings 24:15-17).

His mother's name was Hamutal (II Kings 23:31). She was from Libnah and was the daughter of another man whose name was Jeremiah. Zedekiah was an evil king just like his brother, Jehoiakim.

According to Rabbinical literature, Jehoiakim was an immoral murderer and godless tyrant. He cheated people out of wages and he murdered people to take their property. Zedekiah was just like him.

No specific sin is named, but the word "evil" means he was involved in wicked, perverted, twisted evil that is right out in the public (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 772).

SUPPLEMENTAL FACT #2 – When God in His anger brought Babylon to Jerusalem, King Zedekiah did not submit to God's word and surrender, but he rebelled. **52:3**

Everything that is described in this chapter that God did to His own property and people was due to God's anger. It is possible for the people of God to push God to such an angry level that His whole focus is chastisement.

God was so angry with His own people that He decided to cast them out of His city. He told His people who remained that if they would submit themselves to Nebuchadnezzar, His servant, they would survive. Zedekiah was never interested in obeying the word of God and he certainly did not obey here.

In fact, he made an alliance with the Egyptians in direct disobedience to what Jeremiah told him to do (i.e. Jer. 38:17).

SUPPLEMENTAL FACT #3 – Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem for two years from the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign to the eleventh year of his reign. **52:4-5**

In Zedekiah's ninth year of reign in 588 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's army came to Jerusalem and began its siege. The siege continued for two years until Zedekiah's eleventh year.

SUPPLEMENTAL FACT #4 – Within four months there was no food for the people and they were so exhausted they could not defend the city. **52:6**

By the ninth day of the fourth month of the siege in 587 BC, there was no more food. The book of Lamentations gives a description of what things were like - Lam. 2:11-12; 4:4, 9-10. God was allowing His own people that He wanted to bless to go through this because they would not submit to Him or His word.

SUPPLEMENTAL FACT #5 – When the city was taken, the people fled, including Zedekiah.
52:7-8

Because the people were weak, they could not defend themselves and the military could not defend them because they fled. They figured out some nighttime escape route. It is not known for sure just how they got away, but they did. They probably had some underground escape route.

They headed south toward the Arabah and somehow they were able to slip through the Babylonian military lines and the Babylonian army chased after them.

Again we must remember that on multiple occasions, Jeremiah specifically told Zedekiah not to run from Nebuchadnezzar. He told him that if he would surrender to the officers of Nebuchadnezzar, he would live (i.e. Jer. 38:17). He also told him if he didn't do this, the city would be destroyed and he would not escape (Jer. 38:18).

So this fleeing and not surrendering was a blatant rejection of the Word of God. God's people may decide to run away from the word of God and do just the opposite, but they will pay. God will track them down and their world will collapse.

SUPPLEMENTAL FACT #6 – King Zedekiah is captured and taken to Nebuchadnezzar at his headquarters in Riblah. **52:9**

Zedekiah was captured in the plains of Jericho and his men had abandoned him. Each man was trying to save his own life. In Jeremiah 39:5 we learn that the Babylonian army overtook Zedekiah and brought him to Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah, and he was judged there.

Riblah was located about 65 miles north of Damascus and about 400 plus miles north of Jerusalem. It was a good place for Nebuchadnezzar to be because he had a good view there of both Syria and Palestine, because it was on the Syrian border of Lebanon. Again, the point is **you cannot escape the chastising judgment of God no matter how far you run or where you go or try to hide.**

SUPPLEMENTAL FACT #7 – Nebuchadnezzar kills Zedekiah's sons, slaughtered his princes before his eyes and then put out his eyes and took him to Babylon. **52:10-11**

Nebuchadnezzar had appointed Zedekiah to be the king and he had betrayed him. This is no surprise, because Zedekiah betrayed God and was not faithful to the God of the Bible.

Nebuchadnezzar had been betrayed by Zedekiah so he ordered all of his sons and all of his leaders to be slaughtered and he made Zedekiah watch it. Then he put out his eyes and took him to Babylon and put him in prison until the day he died. So the last thing that Zedekiah saw with his eyes was his own children executed.

We must wonder if his sons looked at their dad as if to say why did you lead us to this? Dad, if it weren't for your rebellion, we wouldn't be here.

More than likely, when Zedekiah got to Babylon, he was paraded through the streets of Babylon "as a trophy of war" for all to see.

SUPPLEMENTAL FACT #8 – Nebuzaradan completely destroys Jerusalem. **52:12-27**

What we read in these verses is almost identical to II Kings 25:8-17. These verses describe the systematic destruction of Jerusalem ordered by God and carried out by the Babylonians.

Nebuzaradan, the captain of the military, entered Jerusalem on the 10th day of the 5th month of the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar being in control of the Babylonian army.

There are ten facts that are clearly brought out:

Fact #1 - The Temple is burned down. **52:13a**

The false teachers and prophets had been telling the people that this was "the Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD" and it could not ever be destroyed (Jer. 7:4). Jeremiah said they are lying to you and don't you believe them.

Fact #2 - Every royal palace and every large house was burned down. **52:13b**

Fact #3 - All the walls were broke down. **52:14**

Archeological discoveries have determined how thorough these walls were destroyed.

Fact #4 - People were taken captive to Babylon. **52:15**

Jeremiah warned them time and time again not to listen to the false ministers who were telling them they were safe and peaceful. He told them they were liars and they would be removed from the land (Jer. 27:10).

Fact #5 - Some poor people were left to care for the land. **52:16**

Some of the poorest people were left behind and put in charge of this major area. Think of it, the big political leaders and all the wealthy people have been taken and their houses burned down and poor people have been left to care for the land.

Fact #6 - Everything made of bronze at the house of the LORD was broken and taken to Babylon. **52:17**

Before things were completely destroyed, they were completely looted. The false priests lied to the people and said the bronze vessels would never be taken to Babylon (27:16).

Fact #7 - Every item used for Temple worship was taken to Babylon. **52:18-19**

We know from Daniel that in the first deportation many key items from the Temple were taken (Dan. 1:2). Apparently some of the items had been remade and now they were taken too. There were pots, shovels, snuffers, basins, pans, bowls, lampstands and things made also of fine gold and silver.

Fact #8 - All bronze items made by Solomon were taken. **52:20-23**

We know from II Kings 25:16-17 that Solomon made many things for the Temple out of bronze, including pillars.

In **verses 20-21** we get a fulfillment of prophecy that is mind-boggling. Just the weight and size of the bronze pillars would be astronomical. The pillars were 18 cubits tall which equals 27 feet. The pillars were 12 cubits in circumference which is 18 feet. The pillars were four fingers thick. On top was a capital which was five cubits or 7.5 feet. Plus, there were 100 bronze pomegranates that were each all bronze.

Now these were pillars that the false priests said could not ever be moved. Well the Babylonians cut them down and removed them and took all of it to Babylon.

Before they burned the city down, they looted it. All of this was a judgment of God against His own people.

Fact #9 - Priests from the Temple and officers of the Temple were taken. **52:24**

These leaders had told people lies. They told them they were all safe and that everything was fine and everything would work out for good. These were religious liars and God tracked every one of them down. The judgment of God tracks everyone down. Live a lie and “payday someday.”

Seraiah was the chief priest and Zephaniah was second priest next in rank. Nebuzaradan took these religious leaders and the military leaders and hauled them away. **Frankly, these leaders had led God’s people straight into the judgment of God and they were severely judged.**

Fact #10 - All Key leaders were taken. **52:25**

They found key leaders and advisers and army commanders and 60 men of the people hiding in the city and they led them out.

According to **verses 26-27**, all of these were taken to Riblah, and Nebuchadnezzar executed them all right there.

According to **verses 28-30**, there were three different deportations of Jewish people:

- 1) The first deportation in the seventh year totaled 3,023 Jews.
- 2) The second deportation in the 18th year totaled 832 Jews.
- 3) The third deportation in the 23rd year totaled 745 Jews.

In three deportations there were a total of 4,600 people taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. No one can hide nor escape the judgment of God.

SUPPLEMENTAL FACT #9 – Jehoiachin is released from prison after 37 years and was able to live out his days in luxury. **52:31-34**

The book closes in a very unique way. Evil-merodach, who was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned from 562 BC-560 BC decided to release Jehoiachin king of Judah.

He only was in power three months and he had been taken to Babylon and had been in prison for 37 years.

There are preserved tablets from the Ishtar Gate in Babylon that do say that Jehoiachin had been freed and did receive a regular food supply from the king.

More than likely this finale to the book was for the purpose of showing that God was not done with Israel and there was a bright future ahead.

Now Jeremiah predicted that this Babylonian captivity would last 70 years and then God would start blessing Israel again and would bring Israel back to Jerusalem and bless her again (Jer. 29:10).

Well Jehoiachin had been in prison for 37 years, which meant there were only 33 years left until God would again bless His people.

The encouraging news for the people of God is that when you have angered God to the point that He chastises you, there can be light at the end of the tunnel if you learn your lesson.

Also, I want to make a key chronological point concerning the nations. God poured out His judgment on the nations before He blesses Israel again. That is exactly the way it will work in the Great Tribulation.

God will bring down every city from every nation just before He restores Israel (Rev. 16:19). What this prophetically means is that God's people can expect to see every city in every nation becoming more and more evil until God brings them all down. After that, His people will shine.

Jeremiah is an amazing book that warns God's people that if they do not turn from sin, they can anger God to the point that He judges them.