

2ND KINGS

Week 39, Chapters 24 and 25

We're entering the home stretch in our study of 2nd Kings. This week and next should finish up the book. But what finishing up the book means, is that Judah will then be officially exiled from the Promised Land. At that point, none of the tribes of Israel will be living in the land that God first set apart for them in His promise to Abraham. That doesn't mean that no Israelites remained in the land following the exile. For various reasons a mixed group of the remnants of the 12 tribes were able to stay, in both the south (Judah) and in the north (Israel, also known as Ephraim or the northern kingdom).

This Babylonian exile is earth shaking in the history of Israel; in fact it was in Babylon where the religion of Judaism, and the concept of synagogues as houses of worship, was born. The Babylonian exile plays such a role in the plan of redemption that the God of Israel is laying out, that various aspects of that exile are spoken of in a number of Old Testament books. We'll be using quotes from several of them in today's study.

Last time we spent a good deal of our effort in Jeremiah 27. But today I'm going to try to chart the historical path, and connect the dots, of the final 20 years of Judah's existence. The crux of the Jeremiah 27 passages is a difficult one for both Jews and Christians to accept; Rabbis have worked in some pretty fanciful ways to explain it away, and Christian leadership simply says that God essentially changed how He operates once New Testament times arrived so whatever God did is irrelevant to modern Believers. And the crux issue is that God decided to be on Babylon's side for awhile, and against Israel. He decided to turn Judah over to Babylon as a punishment for their decade after decade of ever-worsening apostasy and unfaithfulness. And He told Judah that they were to willingly bow down to Babylon; they should not resist. The king and government of Judah should be co-operative, subdued, and never consider rebelling because to rebel against Babylon would be to rebel directly against God. Neither Babylon nor King Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as evil in God's eyes; rather they have been raised up to be God's hand of justice and judgment upon His people. It is Judah that is currently evil, and it is they who are thus receiving God's severe sentence against them.

As bible students and modern day believers we have grown used to the idea that to fight against Israel, or to do harm to Israel, was automatically the same thing as coming against Yehoveh. This is because Israel, the land, was God's set-apart kingdom. And Israel, the people, was God's set-apart people. But God makes it clear that we ought not to assume that just because a person or a nation of people is redeemed and set-apart for Him that they are immune from His punishment, or that He won't allow us to be put into subjugation or oppressed by another person or nation if we trespass seriously enough and for long enough.

And this is stated outright in Jeremiah 27; no guesswork is needed on our part.

CJB Jeremiah 27:5 *"I made the earth, humankind, and the animals on the earth by my great power and my outstretched arm; and I give it to whom it seems right to me."*

When God's redeemed rebel against the Lord, whether it be ancient Israel, modern Israel, or modern Believers in Yeshua, He has and He will take action. And Paul tells us to expect exactly that as disciples of Yeshua.

Romans 11:17-22 CJB

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you- a wild olive- were grafted in among them and have become equal sharers in the rich root of the olive tree,

¹⁸ then don't boast as if you were better than the branches! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root, the root is supporting you.

¹⁹ So you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."

²⁰ True, but so what? They were broken off because of their lack of trust. However, you keep your place only because of your trust. So don't be arrogant; on the contrary, be terrified!

²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, he certainly won't spare you!

²² So take a good look at God's kindness and his severity: on the one hand, severity toward those who fell off; but, on the other hand, God's kindness toward you- provided you maintain yourself in that kindness! Otherwise, you too will be cut off!

In 2nd Kings 24 we found that **Y'hoyakim**, Josiah's son, had taken over after another son of Josiah, **Y'ho'achaz**, after he was on the throne for only 3 months. **Y'ho'achaz** was removed and imprisoned by the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco, who then placed him with his brother **Y'hoyakim**. However **Y'hoyakim** would be a vassal first to Egypt and then to Babylon.

Y'hoyakim was a foolish man, we are told. He was an evil king who behaved in the way of the other apostate kings of Judah that preceded him. So God Himself came against Jehoiakim by inciting King Nebuchadnezzar to send a military force of mercenaries from Amon, Moab, and Aram (Syria), led by his own Babylonian commanders, to attack Judah.

The invasion took place in the month of Kislev (December) 598 B.C. And the result was exactly what Jeremiah had warned would happen if Judah didn't bow down in contrite submission to Babylon.

Jeremiah 27:11-13 CJB

11 But the nation that puts its neck under the yoke of the king of Bavel and serves him, that nation I will allow to remain on their own soil," says ADONAI. "They will farm it and live there.""

12 Then I spoke to Tzidkiyahu king of Y'hudah in just the same way: "Put your necks under the yoke of the king of Bavel, serve him and his people, and you will live.

13 Why would you want to die, you and your people, by sword, famine and plague- which is what ADONAI has decreed for the nation that will not serve the king of Bavel?

Surprisingly, 2nd Kings 24 gives us almost no information about what happened to Judah and to King Jehoiakim as a result of this invasion. All it says is:

2Kings 24:6 CJB ⁶ Then Y'hoyakim slept with his ancestors, and Y'hoyakhin his son took his place as king.

However there are considerably more details available in other books. For instance in 2nd Chronicles 36 we get this:

2Chronicles 36:5-6 CJB

5 Y'hoyakim was twenty-five years old when he began his reign, and he ruled for eleven years in Yerushalayim. He did what was evil from the perspective of ADONAI his God.

6 N'vukhadnetzar king of Bavel attacked him and bound him in chains to carry him off to Bavel.

We have a conundrum. 2nd Kings 24 says Jehoiakim died in Jerusalem, and 2nd Chronicles 36 says he was taken away prisoner to Babylon. Scholars have debated over which of these two statements is accurate, because they can't both be right. In general the evidence is that he

died in Jerusalem. For one thing, the rather detailed and complete Babylonian Chronicles that charts the names of various kings taken prisoner during the many invasions of kingdoms and nations by Babylon makes no mention of Jehoiakim being arrested and brought to Babylon. Further, we have a prediction of **Y'hoyakim's** violent death from the mouth of the Prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 22:18-19 CJB

18 *Therefore here is what ADONAI says concerning Y'hoyakim the son of Yoshiyahu, king of Y'hudah: "There will be no one to mourn for him, 'Oh! My brother!' or 'Oh! My sister!' There will be no one to mourn for him, 'Oh! My master!' or 'Oh! His glory!'*

19 *He will be given a donkey's 'burial'- dragged out the gates of Yerushalayim and thrown away [to rot].*

Jeremiah 36:27-30 CJB

27 *Then this word of ADONAI came to Yirmeyahu after the king had burned the scroll with the words Barukh had written at Yirmeyahu's dictation:*

28 *"Take another scroll, and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll, which Y'hoyakim the king of Y'hudah burned up.*

29 *And as far as Y'hoyakim king of Y'hudah is concerned, you are to say that ADONAI says, 'You burned this scroll, asking, "Why did you write in it that the king of Bavel will certainly come and destroy this land and leave it without either humans or animals?"*

30 *Therefore ADONAI says this about Y'hoyakim king of Y'hudah: "He will have no one to occupy David's throne; and his dead body will be thrown out to lie in the heat by day and in the frost by night.*

Taken together with the 2nd Kings 24 statement that he died at Jerusalem at the time of the invasion, it is anyone's guess where the tradition came from about Jehoiakim being taken prisoner to Babylon. But it appears to be an error.

Then in 2nd Chronicles we find that articles were looted from the Temple and taken to Babylon.

2Chronicles 36:7 CJB ⁷ *N'vukhadnetzar also carried the articles in the house of ADONAI away to Bavel and put them in his temple in Bavel.*

Not just loot, but also citizens of Judah were deported to Babylon in retribution for **Y'hoyakim's** rebellion, including the namesake of a bible book that we will soon be studying.

Daniel 1:1-6 CJB

CJB *Daniel 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Y'hoyakim king of Y'hudah, N'vukhadnetzar king of Bavel came to Yerushalayim and laid siege to it;*

² *and Adonai handed Y'hoyakim king of Y'hudah over to him, along with some of the articles from the house of God. He took them to the land of Shin'ar, to the house of his god and placed the articles in the storehouse of his god.*

³ *The king ordered Ashp'naz, the eunuch serving as his chief officer, to bring into the palace from the people of Isra'el some of royal or noble descent.*

⁴ *They were to be boys without physical defect, handsome in appearance, versed in all kinds of wisdom, quick to learn, discerning, and having the capacity to serve in the king's palace; and he was to teach them the language and literature of the Kasdim.*

⁵ *The king assigned them a daily portion of his own food and the wine he drank, and they were to be cared for in this way for three years. At the end of this time they were to become the king's attendants.*

⁶ *Among these, from the people of Y'hudah, were Dani'el, Hananyah, Misha'el and 'Azaryah.*

So here we find that it was under the reign of King Jehoiakim that Babylon first invaded Judah. But before Judah was invaded, King Nebuchadnezzar entered a peace treaty with King Jehoiakim that Judah would be a vassal to Babylon. After 3 years **Y'hoyakim** rebelled (quit paying tribute), and then in 598 B.C. Judah was invaded and **Y'hoyakim** was killed by Babylon in order to restore their dominance over Judah. It was at this time that the vassal relationship turned to exile. And it didn't have to happen. The Lord was satisfied to merely have Judah placed under Babylon's control and Babylon's King for some indefinite period of time. In reality, that was the punishment that God had decided to inflict upon Judah for their apostasy. If only they had listened to Jeremiah's Word from the Lord, Judah didn't have to be destroyed; a descendant of David could have remained sitting on Judah's throne (even if he was a vassal king to Babylon), and the people could have stayed in their own land, farming, tending herds and flocks, generally doing what they had always done. There is no evidence that Babylon acted as barbarians and harmed or mistreated the people of Judah, or even forced their gods and their religion upon them.

This exile occurred ONLY because **Y'hoyakim** and his government administration disobeyed God by rebelling against Babylon because they didn't like being a vassal and having their independence taken away, and they also didn't want to accept God's punishment upon them.

Let's re-read a portion of 2nd Kings 24 and deal with the next king of Judah, **Y'hoyakhin**.

RE-READ 2ND KINGS 24:7 – end

Y'hoyakhin was the son of **Y'hoyakim**. He was 18 years old when he took over the throne (he was given it by King Nebuchadnezzar), and just like his half-brother **Y'ho'achaz** he only managed to rule for 3 months before trouble overtook him. The words of 2nd Chronicles 36 say that he ruled for exactly 3 months and 10 days. But also recognize that 2nd Chronicles says that he was 8 years old (not 18) when he became king. While some Rabbis have gone through all sorts of gyrations to try and explain away this discrepancy, none is needed. The number 8 is a copyist error. This was not a child king and the context makes that abundantly clear.

Being an impetuous and immature 18 year old, he immediately defied Babylon and Yehoveh and he rebelled. So once again Babylon sent its army to re-establish control. First Nebuchadnezzar sent his generals and his military to put the city under siege, and he only came to take personal command at a later date. It happened in the month of Adar (March) in the year 597 B.C. The young Jewish king no doubt never counted on Nebuchadnezzar reacting this way, and so when the army showed up, and the siege began, he rather quickly panicked, opened the city gates and along with his family and members of his royal court went out to surrender to the King of Babylon in hopes of mercy. But the king didn't trust him; rightly so because young **Y'hoyakhin's** father had also pledged loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar only to betray him at the first opportunity. So he and his family and government officials were arrested and hauled off to Babylon.

This event had been predicted by Jeremiah. Notice as you hear these passages that **Y'hoyakhin** was earlier known by another name, **Koniyahu**.

Jeremiah 22:24-30 CJB

24 "As I live," says ADONAI, "even if Koniyahu the son of Y'hoyakim king of Y'hudah were the signet ring on my right hand, I would pull you off

25 and hand you over to those who seek your life, to those you fear, N'vukhadretzar king of Bavel and the Kasdim.

26 I will hurl you and the mother who gave birth to you into a country different from the one you were born in, and you will die there.

27 They will not return to the country to which they long to return."

28 Is this man Koniyahu a despised, broken pot, an instrument nobody wants? Why are they being thrown out? Why are he and his offspring thrown out into a country they do not know?

29 Oh, land, land, land! Hear the word of ADONAI!

30 This what ADONAI says: "List this man as childless; he is a lifetime failure- none of his offspring will succeed, none will sit on David's throne or rule again in Y'hudah."

So now a 2nd wave of people from Judah was deported to Babylon. About 10,000 people that represented the cream of the crop of Judah's population were taken. Notice that verse 14 says that "all" Yerushalayim was taken, and then goes on to say that "all" the princes and "all" the bravest soldiers were included. It needs to be stated that the use of the term "all" in the bible is not a precise term; it does not mean 100%. It is what we might call in English grammar hyperbole. It means to express a significant amount; the vast majority that is large enough to represent the whole. It is no different than how we use the term "all" today. Our kids might say that they get in trouble "all the time". Or that "all" of our luck is bad luck. Or that "all" doctors are rich or that "all" politicians are greedy. "All" means "predominately", not "every last one".

Thus when we hear that "all" nations will come against Israel in the End Times, it is not absolute; it does NOT mean that there won't be a few nations who stay out of the fray. But it does mean that bulk of the earth's powerful nations will. So don't let the term "all" as it is used in the bible mislead you. It was never intended to mean "all" inclusive with no exceptions".

We also read in verse 13 that even more of the Temple furnishings and treasures were taken. In the first invasion and wave of deportation in 598 B.C. it was things like vessels and pans and gold and silver articles that were taken. But this time the result was more dramatic and more destructive. Larger articles of precious metal, so too large to transport, were cut into pieces and taken to Babylon so that they might be melted down and reformed into something else. But take note: the Temple itself was NOT destroyed nor was Jerusalem decimated. This was but the 2nd stage in the process of emptying Judah of its people, and there was one more to go. It was an escalation in response to Judah rebelling for a 2nd time in only a couple of years. And, once again, the deportations and looting of the Temple didn't have to be. If only ***Y'hoyakim*** and then his son ***Y'hoyakhin*** had been obedient to God's Word from Jeremiah, and submitted to Babylon as Yehoveh instructed, then the Babylonian army wouldn't have invaded in retribution.

Now, as to the numbers of people that 2nd Kings 24:14 says were sent away to Babylon: here it says it was 10,000. Then in verse 16 it speaks of 7,000 plus 1,000. If we look at Jeremiah 52 we hear this:

Jeremiah 52:28-30 CJB

28 *The numbers of people deported by N'vukhadretzar were as follows: in the seventh year, 3,023 persons from Y'hudah;*

29 *in the eighteenth year of N'vukhadretzar, 832 persons from Yerushalayim;*

30 *and in the twenty-third year of N'vukhadretzar, N'vuzar'adan the commander of the guard deported 745 persons from Y'hudah; the total comes to 4,600 persons.*

In the end we can only speculate, but some things are self-evident. Numbers like 10,000, and 7,000, and 1,000 are round numbers meant as approximations not as precise figures. Yet Jeremiah 52 is obviously quite precise. Even so, it is unclear as to which groups of “persons” are being spoken of. The numbers are much too small to indicate the total number who was deported. No matter, we can get the picture that several thousand were taken, and they were from the more elite classes, the educators and leadership at all levels. The common people were left as no doubt they weren't seen as being at fault, nor were they of any particular value in Babylon. Besides, they were needed to keep the mines operating, the fields and orchards producing, construction continuing, and so on. If Babylon emptied the land of the working class then there would be no source of tribute to draw from Judah.

But with **Y'hoyakhin** imprisoned Judah now needed a replacement king, and so Nebuchadnezzar chose **Mattaniah**, who was **Jehoiakhin's** uncle. Nebuchadnezzar (as customary) gave **Mattaniah** a new royal name, **Tzidkiyahu** meaning **Yehoveh is righteous**. Notice: Nebuchadnezzar was a smart king and a good politician who had a lot of experience in holding together a large empire of diverse nations and peoples. So he wisely insisted on not only keeping a Jewish king on Judah's throne, but even someone from Josiah's family because this was of the Dynasty of David. In other words, he understood that by keeping a descendant of David's royal line in power, the people would be more inclined to obey that king because he was legitimate, and so they were less inclined to make trouble.

Zedekiah, as he is called in English, would be Judah's last king who was both Jewish and of the line of David. Why did Nebuchadnezzar choose Zedekiah? Well, for starters, Jehoiakhin was too young (18 or 19 years old) to have had any sons beyond the age of 2 or 3. Zedekiah was Josiah's 3rd son, and was probably the last remaining option for Nebuchadnezzar if he wanted to enthrone a member of Josiah's family. Unfortunately, Zedekiah was totally unlike his father; rather **Tzidkiyahu** was much like all the other wicked kings of Judah, although perhaps he didn't work quite so zealously at being wicked. Nonetheless the Lord saw him as evil.

2Chronicles 36:11-13 CJB

11 *Tzedekyah was twenty-one years old when he began his reign, and he ruled for eleven years in*

Yerushalayim.

¹² *He did what was evil from the perspective of ADONAI his God. He did not humble himself before Yirmeyahu the prophet speaking on behalf of ADONAI.*

¹³ *He also rebelled against King N'vukhadnetzar, who had made him swear loyalty to him by God; instead, he became stiffnecked and hardhearted, refusing to turn to ADONAI the God of Isra'el.*

Notice a couple of things about this passage: first, we have a slight variation of **Tzidkiyahu's** name. Here he is called **Tzedekyah**. Whereas **Tzidkiyahu** is **Yehoveh is righteous**, **Tzedekyah** is translated as **God is righteous**. This sort of switching back and forth from God (**yah**) to Yehoveh (**yahu**) in a name was typical of Hebrew custom and literature. But second, we see that Zedekiah's main trespass was that he didn't obey God's Prophet Jeremiah. And this was viewed by the Lord as being stiff necked (stubborn), hardhearted (his mind was closed to God, just as was the Pharaoh of the exodus), and he would not turn to Yehoveh God of Israel but rather relied on his own ways and his own intellect.

Verse 20 ends this chapter with the notice that it was because the Lord had already decided the fate of Judah and Jerusalem that Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon. In other words, the final act that would bring an official end to the Kingdom of Judah just needed someone to carry it out. So God put it in Zedekiah's mind to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. Truly, such a thought to rebel was irrational. Judah had no means to defeat Babylon. Every time it had been tried within the past few years, Judah lost more wealth, more people, and more of the Temple and Palace treasures.

It is an amazing thing that we witness in bible history that not only within God's Kingdom but among gentile nations, government leaders often made self-destructive decisions that defied common sense. We read of them, analyze them, and scratch our heads wondering how a person could rise to such a lofty position, and yet behave so foolishly. And yet to themselves, and to those who formed their brain trust, these decisions were brilliant and well-conceived. And any who questioned them or objected were seen as ignorant; incapable of understanding life, economics and governing on their elite level. Of course invariably, those leaders (Hebrew or gentile) who made such decisions had no connection to God. They relied on human wisdom alone, and either deceived themselves into thinking that they were in good stead with the God of Israel, or they believed that their own prowess, cunning and intelligence were all that was needed to rule. It is no different than today, and I can safely say that the end result for the leaders and their nations of today will be the same as was those ancient ones: national ruin and estrangement from God.

Let's move on to the last chapter of 2nd Kings.

READ 2ND KINGS 25 all

This chapter cuts right to the chase: the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of God followed by the final wave of deportations to Babylon. Verse 1 explains that it happened in the 9th year of the 11 year reign of Zedekiah. However when it speaks of the 10th day of the 10th month, it is NOT in reference to how much time **Melech Tzidkiyahu** (King Zedekiah) had been on the throne. Rather the 10th day of the 10th month is giving us a calendar date. The 10th month is **Tevet** (January). It was the dead of winter in Judah; short days, cold, frost would cover the ground most mornings and without a decent cloak or blanket one could die of hypothermia overnight. In the higher elevations like Jerusalem, a dusting of snow was common and expected. A warm fire was a must. The year was 588 B.C.; only 9 years had passed since the previous failed rebellion attempt. Why would Zedekiah think that now might be a good time, when all the earlier times ended in disaster? We have to look to Ezekiel to explain his decision, as obviously doomed to failure and impossible to comprehend as it must have seemed to everyone in Judah and Babylon..... except, of course, to the mind of the deluded King Zedekiah who was being enticed by the Lord to go ahead and follow his evil inclination.

Ezekiel 17:11-18 CJB

11 The word of ADONAI came to me:

12 "Say to the rebellious house: 'Don't you know what these things mean?' Tell them: 'Here, the king of Bavel came to Yerushalayim, took its king and princes and brought them to himself in Bavel.

13 Then he took a member of the royal family and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. He removed the powerful leaders of the land,

14 so that this kingdom of his would stay humble and not develop aspirations of its own; rather, it would keep his covenant and live accordingly.

15 But this man rebelled and sent representatives to Egypt, in order to obtain horses and a sizeable army. Can he succeed? Can someone who does such things escape punishment? Can he break the covenant and still escape punishment?

16 "'As I live,' says Adonai ELOHIM, 'in the place where the king who gave him his throne lives, whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke, there with him in Bavel I swear that he will die.

17 Pharaoh with his mighty army and numerous troops will give him no help in the war, when they raise siege-works and build fortified towers to destroy many people;

18 because he despised the oath by breaking the covenant to which he had sworn allegiance; having done all these things, he will not escape unpunished.'

And here we have it: Zedekiah decided that it would be a great idea to put his hope in an ancient adversary: Egypt. He tried to make an alliance with Egypt in anticipation that they would rescue him from Babylon. Oh how often Believers will find themselves in a bad way, and rather than petition God and wait upon Him in trust, we revert to the ways of the world, to the former ways that we had supposedly long ago left behind, in order to try and deliver ourselves. In the bible Egypt has always been representative of a wicked and cruel taskmaster; Satan's kingdom, more or less. And yet, like heroin to a drug addict, it seduces even the one who seems on the road to rehabilitation right back to its degradation and destructive power. But God has another name for it when we choose the ways of the world over His ways: rebellion.