

November 9, 2025

“Jerusalem’s Fall”
Lesson 1

2 Kings 24:18-20, 25:1-8

Intro

Today’s passage is dealing with the time leading up to the Babylonian exile in 586 BC. God had warned the people through His prophets that judgment would come if they continued to break his covenant. Moses speaks of this in Deuteronomy. The prophets had warned both Israel and Judah of the coming judgment. Their words were proven true when Israel, the northern kingdom, was exiled in 722 BC. Now Judah is facing the same fate.

The blame for this outcome can be directly traced to Judah’s leadership. They had 20 different rulers from the time of the divided kingdoms in the 10th Century BC. There are evil kings, and good kings, and then evil kings again. Today’s lesson deals with the last of the 20 kings, Zedekiah. His father, Josiah, was the last godly king of Judah. After he died in battle, his ungodly son Jehoahaz ruled briefly before being deported to Egypt by the Pharaoh, who put his brother Eliakim in the throne as king. He ruled for 11 years before dying. His son Jehoiachin succeeded him, but ruled only 3 months before the Babylonians overtook Jerusalem. They put one of Jehoiachin’s relatives, Mattaniah, in as king, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

Read 2 Kings 24:18-20

1. vs. 18: We are told here that Zedekiah was only 21 when he was named king
 - Each of the last 4 kings of Judah was young
 - Jehoahaz—23
 - Jehoiakim—25
 - Jehoiachin—18
 - Zedekiah—21
 - Josiah, Zedekiah’s father, was only 8 when he became king
2. vs. 19: Zedekiah was evaluated by God as one who “did evil in the eyes of the Lord”
 - This description is used about 50 times in the OT, most in 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles
 - The opposite, doing “right in the eyes of the Lord” is used less than 25 times in the OT
 - The last to be described this way was Josiah
 - It’s ironic that Zedekiah is described as doing evil
 - His name means “The Lord is righteous”
 - Further irony is that the name was given to him by a pagan king (see Intro notes)
 - He is said to have done evil “as Jehoiakim had done”
 - This copying behavior phrase is used of all the previous kings back to Josiah
 - This suggests active promotion of evil, not just passive tolerance of it
3. vs. 20: The coming fall of Judah is the result of “the Lord’s anger”
 - The territories of Judah and Benjamin are small, and sit between Egypt and Mesopotamia
 - As such, they are constantly under attack by foreign kingdoms out to conquer

The human view would see this fall as a military / political problem

But God's view is different

He is angry because the people have violated the covenant between them and God

God's anger isn't selfish or misplaced, as is that of human anger

God's anger is a reaction to rebellion and idolatry

The result of the people's rebellion will be the overthrow of their nation

Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon is referred to at the end of the verse

Instead of turning to God for help against Babylon, Zedekiah turned to Egypt

This was the advice of his counselors

Jeremiah warned that exile was coming, and counseled surrender to Babylon

Read 2 Kings 25:1-9

4. vs. 1: The rebellion of Zedekiah leads to the Babylonian army laying siege to Jerusalem

This happens 9 years after Zedekiah became king

The Babylonians build "siege works all around" the city

This allows them to attack the city more effectively

It also prevents the people from getting food or water into the city

The design is to starve the people into submission

Babylonian artwork shows examples of them doing this—they are practiced in warfare

5. vs. 2-3: According to this verse, the siege has been going on for about a year and a half

The people have finally run out of food—"there was no food for the people to eat"

They have been able to last because of what previous kings had done

Some had cisterns built, providing the city with a water supply

2 Kings 20:20 suggests the city may have had a water supply within its walls

The siege was also lifted briefly to repel an attack by the Egyptian army

This likely allowed food and water to get into the city walls

6. vs. 4: Here the Babylonians break through the walls

The verse says the army "fled through the gate"; Zedekiah fled also

They likely left, not where the army was breaking through, but in another direction

There are valleys bordering Jerusalem to the east and south, and a smaller one to the west

For an army, attacking from the north makes the most sense

Though they had surrounded the city, the Babylonians were in greater force to the north

The king and his men were also fleeing at night, making it harder to see them

7. vs. 5: However, they are seen, as the Babylonian army chases and captures them

Zedekiah gets separated from his army and is taken captive

They are captured in "the plains of Jericho"

This is about 15 miles east of Jerusalem, with an elevation drop of about 3300 feet

8. vs. 6: Upon his capture, Zedekiah is taken to face Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah

Riblah is about 300 miles away from Jerusalem

It's the same city where Jehoahaz was imprisoned by Pharaoh 20 years earlier

Jeremiah told Zedekiah that Babylon would take the city if he didn't surrender

He was also told the people and the city would be spared if he did surrender

He now has 300 miles to ponder why he didn't listen to this warning
He also has 300 miles to ponder why he didn't learn from Jehoahz's fate

9. vs. 7: Zedekiah's stubbornness results in severe consequences for his family, not just for him
His sons are killed as he watches
Then his eyes are put out
He is blinded, which seems poetically just, as he refused to "see" the signs
Then he is bound with bronze shackles and taken away to Babylon
The caravan route to Babylon is roughly 900 miles, a trip of 3-4 months
10. vs. 8: About a month after breaking through the walls, a top Babylonian official comes to the city
Nebuzaradan is the commander of the king's guard—he is highly trusted and highly placed
The year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign is given
This shows the Babylonians are in complete charge
11. vs. 9: Nebuzaradan sets fire to the temple, the palace, and all the houses in the city
The entire city is destroyed because Zedekiah refused to listen to Jeremiah
This outcome was predicted in Amos 2:4-5 and Micah 3:9-12

Application: Despite the outcome, this story gives proof of both God's patience and justice. He told His people what would happen if they broke the covenant. He saved them from enemies repeatedly, but they refused to repent and obey. This is not the end for them however. God also promised to restore His people and bring them back into full relationship with Him (see Jer. 31:31-34). He sent Jesus Christ to keep that promise. And thankfully, God is still patient with us.

Prayer: Father God, You are right in all Your ways. Your righteousness shows us our wickedness, and so we come to you in repentance. Help us to seek, learn, and apply the lessons show us in Biblical history. In Jesus' name, Amen.