

BOOK OF 2 KINGS
THE EVIL REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH-PART 1
2 KINGS 24:17-20; 2 CHRONICLES 36:11-16; JEREMIAH 24; 29

Introduction

Tonight we **begin** to look at **THE EVIL REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH** who was **JUDAH'S** final king to reign before the last invasion and **DESTRUCTION** of **JERUSALEM** at the hands of the **BABYLONIANS!**

ZEDEKIAH was the third born son of good king **JOSIAH!** Unfortunately, **ZEDEKIAH** was just as evil as his brothers. His given name at birth was **MATTANIAH**, but upon his being chosen by **NEBUCHADNEZZAR** to replace **JEHOICHIN** on the throne, his name was changed by the **BABYLONIAN** king to **ZEDEKIAH.**

MATTANIAH means “***Gift Of JEHOVAH.***” ***ZEDEKIAH*** means “***JEHOVAH is Might***” or “***JEHOVAH is Righteous.***” (Was this possibly **PROPHETIC** in that the **LORD** would show **HIS MIGHT** and **RIGHTEOUSNESS** in **HIS JUDGMENT** of **ZEDEKIAH** and **JUDAH**?)

Let's begin by looking at some verses that summarize **ZEDEKIAH'S** entire life. (*See 2 CHRONICLES 36:11-16*) As we read this, I want you to imagine having your entire existence on this earth summed up with these words.

That would not be a good thing as **ZEDEKIAH** would now testify if he could!

ZEDEKIAH should have never been king being the third born child. He should really be one of those names in the genealogy **1 CHRONICLES** that nobody really knows.

However, **ZEDEKIAH** became king because **NEBUCHADNEZZAR** needed another puppet king on the throne after pulling **JEHOIACHIN**, his nephew (i.e. his brother **JEHOIAKIM'S** son) off the throne and carrying him and his associates off to **BABYLON** where he would live out his days and die!

There was a stark contrast between **ZEDEKIAH'S** life and that of the **PROPHET JEREMIAH** who **PROPHESED** during the whole evil reign of **ZEDEKIAH.** At this point in his life, **JEREMIAH** was a **SEASONED** **PROPHET** having **PREACHED** and **PROPHESED** for 30 years already with many of his **PROPHECIES** having already been fulfilled and others that would eventually be fulfilled!

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To **ZEDEKIAH**, **JEREMIAH** appeared to be his greatest problem! But **JEREMIAH** was **NOT** his greatest problem! **ZEDEKIAH'S** own **sin** and certainly **his turning a deaf ear to the WORD OF THE LORD** were his greatest problems as so often is the case! Had he just taken time to listen to and heed **JEREMIAH** and the **WORD OF THE LORD** that he spoke to him, things could have been so much different for him and **JUDAH!**

ZEDEKIAH was just a **twenty-one year old know-it-all punk** when he came to the throne! He refused to listen to **JEREMIAH!** In fact we will see later in our study that he had **JEREMIAH** locked up in prison! That pretty much tells us why his reign was evil!

In many ways, **ZEDEKIAH** was the embodiment of all that was wrong in **JUDAH.** His character validated the **LORD'S** decision to destroy **JERUSALEM** and to punish **JUDAH** by having them carried into captivity!

I. JEREMIAH'S FIRST VISION OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH—THE PARABLE OF THE FIGS. (JEREMIAH 24) (Vs 1-3)

Shortly after **ZEDEKIAH** became king, **JEREMIAH** was given this **VISION** from the **LORD GOD** in which **JEREMIAH** saw two starkly different **baskets of figs** that were set before the **TEMPLE** of the **LORD!**

(i.e. As if presented as an offering before the presence of the LORD HIMSELF! Baskets of figs used to be offered as first-fruits in the Temple!)

One of these baskets is described as being that of **VERY GOOD FIGS** and the other basket was that of **VERY NAUGHTY or BAD FIGS!**

This **PROPHECY** was designed to encourage the despairing exiles in **BABYLON**, while at the same time reproving the people who were still in **JUDAH!** Those who remained in **JUDAH** prided themselves as being superior to those who had been carried away into **BABYLON** and so they abused the forbearance of **GOD!**

A. The Good Figs. (Vs 4-7)

The **GOOD FIGS** represented those of **JUDAH** who had already been carried away into **BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY** at this juncture!

1. **The LORD Said HE Would “Acknowledge” Them!**
(Vs 5a) “Acknowledge” = means “recognize” or “regard with favor”
2. **The LORD Said HE Sent Them Out Of JUDAH Into Captivity In BABYLON For Their Good! (Vs 5b)**
(This reminds me of Romans 8:28 in the N.T.)

Their removal to **BABYLON** saved them from the calamities which befell the rest of the nation!

It also led many of them to repentance in **BABYLON** and so God bettered their condition though they remained in **CAPTIVITY** for the 70 years appointed by **GOD!**
(e.g. **DANIEL** and the three **HEBREW CHILDREN** as well as **EZEKIEL** were among these captives!)

3. **The LORD Said That HE Would Set His Eyes Upon Them For Good! (Vs 6a)**
 - a. **HE Would Bring Them Again To This Land (i.e. JUDAH!) (Vs 6b)**
 - b. **HE Would Build Them And Not Pull Them Down! (Vs 6c)**
 - c. **HE Would Plant Them And Not Pluck Them Up! (Vs 6d)**

Jeremiah 12:15—“And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.”

i.e. The **PROPHECIES** of **RESTORATION** and **SALVATION** are directed at the first group of exiles that went to **BABYLON**, indicating the **LORD’S** displeasure with those who remained in **JUDAH**—especially the leaders!

B. The Bad Figs. (Vs 8-10)

The **BAD FIGS** represented **ZEDEKIAH**, his princes, and the residue of **JERUSALEM** that remained in the land and those that had gone down into **EGYPT!**

The people who remained in **JUDAH** were likely rejected because they **DID NOT REPENT** after seeing the fate of the first group of exiles!

But now, because of that failure to **REPENT**, their fate stood in stark contrast to those who had already been carried away into **CAPTIVITY** in **BABYLON** at this point.

The **LORD** said that **HE** would **DELIVER THEM TO BE REMOVED** from **JUDAH** for their hurt! Then the **LORD** pronounced upon them **REPROACH, TAUNTING, and A CURSE** wherever they happened to be carried away.

Also specifically mentioned are **the SWORD, the FAMINE, and the PESTILENCE** upon them until they ALL are totally consumed from off the land of **JUDAH!**
Wow! What a CONTRAST!

Conclusion

It seems likely that around this same time **JEREMIAH** sent a letter to the **CAPTIVES** in **BABYLON** telling them to settle in for a long **CAPTIVITY**.
(**Jeremiah 29:1-14**)

1. He told them to build houses, plant gardens, have families, and even pray for peace in Babylon.
2. He warned them not listen to the false prophets who were saying that the captivity would be over shortly. (Cf. **Jeremiah 28 - Hananiah**)