

Journey through Jeremiah Part 57, Jeremiah Comes Full-Circle

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, Feb. 07, 2018

† Jeremiah 52:1-34

Tonight, we finalize our Bible studies through the Book of Jeremiah. We began this study on December 21, 2016 and I said that night it would take us 2-years to finish it. Well, I was off by 11 ½ months... Even though it has taken us 57 studies we have gotten through it in record time.

I hope you have enjoyed this study and have learned more about the Book of Jeremiah. I know I have learned a lot that I didn't know before as I studied, prayed, and meditated on the lessons. Since I am a huge history buff, I really enjoyed researching the historical aspects of it all and feel that I understand things much better than I did.

Well, in this final chapter we find a recap of what it was all really about – the fall of Jerusalem with the destruction of their land and the Temple – and the exile of inhabitants of Judah. These are the things that caused Jeremiah to weep. We can get a deeper understanding of this from Jeremiah's writing in the Book of Lamentations. We didn't go there very much during our studies, although we maybe should have a little more than we did, but in talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and the inhabitants of Judah, Jeremiah says this in **Lamentations 1:16** *For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.*

1 Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 2 And he did *that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.* 3 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

King Zedekiah – Zedekiah, as you well know, would be the last King of Judah. In 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar and his Chaldean army invaded and conquered Jerusalem. They took the current King, Jehoiachin, son of Josiah, into captivity. Then, Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, as King of Judah and re-named him Zedekiah.

And, just as it says here in Jeremiah, the Book of 2 Kings tells us the same: **2 Kings 24:18-20**: *Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. (19) And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. (20) For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.*

Zedekiah was nothing more than a puppet king in Judah. Nebuchadnezzar was the real king and was only allowing him to reign if he did things the way Nebuchadnezzar wanted. Of course, just as we are told in the Bible, Zedekiah decided to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar.

4 And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, *that* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. 5 So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

Zedekiah's rebellion occurred during the 9th year of his reign, when he made a secret alliance with Pharaoh of Egypt to fight against Nebuchadnezzar. Of course, that didn't work out and when Nebuchadnezzar found out he met Pharaoh half way between Egypt and Jerusalem and whooped him and drove them back to Egypt, then he sent his men to Jerusalem and they besieged the city.

6 And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.

With the city besieged for 3-years and no food coming in things got bad in Jerusalem. People were starving to death. Famine leads to all kinds of problems, death and disease.

7 Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain.

All the soldiers stationed in Jerusalem ran out a back hidden passage behind the King's palace and Zedekiah did too thinking he would escape.

8 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. 9 Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. 10 And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah.

We've studied this in great detail already, so we aren't going to spend a whole lot of time on it but if you remember, Jeremiah has warned Zedekiah all of this would happen unless he gave himself up to Nebuchadnezzar. But he didn't listen to Jeremiah and everything is now coming down upon him.

Nebuchadnezzar had invaded the king's palace and taken his sons as prisoners. Zedekiah is only 32-years old at this time so his sons would have been very young, some may have been infants. He had to stand there and watch as Nebuchadnezzar put all of his sons and princes to death. What a horrible thing.

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.

Can you imagine the last thing you ever saw was such grisly murders of your own children? We don't know how long Zedekiah would have to rot away in the Babylonian prison before he died but it had to be an awful ending, especially for a king.

12 Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, which served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem, 13 And burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire:

We are told again about Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard for the Chaldean Army. He was Nebuchadnezzar's chief executioner. I affectionally nick named him "**The Butcher of Babylon**." He, along with his army of soldiers, went on a rampage of mayhem, murder, and madness. They resorted to one of the greatest weapons of all time, Fire. Fire is a destroyer. What it doesn't burn down it turns black and unusable. That was the whole intention of the Chaldeans, to render Jerusalem unusable.

14 And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about.

Setting fire to everything wasn't enough. Fire cannot consume walls, so they broke the walls down. This would make it nearly an impossible task to rebuild.

15 Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive *certain* of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude. 16 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left *certain* of the poor of the land for vinedressers and for husbandmen.

They weren't really interested in the poorest of poor. They had no money or possessions to take from them. They would be nothing more than mouths to feed and trouble in Babylon, so they left them there to work in the fields and pay tribute money to Babylon.

17 Also the pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that was in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon. 18 The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away. 19 And the basons, and the firepans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; that which was of gold in gold, and that which was of silver in silver, took the captain of the guard away.

You can't imagine what this must have been like for the Jews to witness. The Temple is the holiest of all places on earth. These pagan Gentiles were defiling the Temple just by being in it. They displayed utter contempt for the Jews by destroying and stealing the things out of the Temple of God.

Daniel tells us that it was these same vessels that they had taken from the Temple that they were using the night that Babylon fell: **Daniel 5:1-5** Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. 3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. 5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

Hey, the Chaldeans sealed their own fate when they took those vessels out of the House of God.

20 The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brasen bulls that were under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the LORD: the brass of all these vessels was without weight. 21 And concerning the pillars, the height of one pillar was eighteen cubits; and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof was four fingers: it was hollow. 22 And a chapter of brass was upon it; and the height of one chapter was five cubits, with network and pomegranates upon the chapters round about, all of brass. The second pillar also and the pomegranates were like unto these. 23 And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; and all the pomegranates upon the network were an hundred round about.

All of this is descriptions of things that the Chaldean army plundered or destroyed from the Temple. Each piece had a significant purpose and was in the Temple under direction of the LORD when Solomon had built it.

24 And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: 25 He took also out of the city an eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and threescore men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city. 26 So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah. 27 And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land.

The Chaldean army rounded up everyone that was of importance and anyone that

worked for the king and brought them to Nebuchadnezzar's temporary headquarters in Riblah which was on the road between Israel and Babylon. They used this place as a type of processing station, but also as we just read, a place where judgment was carried out and a quick death sentence given.

28 This is the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand Jews and three and twenty: 29 In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons: 30 In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons were four thousand and six hundred.

Then we have a list of those that were taken into Babylonian captivity.

1. 3,023 – in the seventh year
2. 832 – in the eighteenth year
3. 745 – in the twenty third year

Total = 4600

Now, bear in mind that this does not include the 10,000 that were taken into captivity during Nebuchadnezzar's 1st year of reign, when they took King Jehoiachin. We are given that number in **2 Kings 24:14** And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. - So then that gives us a **total of 14,600** captives taken that we are told about.

31 And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evilmerodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, 32 And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon, 33 And changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. 34 And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

And the Book of Jeremiah ends with informing us of the release of King Jehoiachin from prison. This brings everything into full-scale since he was the King that was first taken by Nebuchadnezzar during the first captivity. According to the Bible he was released from prison after 37-years and was shown great favor by the new King of Babylon Evilmerodach.

The Bible doesn't give us much information about Evilmerodach but he was a son of Nebuchadnezzar. Jewish history tells us that he stepped in as King during the 7-years that his father Nebuchadnezzar was driven into the fields to eat like an animal and after Nebuchadnezzar came back to resume his throne, he threw his son Evilmerodach into prison. It is said that is where he met Jehoiachin and became friends with him. Then after Nebuchadnezzar died, Evilmerodach was released from prison and made King of Babylon. Then one of the first things he did was release his friend, Jehoiachin from prison.

It is also said that when Evilmerodach was released from prison that he demanded his father's body be exhumed so he would have proof that he was really dead. Then he tied the body behind a horse and had him drug through the city so that everyone would know that Nebuchadnezzar was truly dead. – But that's not in the Bible, that is Jewish history.

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