

Unit III: Ezekiel and the Exile of Judah

We've Fallen and We Can't Get Up!

DEVOTIONAL READING: Lamentations 1:18-22

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 2 Kings 23:1–25:21

PRINT PASSAGES: 2 Kings 24:18-20; 25:1-9

KEY VERSE

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. (2 Kings 24:20, KJV)

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It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence. Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. (2 Kings 24:20, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe the theological meaning of the events that led to the Babylonian Exile.
- Embrace exile as a part of the human condition.
- Reach out to those who experience the pain, hopelessness, and detachment of exile.

*Key Terms

Besieged (25:2)—Hebrew: *māsôr* (maw-tsore'): enclosed; entrenched; fenced (in); “kept under siege” (NIV).

Encamped (25:1)—Hebrew: *chanah* (khaw-naw'): pitched tents; dwelled; rested; remained camped; settled; “round about” (KJV).

Evil (24:19)—Hebrew: *ra'* (rah): bad; wicked; wretched; malignant; vicious in disposition.

Rebelled (24:20)—Hebrew: *marad* (maw-rad'): revolted against authority; disobeyed; defied.

Reigned (24:18)—Hebrew: *malak* (maw-lak'): was or became king or queen; ruled.

Scattered (25:5)—Hebrew: *puwts* (poots): dispersed; dashed in pieces; spread; disseminated.

***(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)**



The Biblical Context

The events of 2 Kings 24:18–25:9 unfolded during a critical moment in Jewish history around 587–586 BCE, as the kingdom of Judah faced its final days. This passage captures the culmination of years of political and spiritual decline, set against the backdrop of major power shifts in the ancient Near East. Babylon had emerged as the dominant empire, having already conducted two previous deportations of Judah's population. Zedekiah, originally named Mattaniah, was installed as a vassal king by Nebuchadnezzar after the deportation of King Jehoiachin, his nephew. This created a complex political situation where Zedekiah served as a puppet ruler caught between Babylonian authority and internal pressures. Throughout his reign, the prophet Jeremiah consistently advised submission to Babylon as God's chosen instrument of judgment, but Zedekiah instead listened to false prophets who promised Egyptian aid. The destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple marked the end of the Davidic monarchy and forced a fundamental transformation in Jewish religious practice. Without the Temple as the physical center of worship, the Jewish faith had to evolve and embrace new forms of religious expression that would shape Judaism for centuries to come.

Introduction

African American communities often confront the painful reality of consequences that affect generations. Systemic inequalities, personal struggles, and the weight of oppression create moments when it feels as though everything is falling apart. The fall of Jerusalem in 2 Kings 24:18–25:9 powerfully illustrates the impact of leadership and collective actions on a populace. The people of Judah faced dire consequences resulting from a series of poor leadership decisions. Their desperate crisis places timeless emphasis on the urgency of remaining vigilant in choosing actions and considering their implications. Understanding history is crucial for making informed decisions that foster healing and progress. The road ahead may be difficult, but a commitment to effecting positive change is essential for creating a brighter future for present and future generations.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Cost of Failed Leadership *(2 Kings 24:18-20)*

KJV

18 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.

NIV

18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah.

19 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done.

20 It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence. Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Adversity often presents the greatest lessons about leadership and faith. Verse 18 introduces Zedekiah, who was twenty-one years old when he became king, reigning eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah—a detail revealing the human dimension of leadership and the influence of family legacy. Verse 19 reveals Zedekiah's tragic choice to do evil before the Lord, just as Jehoiakim had done. While he followed the destructive patterns of previous kings, Zedekiah's story speaks about the courage required to break cycles of dysfunction and choose a different path. Verse 20 shows the devastating consequences, as God's anger against Jerusalem and Judah reached its peak, resulting in their being cast from His presence. The text reveals that Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon was fundamentally an act of rebellion against God, demonstrating how spiritual disobedience often manifests in political miscalculation. Like a powerful sermon that resonates through time, the reign of Zedekiah teaches that true leadership is more than a matter of position or power—it is about aligning one's will with God's purpose.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can people balance supporting their leaders while holding them accountable to godly standards?

The Siege and Suffering (2 Kings 25:1-7)

KJV

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 host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about.

2 And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

3 And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land.

4 And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain.

5 And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him.

6 So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him.

7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

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4 And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain.

5 And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him.

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SO IN the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it.

2 The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

3 By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat.

4 Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah,

5 but the Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered,

6 and he was captured. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him.

7 They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.

Even in the darkest hours, God's purpose prevails. The events of verse 1 mark the beginning of the siege in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, when Nebuchadnezzar's entire army marched against Jerusalem. Verse 2 describes the grueling siege that lasted until the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign. Verse 3 paints a devastating picture of the famine that gripped the city by the ninth day of the fourth month, when no food remained for the people. Verse 4 captures the dramatic moment when the city wall was broken through, and all the soldiers fled by night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, even as the Babylonians surrounded the city. Verses 5-7 detail Zedekiah's attempted escape and capture in the plains of Jericho, where his army deserted him. The passage culminates in the tragic sequence of events at Riblah—the execution of Zedekiah's sons before his eyes, followed by his own blinding and imprisonment in bronze shackles. Facing challenges with faith is always better than running in fear.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

When God judges a sinful nation or community, the righteous suffer along with the ungodly. How would you encourage those who are suffering the hard consequences of their leaders' actions?

The Temple's Destruction (2 Kings 25:8-9)

KJV

8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth

year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:

9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

NIV

8 On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.

9 He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down.

In the ashes of destruction often lie the seeds of spiritual renewal. Verse 8 precisely dates this pivotal moment—on the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, when Nebuzaradan, commander of the imperial guard, arrived in Jerusalem representing the king of Babylon. Verse 9 details the systematic destruction: the burning of the Lord’s Temple, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building was set aflame by the commander’s orders. This profound loss catalyzed an even deeper faith—as the destruction forced God’s people to discover that true worship transcends physical structures. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Jewish faith emerged stronger and more resilient from this catastrophe. Burning these sacred and civic structures transformed how God’s people understood worship and community, proving that true faith can flourish even in the most challenging circumstances. This passage teaches that even when everything familiar is destroyed, those who will trust God can enter a richer, more mature relationship with Him.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What encouragement is there for remaining steadfast and faithful when familiar religious structures and supports are challenged or removed?

A Closing Thought

Even when God’s judgment is severe, He always has a purpose beyond punishment. The fall of Jerusalem initiated a period of profound spiritual transformation for God’s people, leading them to develop a greater, more personal faith that could survive without external structures. God works to refine and restore His people even in our darkest moments.

Your Life

Christians today must examine their lives for areas where they have compromised personal values or failed to stand for truth. Judah learned that there are consequences for poor choices . . . but God’s grace provides a path forward. Learn from their experience by taking responsibility for your actions, responding humbly to correction, and trusting God’s refining process.

Your World!

Use this historical account to share how God's faithfulness extends beyond failure. Share a personal testimony of how God has brought you through difficult seasons of consequence and correction. Emphasize that God's discipline is always aimed at restoration, not destruction. Doing this can provide hope to others facing similar struggles.

Closing Prayer

Lord, grant us the wisdom to learn from history's lessons, the courage to face our failures, and the faith to trust Your refining process in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Please be prepared for next week's lesson. The lesson topic for Sunday, November 16, 2025, is "The Medium Is the Message." The Devotional Reading is 2 Corinthians 1:2-6, the Background Scriptures are Ezekiel 1:1-3; 2:1-3:27; 8:1-4; 11:22-25; 24:15-24; 33:30-33, and the Print Passages are Ezekiel 3:10-11; 24:15-24, 27.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, November 10	"With Righteousness Comes Suffering"	(1 Peter 3:8-17)
TUESDAY, November 11	"Christ Exalted through Suffering"	(1 Peter 3:18-22)
WEDNESDAY, November 12	"God Rescues Us from Our Afflictions"	(Psalm 34:6-19)
THURSDAY, November 13	"Comfort for the Brokenhearted"	(Matthew 5:3-12)
FRIDAY, November 14	"Speak, whether People Listen or Not"	(Ezekiel 3:4-11)
SATURDAY, November 15	"Steadfastness and Faith amid Persecution"	(2 Thessalonians 1:1-4)
SUNDAY, November 16	"Unspeakable Grief"	(Ezekiel 24:15-27)

NOTES
