



LESSON 22 BABYLON ASCENDANT

Israel		Judah	
Jeroboam	931–910	Rehoboam	931–913
Nadab	910–909	Abijah	913–911
Baasha	909–886	Asa	911–870
Elah	886–885		
Zimri	885		
Omri	885–874		
Ahab	874–853	Jehoshaphat	873–848
Ahaziah	853–852		
Joram	852–841	Jehoram	848–841
Jehu	841–814	Ahaziah	841
		Athaliah	841–835
Jehoahaz	814–798	Joash	835–796
Jehoash	798–782	Amaziah	796–767
Jeroboam II	793–753	Uzziah	792–740
Zechariah	753		
Shallum	752		
Menahem	752–742	Jotham	750–731
Pekahiah	742–740		
Pekah	752–732	Ahaz	735–715
Hoshea	732–722	Hezekiah	729–686
		Manasseh	696–642
		Amon	642–640
		Josiah	640–609
		Jehoahaz	609
		Jehoiakim	608–598
		Jehoiachin	598–597
		Zedekiah	597–586

God's prophet Habbakuk had wondered "how long" he would have to witness the iniquity of his people (see Habakkuk 1.1-4). The Lord responded by saying He "was raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs" (Habakkuk 1.6). The Chaldeans were an ethnic group in southern Mesopotamia who became the dominant people of Babylon... the very people whom the Lord said would take Hezekiah's treasures and sons away to Babylon (2Kings 20.17-18). These were the people God would use to execute His judgment on Judah (see 2Kings 21.10-15). In this lesson we will see how Babylon ascended to the position of dominance over Judah.

Jehoahaz' Brief Reign (2Kings 23.31-34; 2Chronicles 36.1-4)

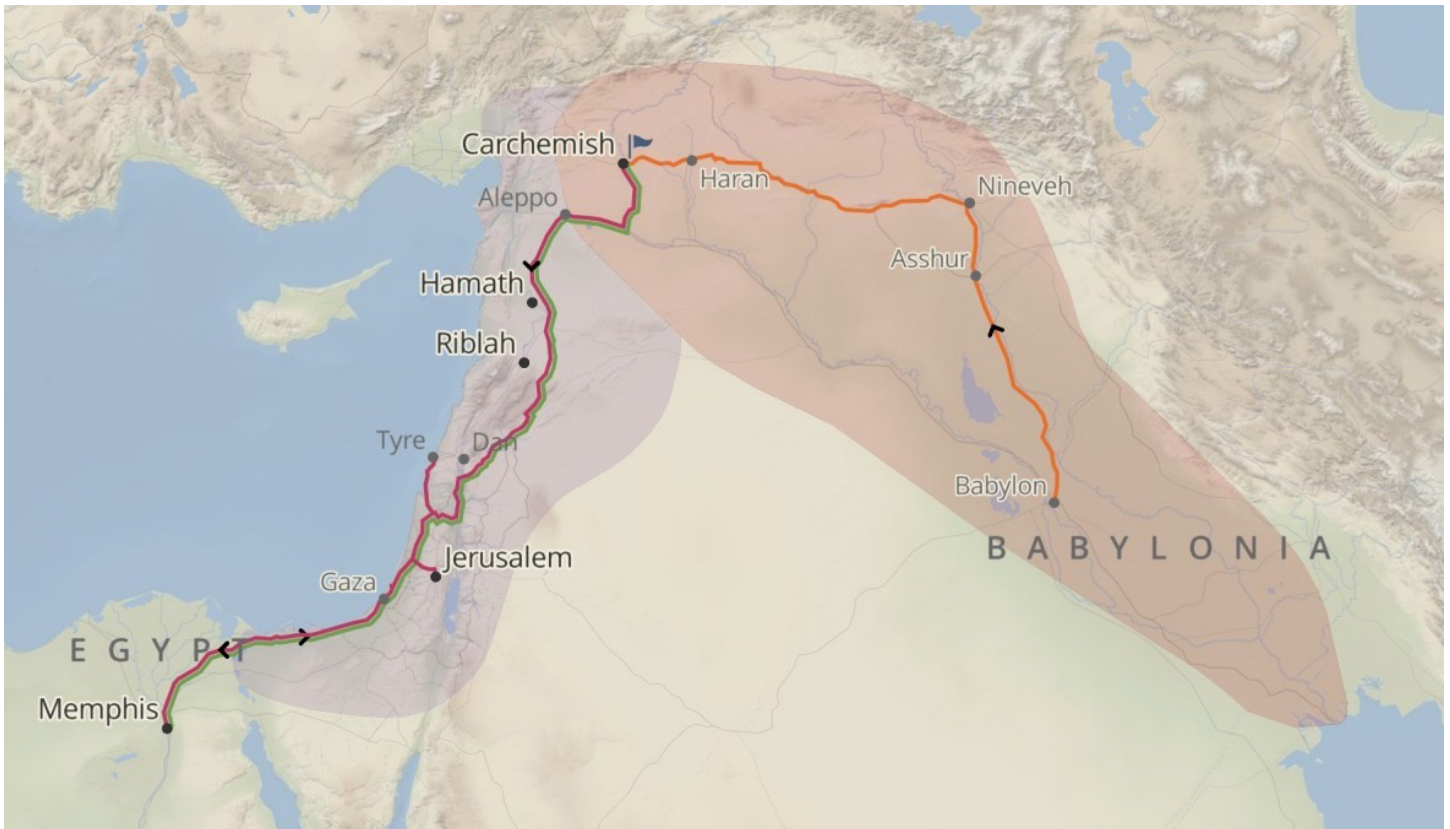
Following Josiah's death at Megiddo (2Kings 23.29-30), the people made Jehoahaz king, even though he was not Josiah's eldest son (Jehoahaz was 23, Jehoiakim was 25 according to vs. 36). Jehoahaz may have been anti-Assyria / anti-Egypt, thus winning the affection of the people who mourned the death of Josiah at the hand of the Egyptians. Regardless, he wouldn't reign long for after 3 months

he was summoned to Neco's camp at Riblah (in Syria) and deposed. Neco had been unsuccessful in aiding the Assyrian forces at Haran and had been forced to withdraw his forces south of the Euphrates. Yet, he still wished to exert power and influence over Judah, thus he replaced Jehoahaz with his brother Jehoiakim and placed a heavy tribute on the king (\$1.3-1.7 million dollars in silver and \$1.1-1.4 million dollars in gold). Jehoahaz would ultimately be taken to

Egypt, where he would die in captivity (see Jeremiah 22.11-12).

Jehoiakim Becomes A Vassal Of Babylon, Then Rebels (2Kings 23.34-24.5; 2Chronicles 36.5-8)

Jehoiakim would be under the dominion of the Egyptian Pharaoh for 3 years, during which time he was required to pay the yearly tribute of 100 talents of silver and 1 talent of gold. By this time Judah would have been a poor country as they had been under the dominion of the Assyrians and now the Egyptians. All Jehoiakim could do was tax the people further so that he could pay the required tribute (2Kings 23.35). This set the stage for one of the Lord's most scathing rebukes of the king, for in the midst of financial ruin he had undertaken the construction of his own ornate house (see Jeremiah 22.13-19)! No wonder the Lord said the people would not lament for him and that Jehoiakim would be "buried with a donkey's burial". Jeremiah's prophecies also help us better understand the indictment against Jehoiakim that he, "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (2Kings 23.37). Jeremiah records how this wicked king pursued and killed a prophet of the Lord (Jeremiah 26.20-23) and casually burned the words of the Lord (Jeremiah 36.20-26).



2Kings 24 begins with these ominous words: "In his days Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up..." Nebuchadnezzar was the son of Nabopolassar who had proclaimed himself king of Babylon in 626, and then proceeded to capture

the Assyrian strongholds of Ashur, Nineveh and Haran. In 605 BC the Babylonian army, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar, struck a decisive victory against the forces of Assyria and Egypt at Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar pursued the Egyptian army deep into Syria and Palestine before receiving word of his father's death in Babylon. It's unsure if Nebuchadnezzar personally visited Jerusalem before rushing back to Babylon to claim the throne, or if he only sent some of his forces. Regardless, Jehoiakim was now a vassal of the Babylonian king! The Chronicler states that Nebuchadnezzar had the Judean king bound with bronze chains, intending to take him captive to Babylon (2Chronicles 36.6). However, the Babylonian king relented and Jehoiakim was allowed to remain on the throne, no doubt having pledged loyalty to his new overlord. However, the Lord revealed that this was only the beginning of how the Babylonians would afflict Judah and Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 25).

After securing the throne for himself, Nebuchadnezzar once again turned his attention toward Egypt. However, an attempted invasion in 601 BC ended in a bloody stalemate. Jehoiakim likely saw this a sign of Babylonian weakness, thus he rebelled (2Kings 24.1). It would be a few years before Nebuchadnezzar could bring all of his forces against the rebel king in Jerusalem, but in the meantime he sent bands of fighters to harass and destroy what they could (2Kings 24.2). As the text relates, all of this was to fulfill what the prophets said and to bring about the removal of the people from the land.

Daniel Taken Captive

The book of Daniel opens by recording how, "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it." (Daniel 1:1, NASB95) This was the coming of Nebuchadnezzar we noted in 2Kings 24.1, and the beginning of the fulfillment of what the Lord had said would happen to Hezekiah's treasures and descendants (see 2Kings 20.17-18). The text of Daniel emphasizes that this occurred not because of the Babylonian king's might, but because "the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand..." (Daniel 1.2). Daniel, a youth from a noble family (Daniel 1.3-4), was taken to Babylon in 605 BC and would remain there throughout the 70 years of captivity. Time will not allow us to consider the book of Daniel in any detail, but we should note a couple of important lessons the book provides.

1. The Lord rules in the kingdoms of men. Daniel 2 relates how the Lord knew other kingdoms would arise after that of Babylon, but that the Lord would ultimately destroy them all and establish His own everlasting Kingdom. Daniel 4 records how Nebuchadnezzar was humbled until he recognized that "the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes." The faithful remnant needed this reassurance that their Lord had not been defeated, but was in fact bringing His will to pass as He

judged the wicked.

2. The righteous live by faith. Recall that in Habakkuk's prophecy the Lord said, "as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2.4). Whether Jehoiakim or Nebuchadnezzar, the proud would be brought down. But what of the righteous? Daniel serves as an example of one who lived by faith (note Daniel 1.8) and lived because of his righteousness.