



LESSON 23 LAST KINGS OF JUDAH

| 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 |

The book of Daniel opens by declaring how “the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah” into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1.2). Later, Daniel would declare to the Babylonian king that “you, o king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and caused you to rule over them all” (Daniel 2.37-38). The Lord had exalted Babylon and placed Judah under her dominion, but Judah’s kings would rebel against their Babylonian master just as they rebelled against the Lord. This rebellion against the Lord and His chosen rulers would result in the end of the Davidic line, the destruction of the place where the Lord caused His name to dwell, and the expulsion of the people from the land.

We noted in our last lesson how Jehoiakim was a faithful vassal to Nebuchadnezzar for 3 years, but then rebelled (2Kings 24.1). It would seem that Jehoiakim made the mistake that so many of Judah’s kings would make, placing his hope in Egypt. Yet, the text records that “the king of Egypt did not come out of his land again...” (2Kings 24.7). Nebuchadnezzar sent raiding bands against Jerusalem until he could muster his forces, and in December of 598 BC

the Babylonian king left his capital and marched his army toward Syria and Palestine. Jehoiakim died as the Babylonian forces set out. We are not told how he died, possibly as a result of the various raiding parties who made war against the men of Judah. What we do know is that he was not accorded a noble burial (see Jeremiah 22.18-19).

Jehoiachin & The Second Wave of Captives (2Kings 24.6-16; 2Chron. 36.8-10)

Nebuchadnezzar was already on the march when Jehoiachin succeeded his father as king of Judah. Nevertheless, he continued to practice evil during his short three month reign. Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem, but Jehoiachin did not put up a fight. When Nebuchadnezzar arrived the young king went out to him. The Babylonians took Jehoiachin, his mother, the officials of the city, the treasures of the Temple and all the strong of the land into captivity. "None remained except the poorest people of the land" (2Kings 24.14).

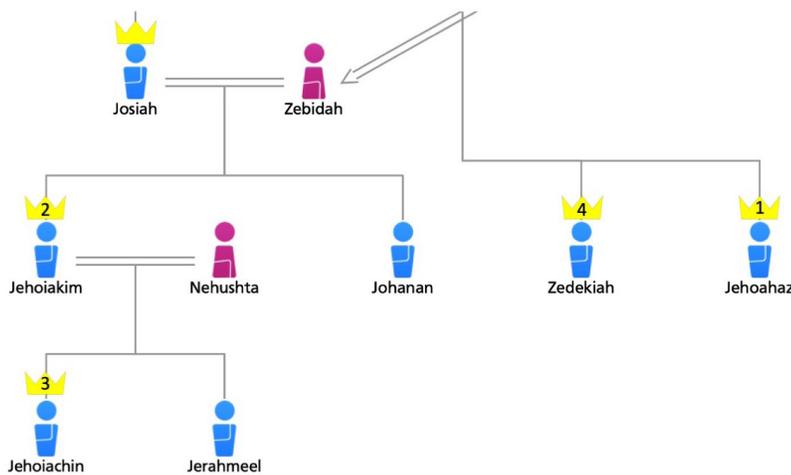
It would seem that many in Judah still viewed Jehoiachin as the legitimate king, even after his deportation (note the false prophecy of Hananiah in Jeremiah 28.4). However, the Lord declared that not only would Jehoiachin never return, but that none of his heirs would ever rule over Judah: "Thus says the LORD, 'Write this man down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper Sitting on the throne of David Or ruling again in Judah.'" (Jeremiah 22.30, see also vss. 24-29). Both 2Kings and Jeremiah end by showing how Jehoiachin remained in Babylon for the rest of his life, even though he was ultimately freed from prison and provided for by the king of Babylon.

The Babylonians were unlike the Assyrians in that they did not disperse their captives, but resettled them as a community. The captives of Judah were resettled along the river Chebar in Babylon. Ezekiel was among the exiles and was commissioned by God to be His spokesman. However, even though the people were being punished for their sins, they were not of an attitude to repent: "Then He said to me, 'Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel,



to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' As for them, whether they listen or not—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them.'" (Ezekiel 2:3–5, NASB95). However, as stubborn as they were the Lord deemed referred to them as “good figs” who would ultimately have “a heart to know Me” as opposed to those who remained in Jerusalem who would be “a terror and an evil for all the kingdoms of the earth, as a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse in all places where I will scatter them” (Jeremiah 24).

We should also note Jeremiah 29 which records the letter Jeremiah sent to the captives in Babylon. They had heard that their return home was eminent, but those were false hopes. God counseled them to resume normal lives of building, planting, starting families and to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you” (vss. 5-7). “For thus says the LORD, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. ‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. ‘Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ‘You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. ‘I will be found by you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.’” (Jeremiah 29:10–14, NASB95).



Kings After Josiah

Zedekiah’s Covenant Breaking (2Kings 24.17-20; 2Chron. 36.10-14)

When Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive he appointed his uncle as king of Judah, changing his name from Mattaniah to Zedekiah. Zedekiah would be the third son of Josiah to rule as king... and the last king of Judah. Like so many others, Zedekiah “did evil in the sight of the Lord”. The chronicler specifies a few of Zedekiah’s transgressions. Of particular importance was how Zedekiah, the priests and the people “defiled the house of the Lord which He had sanctified in Jerusalem” (2Chronicles 36.14). Significantly, Ezekiel was carried to the Temple in a vision and there he was shown all the ways in which the Lord’s

Temple had been profaned (Ezekiel 8). The vision concluded with the Lord leaving the Temple (Ezekiel 10.18-19) and the city of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 11.22-23). Earlier, Jeremiah had warned the people from putting their trust in the fact that God's Temple still stood in Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 7.4). Yes, the Temple was there, but it was profaned and uninhabited by the Lord! It would soon be destroyed.

Zedekiah also refused to "humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet" (2Chronicles 36.12). In particular, he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (2Chronicles 36.13) even though Jeremiah had urged Zedekiah to submit to the Babylonians (Jeremiah 27). "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people, and live! Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, famine and pestilence, as the LORD has spoken to that nation which will not serve the king of Babylon? So do not listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you, saying, 'You will not serve the king of Babylon,' for they prophesy a lie to you; for I have not sent them," declares the LORD, "but they prophesy falsely in My name, in order that I may drive you out and that you may perish, you and the prophets who prophesy to you." (Jeremiah 27:12-15, NASB95) Jeremiah 28 records how one false prophet, Hananiah, urged rebellion against Babylon and promised that the Lord would bring the captives home in only 2 years. But the Lord had given the people into the hand of the Babylonian king and Hananiah would perish for his falsehood. Zedekiah would rebel, but as the Lord revealed to Ezekiel this rebellion would not succeed (Ezekiel 17.11-21).