

## 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)

### Life Happens

Monica sat in her apartment, engulfed by moving boxes that symbolized her upheaval. At age 30, she never anticipated having to start over. The non-profit organization she had dedicated five years to—



## Overview

The fall of Jerusalem marks a pivotal moment in Jewish history, occurring around 587 BC during a period of intense global power shifts. This catastrophic event represented not only a military defeat but also a theological crisis that compelled God's people to grapple with their understanding of divine promises and human responsibility. Zedekiah's reign as the last king of Judah coincided with a time of heightened political tension between the superpowers of Egypt and Babylon. The once-great kingdom founded by David now faced its darkest hour, with the destruction of both the city and the Temple signifying the apparent end of God's covenant with His people. The historical context reveals a nation caught between competing empires, as Babylon asserted dominance over the entire Fertile Crescent. This period marked the conclusion of the Davidic dynasty that had ruled for more than four centuries, provoking profound questions about God's promises and the nature of divine kingship. The destruction of Solomon's Temple, which had stood for roughly four hundred years, shattered the people's understanding of God's dwelling place and necessitated a radical reimagining of worship and faith practices. This context helps the reader grasp the political complexities and the deep spiritual crisis facing the people of Judah.

working tirelessly to make a difference in her community—had unexpectedly crumbled due to funding issues, sweeping away her dreams, savings, and professional identity. As she browsed countless job listings, a heavy sense of uncertainty weighed on her heart and mind. Everything she had painstakingly built in her career and the meaningful relationships she had forged were now gone—her once-carefully charted future reduced to a blank canvas.

In this somber moment, feelings of anxiety and despair washed over her, and she found herself questioning where God was amid her struggles. The loneliness was palpable, leaving her longing for support as she faced an uncertain path ahead. Monica realized that now, more than ever, she needed to lean on her friends and family. During darkness, she clung to the hope of new beginnings and the possibility of regaining her footing.

## Questions

1. Can you recall when a sudden, unexpected loss rocked your world?
2. What strategies help you keep faith when everything you've built falls apart?
3. How vital is community support during times of profound change?

## COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### Leadership in Crisis (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.

Zedekiah's rise to the throne at age 21, as highlighted in verse 18, mirrors the journeys of many young professionals today who find themselves stepping into significant roles with immense responsibilities. His mother, Hamutal, mentioned in verse 19, is a powerful symbol of the deep connection to Judah's royal heritage and the weighty expectations accompanying his leadership. Despite having access to the wise prophetic counsel of Jeremiah, Zedekiah opted for political expediency rather than embracing divine wisdom.

As verse 19 illustrates, like his predecessor Jehoiakim, Zedekiah failed to learn from past mistakes, allowing history to repeat itself. His eleven-year reign, noted in verse 18, was characterized by his attempts to navigate the treacherous waters between Babylon and Egypt—a strategy ultimately destined for disaster. Verse 20 further emphasizes that his actions provoked divine anger, demonstrating the essential link between leadership choices and their spiritual consequences.

The narrative starkly connects Zedekiah's decisions to the eventual destruction of Jerusalem, serving as a haunting reminder that leadership failures can reverberate through communities and lead to devastating outcomes. His story stands as a poignant testament to the idea that positions of influence require professional competence, a commitment to spiritual wisdom, and moral courage. In today's world, these qualities are essential for effective and responsible leadership.



**What Do You Think?** How do you balance professional ambition with spiritual integrity?

## The Cost of Rebellion (*2 Kings 25:1-4*)

## 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.

## NIV

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,

Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem began in the ninth year of King Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month (verse 1). The date, forever marked in history, evolved into a significant day of fasting and remembrance, a testament to the trials faced. In verse 2, we witness the relentless siege that lasted through Zedekiah's eleventh year, a harrowing eighteen months filled with profound suffering. This enduring struggle reflects the resilience of the human spirit in the face of modern-day crises. Verse 3 vividly illustrates the devastating famine that gripped the city. Food supplies were exhausted, and citizens watched their resources vanish. Despite the dire circumstances, they clung to the hope of Egyptian intervention, embodying the tenacity to believe even in the bleakest of times.

In verse 4, the tension escalates as soldiers desperately bid for escape when the city's defenses are breached. They flee under the cloak of night, navigating the narrow spaces between the walls near the king's garden. This moment illustrates the fragility of human efforts and the realization that they falter in times of rebellion against divine guidance. These verses inspire reflection on the importance of trusting in God—especially during life's most challenging moments—and the seeking of the peace of mind that comes from trusting God in a crisis.

 **What Do You Think?** How do you recognize when you are operating in self-reliance versus God-reliance?

## The End of an Era (*2 Kings 25:5-9*)

### KJV

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.

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

**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.

**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.

Verse 5 recounts the intense pursuit and eventual capture of King Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, where his desperate attempts to flee serve as a powerful reminder of the consequences of our choices. In verse 6, Zedekiah stood before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, illustrating that all authority ultimately answers to a higher power. Verse 7 poignantly captures the heart-wrenching moment when Zedekiah witnessed the execution of his sons before being blinded, symbolizing the end of the Davidic line of kings.

Verses 8-9 detail the systematic destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, as he ordered the burning of the Temple, the royal palace, and all significant buildings. This devastation challenges the idea of divine protection, forcing the people to confront their beliefs about faith and guidance. Yet, through this unspeakable devastation and loss arises the opportunity for spiritual renewal, as the community discovers a deeper understanding of God's abiding faithfulness that surpasses physical structures. This journey underscores the resilience of faith, reminding us that hope and strength can emerge even in the darkest of times.



**What Do You Think?** What “temples” in your life might God be allowing to fall?

## Your Life

Times of devastating loss can feel like personal sieges, whether through career setbacks, relationship failures, or financial collapse. Yet, these moments often transform into powerful crucibles for spiritual growth. Like the exiles who learned to worship without a temple, we are called to discover God's presence in unexpected places. Reflect on how your current challenges might be reshaping your understanding of faith and success.

## Your World!

The fall of Jerusalem poignantly reminds us that no human institution is everlasting. As you meet others grappling with crises of faith and identity, share how God's unwavering faithfulness remains intact despite the collapse of external structures. Your journey of discovering God amid life's challenges could provide hope to someone in need. Let your story of resilience shine as a powerful testament to God's sustaining grace.



## Closing Prayer



## Closing Prayer



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