

## THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

### **TEXT: JEREMIAH 39:1-18**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Everything we have studied so far has been leading up to the fall of Jerusalem (39:1, 2).
2. H.A. Ironside said, "The long-suffering patience of God at last gives way to judgment; the glory departs, and Jerusalem...is delivered into the hands of the Gentiles" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
3. The *Scofield Study Bible* says this marks the beginning of "the 'times of the Gentiles,' the mark of which is that Jerusalem is 'trodden down of the Gentiles,' i.e. under Gentile overlordship. This has been true from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to this day."
4. Referring to the coming tribulation period, our Lord said in Luke 21:24, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."
5. Therefore, "the times of the Gentiles" began when King Nebuchadnezzar overthrew Jerusalem, and will continue till the second coming of Christ.
6. This chapter can be divided into four parts:

#### I. THE COLLAPSE OF JERUSALEM

#### II. THE CAPTURE OF KING ZEDEKIAH

#### III. THE RELEASE OF JEREMIAH

#### IV. THE MESSAGE TO EBED-MELECH

### **I. THE COLLAPSE OF JERUSALEM (39:1-3).**

1. The collapse of Jerusalem is described in greater detail in chapter 52 (the last chapter of Jeremiah); II Kings 25; and II Chronicles 36.
2. The Babylonian army besieged the city for eighteen months, until they finally broke down the walls and entered in (39:1, 2).
3. Referring to the recorded date of the collapse of the city, G. Campbell Morgan said, "We in our security need to be reminded that for us also there may come the eleventh year, and the fourth month, and the tenth day of the month, when God will hurl us from our place of privilege, as He surely will, unless we are true to Him" (*Studies in the Prophecies of Jeremiah*).
4. Nebuchadnezzar was not present in person when Jerusalem fell, but his chief princes sat at the middle gate to direct the troops (39:3).

5. Sitting at the gate of the city signified their success in overthrowing the city (39:3).
6. In his commentary on the book of Jeremiah, H.A. Ironside refers to these princes, and points out that two princes bear the same name "Nergalsharezer."
7. It is a title signifying they were priests of the Babylonish mysteries. Ironside says the title is similar to the Roman "Pontifex Maximus," one of the pope's titles (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).

## II. THE CAPTURE OF KING ZEDEKIAH

1. In chapters 37 and 38, we saw a vivid contrast between the prophet Jeremiah and King Zedekiah. We see it again here in chapter 39.
2. Though Jeremiah repeatedly told the king that it would be foolish to try and escape, King Zedekiah and his family and the members of the royal court fled when they saw that the princes of Babylon had taken Jerusalem (39:4).
3. But King Zedekiah was overtaken by the Chaldeans' army in the plains of Jericho. From there Zedekiah was brought to the military base of King Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah (39:5).
4. King Zedekiah faced the judgment of King Nebuchadnezzar (39:5b), but he also faced the judgment of God.
5. Referring to the duplicity of King Zedekiah, specifically the fact that he broke the covenant he had made with Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel 17:18 and 19 says, "He shall not escape. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head" (cf. Ezek. 12:12, 13).
6. The very last thing King Zedekiah saw before his eyes were put out by King Nebuchadnezzar was the execution of his sons and all the nobles of Judah (Jer. 39:6, 7).
7. If King Zedekiah would have done what Jeremiah had told him to do his sons would not have died, and Jerusalem would not have been destroyed (cf. 38:17, 18).
8. But his sons were slain before his eyes. And Jerusalem was burned to the ground.
9. And then Zedekiah's eyes were put out. Then he was bound with chains and carried away to Babylon (39:6, 7).

10. Jeremiah 52:11 says, "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."
11. There were three deportations to Babylon. During the first deportation, King Jehoiachin had been taken to Babylon, along with his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers. According to II Kings 24:12 this took place during the eighth year of his reign.
12. Eleven years later, King Zedekiah had his eyes put out and was taken as a prisoner to Babylon. This is described here in chapter 39.
13. The final and last deportation took place five years later. Only a small remnant remained behind (cf. 52:28-30).

### **III. THE RELEASE OF JEREMIAH**

1. King Nebuchadnezzar put the captain of the guard, Nebuzar-adan, in charge, and told him to take good care of Jeremiah (39:11, 12). Once again, we see a contrast between godly and faithful Jeremiah, and ungodly and treacherous Zedekiah.
2. Back in Jeremiah 1:8, and again in Jeremiah 15:20 and 21, the LORD promised Jeremiah that he would be delivered from the hand of the wicked.
3. King Zedekiah was promised safety on the condition that he obey the LORD. Since he refused to obey the LORD, he had to suffer the consequences. Even the heathen captain Nebuzar-adan recognized all of this (cf. 40:1-5).
4. Jeremiah was sent to Gedaliah, where he was free to dwell among the people (39:13, 14). Jeremiah 40:1-5 says Jeremiah was brought to Ramah, bound in chains, and then sent back to Gedaliah.
5. Apparently the original orders were for him to go directly from the court of the prison to Gedaliah. He was free to dwell among the people (39:14b), and due to some mix-up he was brought with the prisoners to Ramah.
6. This confusion occurred during the mass deportation of the people.
7. Once the mistake was discovered, Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, gave Jeremiah a choice to go wherever he wanted (40:4, 5).
8. This Gedaliah was not the same Gedaliah who wanted to kill Jeremiah (38:1). That Gedaliah is called, "Gedaliah the son of Pashur" (38:1). This other Gedaliah is called, "Gedaliah the son of Ahikam" (39:14; 40:5).

9. This Gedaliah became the governor of Judah during the time of the Babylonian captivity (cf. 40:7).

#### **IV. THE MESSAGE TO EBED-MELECH**

1. Ebed-melech helped Jeremiah when the prophet was in the dungeon, sinking in the mire (38:6-10).
2. We see here in chapter 39 that Ebed-melech was rewarded for his good deed. Furthermore, the LORD commended Ebed-melech for his faith (39:15-18).
3. Psalm 41:1 and 2 says, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies."

#### **CONCLUSION:**

I will conclude with these words from H.A. Ironside:

During this long period, how terrible the suffering of the inhabitants had been! Yet, in it all, there was callousness of conscience and hardness of heart, coupled with a complaisant self righteousness most abhorrent in the eyes of the Lord. Trouble does not result in repentance, unless the soul sees in it the hand of God in government. Even in the awful days of the last great tribulation, when men shall be scorched with great heat, they will blaspheme the name of God and repent not to give Him glory; and when the kingdom of the beast (the Satan-inspired ruler of the ten kingdoms in that day) shall be full of darkness, they will gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven, repenting not of their deeds (Revelation 16:9, 11).

Even on earth, where the Holy Spirit pleads with men, suffering does not always result in men's turning to the Lord in confession and contrition of soul; neither will it when time has ceased to be, and the Spirit has ceased His striving. In the case of the men of Judah and Jerusalem, the last act of the fearful tragedy found them as hard and unresponsive as ever.

*(Jeremiah and Lamentations)*