

JEREMIAH 52

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

History is the best commentary upon prophecy. Therefore, for the better understanding of Jeremiah's prophecies which related to the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of the kingdom of Judah, we are here furnished with an account of that sad event. The details here are much the same as those which we have read in 2 Kings 24 and 25; but the matter is repeated here, in order to set the stage for the Book of Lamentations, which follows next. We ought to consider the solemn subject of which these particular passages both speak; for notwithstanding the Lord's love for His people, He will not leave them without chastisement when they turn away from Him in rebellion. Therefore, let us not be high-minded, lest the same fate happen to us as well. How blessed it is to see that our safety and security depends on Jesus alone!

This version of the narrative of Jerusalem's downfall begins no earlier than the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah, although Nebuchadnezzar had already taken some of the people into captivity on two separate occasions – one in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim (605 BC), and the other during the reign of Jeconiah (597 BC). God was justly displeased with Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, and His anger against them had risen to such a degree that He had determined to cast them out from His favorable, gracious presence. And so He caused them to be expelled from that good land, which had such tokens of His presence in Providential bounty; and from that holy city and Temple, which had such tokens of His presence in Covenant-grace and love. But we must remember that none are cast out from God's gracious presence, except for those who have first thrown themselves out of it by their obstinate persistence in sin.

King Zedekiah's general character is that he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but the specific evil deed which hastened this destruction was his treacherous rebellion against the king of Babylon. So the Lord eventually allowed the Babylonian army to gain control of Jerusalem, after an eighteen-month-long siege. We cannot imagine what a sad time it was with Jerusalem, during this time that it was besieged. But that which disabled them from holding out against the invaders any longer, and yet could not induce them to humble themselves and surrender, was the famine in the city. The king and his mighty men endeavored to flee out of the city by night; but he was overtaken by the Babylonian pursuers in the plains of Jericho, and all his men were scattered from him. He was immediately treated as a rebel by the king of Babylon, who passed judgment

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *The capture of the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians – verses 1-7*
- ❖ *The fate of Zedekiah, his sons, and the high-ranking officials – verses 8-11, 24-27*
- ❖ *The Babylonians destroy the city and carry away all the plunder – verses 12-23*
- ❖ *A summary of those who were taken as captives to Babylon – verses 28-30*
- ❖ *Jehoiachin's advancement after 37 years in Babylonian prison – verses 31-34*

upon him. He refused to humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet; therefore, God humbled him at the hands of this heathen king. His sons and princes were slain before his eyes; and then his eyes were put out, he was bound in chains, and carried in triumph to Babylon, where he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment and misery. Jeremiah had often told Zedekiah what his obstinate rebellion against the Lord would come to, but he would not take the warning when he might have prevented it.

In verses 12-23, we have an account of the woeful havoc that was made by the Babylonian army about a month after the city was taken, under the command of Nebuzaradan, the general of the army. He laid the Temple in ashes, having first plundered it of anything and everything that was



valuable. He burned down the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. He broke down all the walls of Jerusalem, in order to take revenge upon them for standing in the way of his army so long. Thus this defended city was made a ruin (Isa. 25:2). Nebuzaradan also carried away many of the people into captivity, although he left the poor people of the countryside behind, so that they could be vinedressers and farmers.

This historical narrative closes by relating the gracious revival of favor that Judah's former King Jehoiachin enjoyed, around 560 BC – after 37 years in prison in Babylon. When Nebuchadnezzar was dead, his son showed kindness to Jehoiachin. Hereby we may learn that the world in which we live is a changing world; and although the night of affliction may sometimes be very long, yet we must not despair of the day dawning at last! Jehoiachin was a prisoner for 37 years, since he was 18 years old; and surely liberation was doubly welcome to him after such a long imprisonment. Let those whose afflictions have been lengthened encourage themselves with this example! While there is life, there is still hope. Although we may suffer now, we shall not suffer always. God can cause His people to find favor even in the eyes of those who oppress them; He is able to unaccountably turn their hearts to pity them, according to His Word in Psalm 106:46: "He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives." He can make those who have spoken roughly to speak kindly; and He can make those men feed His people, who have previously fed upon them. Therefore, those who are discouraged and oppressed will find that it is not in vain to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord!

Lord, we praise You for the gracious manifestations of Yourself which You have revealed to us as we have studied the writings of Jeremiah, for therein You are graciously represented to us as patient, longsuffering, and merciful! Amen.