

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

2 KINGS 22-25

With Solomon's son, Rehoboam, the Hebrew kingdom split... The northern ten tribes formed the nation, **Israel**... the southern two tribes took the name of the prominent tribe, **Judah**. The period of the Divided Kingdom lasted 350 years.

During this time, *20 kings ruled over Judah*. Only 8 were righteous.

Israel fared worse - *19 kings reined* and they all were *skunks*... 19 idolaters.

And God's judgment came upon Israel about 130 years before it fell upon Judah. God was patient with both kingdoms, but God's patience has limits. Eventually sin must be judged. Judgment day occurs for all men!

For Israel judgment came at the hands of the Assyrians. In 722 BC, Israel's capitol of Samaria was sacked, and the northern 10 tribes were scattered.

We studied last week how God delivered King Hezekiah and Judah from Assyria... For Judah, God's instrument of judgment will be Babylon.

And Judah first felt their fury in 605 BC. The Babylonians took the Jews captive to Babylon. They were deported in three waves – 605, 597, 586 BC. The final blow came in the summer of 586 - Jerusalem was sacked, and the temple destroyed.

Tonight, we're going to look at the final half-century - and last five kings - of the southern kingdom of Judah. You'll leave an hour older and 55 years wiser.

Chapters 22-23 describe the reign of one of Judah's best kings, Josiah.

“Josiah was 8 years old when he became king, and he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath.”

Who helped Josiah in his early years we're not told.

It may've been Hilkiyah the priest – father of one of Josiah's contemporaries, Jeremiah. Josiah and Jeremiah may've been buddies and grew up together.

“And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.” There was no wobble to his walk. He didn't toy with temptation. He was fixed on God's best.

2 Chronicles 34:2 reads, “In the 8th year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David...” Sixteen years-old was his turning point. *My son is about to turn 16...* Josiah got serious about following God at 16...

Oh what heartaches can be avoided by giving God your whole heart at a young age? Wait until your 30 to follow God - and you've wasted your best years and given God just half a life... Start at 16 and God has a whole life to use.

A monumental event took place in Josiah's 18th year. It shaped his life forever.

“Now it came to pass, in the 18th year of King Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah, the son

of Meshullam, to the house of the LORD, saying: "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. And let them deliver it into the hand of those doing the work, who are the overseers in the house of the LORD; let them give it to those who are in the house of the LORD doing the work, to repair the damages of the house - to carpenters and builders and masons - and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. However there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand, because they deal faithfully."

The Temple was under renovation. Josiah was trying to fumigate the place – get rid of the evil stench and stains caused by the idols of King Manasseh.

Josiah sent a delegation to the High Priest Hilkiah to check on the work...

“Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." This was incredible discovery.

Manasseh had ordered the destruction of the Law. There were priests who had never read – or even seen the Law of God. Some folks feared it was lost forever.

But during the repairs on the Temple – there in a dark, cobwebbed corner – under a mound of debris – Hilkiah found a copy of the sacred Scriptures.

It reminds me of Jesus' words in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." The Bible is indestructible.

Over and over through the centuries God has assured the survival of His Word.

And Manasseh was not the only heretical ruler who's tried to stamp it out.

In 303 AD the Roman Emperor, Diocletian, a fierce opponent of Christianity ordered the destruction of all Bibles. Not only did his decree prove unsuccessful, but his successor, Constantine, a convert to Christianity, used money collected during the reign of Diocletian to commission 50 new copies of the Scriptures.

It's been said, "The Bible is an anvil that has broken many hammers."

God not only oversaw the Bible's *inspiration*, but also its *preservation*.

Jeremiah also mentions the rediscovery of the Law... and describes its impact on him personally. In Jeremiah 15:16 the prophet says to the Lord, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart..." When a starving soul starts to feed on Scripture – joy is always the result.

When Martin Luther picked up his Bible in Erfurt, Germany and began to read it for himself the light of God ignited a fire in his heart that eventually burned across Europe. Spiritual revival always begins with the rediscovery of God's Word.

“And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the LORD.”

Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king.” Imagine, for the first time the king learns of God’s will for His people. Josiah must’ve hung on every word.

Verse 11 “Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes.” For the first time Josiah realized how far short of God’s Law the people were living – and how near they were to judgment.

The light of God’s Word had uncovered the nation’s sin.

“Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.”

So Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe... (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.)

As a side note, it’s always interesting to notice the popularity of names - what names are hot, and what names are not...

The most popular names for babies in America in 2006 were *Jacob* for a boy – *Emily* for a girl... In 1986 it was *Michael and Jessica*... In 1966, *Michael and Lisa*... In 1946 it was *James and Mary*... In 1926 it was *Robert and Mary*... And in 1906 it was *John and Mary*...

Apparently, in Judah in 620 BC animal names were in fashion. “**Shaphan**” means “**rock badger**” – “**Achbor**” means “**mouse**” – “**Huldah**” means “**weasel**”.

“**And they spoke with her**” (Huldah the weasel). And just as God does every Sunday at CC Stone Mountain, God speaks through the mouth of a weasel...

“**Then she said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants - all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read - because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.'"**

"But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Concerning the words which you have heard - because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD.

Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place." So they brought word to the king." In other words, the nation has gone too far to be spared God's judgment – the warnings will come to pass.

But because King Josiah was humble and tender toward God – and repented of his own sin and the sin of the nation – judgment will not come in his day.

In chapter 23 Josiah follows through on his repentance. *He is not just a hearer of the Word, but a doer also.* He institutes sweeping reforms throughout Judah...

"Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. The king went up to the house of the LORD with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem - the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD."

The first step Josiah takes is to arrange a public reading of the Scriptures.

And notice the king himself reads God's Law. From Genesis to Deuteronomy, Josiah read the words of God to the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

Hey, Josiah knew firsthand the power of God's Word. When it was initially read to him it melted his heart, brought him to his knees, and prompted him to action.

Now he unleashes the lion of God's Word on the people of Judah...

“Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant.”

No other Hebrew king instituted as far-reaching reforms as did Josiah.

Notice the four steps to revival... First, is a **rediscovery** of God's Word. Second, is **repentance**. Third, is **recommitment**. Fourth is a **reformation**.

“Reformation is the reordering of society in light of the truth of Scripture.”

And the first place Josiah chooses to institute his reforms is in the Temple.

It reminds me of 1 Peter 4:17, “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God...” Before we clean up society we need to purify the church.

Verse 4, “And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.” Any trace of the idolatry that had infected Judah was incinerated.

“Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven.” Josiah not only got rid of *sinful things*, but *sinful people*. If all you get rid of is the *practice* - and not the *perpetrator*, eventually the wicked person will restart the wickedness. Josiah fired the priests.

“And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people.

Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image.”

Judah had worshipped fertility goddesses. Their priests raised funds through sacred prostitution. These “ritual booths” had turned the Temple into a brothel.

“And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the gates which were at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were to the left of the city gate.

Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren.” This was the first

sign that Josiah's reforms didn't produce the revival he'd wanted.

God hated the high places because they took people away from the Temple.

These priests accepted the destruction of their high places, but didn't grasp God's intent. They never came to the Temple to worship God in spirit and truth.

“And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech.”

The Valley of Hinnom is west of the Old City of Jerusalem. Today, it's a lush green valley with an outdoor theater. The city hosts over 100 concerts a year.

In Josiah's day the stench of human flesh rose from the valley. It's where the worshippers of Molech sacrificed infants to their evil idol. Josiah shut it down. The word **“Topheth”** comes from *“toph”* or **“drum”** – and was a reference to the drums the priests of Molech played to drown out the sounds of the screaming children.

Verse 11 **“Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the officer who was in the court; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.”** The Egyptians envisioned the sun riding through the sky in a chariot drawn by horses. Manassah adopted the Egyptian worship of Ra, the sun god.

“The altars that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars

which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron.” In a holy rage Josiah pulverized these altars to dust.

“Then the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon.” Solomon sinned in his later years by marrying pagan wives and tolerating their idolatry.

Tragically, these idols had been allowed to stand east of Jerusalem - on the southern end of the Mount of Olives - for 350 years. The hill became known as “The Mount of Corruption”. Josiah was the only king to tear down these idols.

“And he broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images, and filled their places with the bones of men.” Human bones desecrated an idol.

“Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder, and burned the wooden image.” Josiah’s reforms reach to the northern kingdom...

His reformation went on the road... He found the altar of the golden calf Jeroboam had erected in Bethel – and oversaw its complete annihilation.

“As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain.

And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.” Burning bones on an altar was a universal act of desecration. It was Josiah’s way of blotting out the sacredness of the sight.

Notice, verse 16 references a prophecy. In 1 Kings 13:2, 300 years earlier, a nameless prophet pronounced judgment on the evils of Jeroboam, the first king of Israel. He said, “Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.' ”

Here’s an amazing validation of the truthfulness of Scripture - 300 years before the fact - Josiah’s actions were foretold... he was even mentioned by name.

Verse 17 “Then he said, "What gravestone is this that I see?" So the men of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel."

And he said, "Let him alone; let no one move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.

Now Josiah also took away all the shrines of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel

had made to provoke the LORD to anger; and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel.

He executed all the priests of the high places who were there, on the altars, and burned men's bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem.”

In verse 21 Josiah reinstates the Passover. “Then the king commanded all the people, saying, “Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.” Such a Passover had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah.” This shows how far the Hebrews had strayed from the Law.

Not since the days of the Judges – prior to 1060 BC – had the Passover been observed by the Hebrews. That’s over 400 years of neglect and disobedience.

“But in the 18th year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the LORD in Jerusalem.” What a holy night it must’ve been! God was pleased with His people.

“Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists...”

He banished the palm readers, and astrologers, and occultists, and the new age channelers. Josiah cracked the crystal balls and burned the Tarot cards.

He also eliminated “The household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the

house of the LORD.” King Josiah was one of the great, unsung heroes of the Bible.

Verse 25 “Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.” Josiah never killed a lion, slew a giant, made an ax-head float, caused it to rain, or killed a Philistine. Yet Josiah fought spiritual wickedness in high places, and he loved God with everything he had!

“Nevertheless the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him.” Even the good Josiah accomplished couldn’t override the evil Manasseh had done. Judah would still be judged.

“And the LORD said, "I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.' ”

It’s interesting, just four years after Josiah dies the Babylonians begin to oppress Judah. God’s judgment comes. We’ll see that despite Josiah’s reformation the people never turned from their wickedness.

From Josiah’s life we learn an important lesson – there’s a difference between *revival* and *reformation*. Just because a society experiences an outward, political **reformation** doesn’t mean folks have been inwardly and spiritually **revived**.

Josiah is proof. God transformed Josiah - and he made righteous changes. But real revival can't be legislated. It rises from bottom up, not top down. You can write new laws all day, but until God writes His law on our hearts nothing really changes.

There's a time and place for Christians to be politically active – but don't be deluded into thinking revival can come through political means. Revival takes a work of God. The change that occurred in Josiah – never got to the people.

“Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And we're told how he dies...

At the time the world was headed for a strategic, climatic battle.

It was 609 BC, and the Babylonians and Medes were threatening the Assyrian empire. The two sides squared off at the town of Carchemesh on the Euphrates.

Egypt was headed north to fight with the Assyrians. Josiah wanted to court the favor of Babylon by going out to stop Egypt. Verse 29 tells us what happened...

“In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him.” Josiah fell on the world's most famous battlefield, the Valley of Megiddo - where the final battle will be staged.

“Then his servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his

own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.” Here’s the moral of the story – don’t jump in on another guy’s fight.

Josiah died in 609 BC. The Battle of Carchemish was decided in 605. It was at Carchemish the mantle passed. Assyria was defeated and Babylon became the world’s superpower. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, dominated the world.

Needless to say, Pharaoh Necho wasn’t in a happy mood on his way back to Egypt – and he didn’t like Jehoahaz – so when he passes through Judah he has King Jehoahaz imprisoned, and places his brother, Jehoiakim, on the throne.

Verse 31 “Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king, and he reigned 3 months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. Now Pharaoh Necho put him in prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold. Then Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim.

And Pharaoh took Jehoahaz and went to Egypt, and he died there.”

Jehoiakim will serve as a vassal to Egypt – a yes-man to Pharaoh.

“So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from every one according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Necho.” It was blackmail. Jehoiakim taxed Judah to buy off Egypt.

Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebudah the daughter of Pedaiiah of Rumah.

And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.” Jehoiakim became Jeremiah’s most bitter enemy. In Jeremiah 36, the king takes a knife and cuts up God’s Word that Jeremiah sent him. He throws it in the fireplace. The evil dude even tried to have Jeremiah arrested and murdered.

As I mentioned, the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians at Carchemish in 605 BC. And fresh off the heels of victory they want to flex their muscle so their army moves south, against the nation of Judah. *Jehoiakim surrenders without a fight.*

Understand the Babylonians had a different policy toward conquered people than did the Assyrians. The Assyrians scattered their defeated foes – while the Babylonians captured them and took them back to Babylon to live in exile.

In 605 BC Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were among those taken to Babylon. They were made servants in the court of Nebuchadnezzar.

Warren Wiersbe writes, “If the Jews wanted to live *like* the idolators, let them live *with* the idolators.” Judah will remain in

exile in Babylon for 70 years before God allows them to return. It will take a *captivity* to cure them of *idolatry*.

Chapter 24 begins, “In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for 3 years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.”

Nebuchadnezzar’s father died, so he returned to Babylon. King Jehoiakim decided in Nebuchadnezzar’s absence to rebel against him.

This was against wise counsel. Jeremiah warned the Jews to surrender to the Babylonians. They were God’s instrument of judgment and to surrender to their army was to submit to God. This is why the Jews accused Jeremiah of treason.

“And the LORD sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon (a coalition formed by the Babylonians); He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken by His servants the prophets.

Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD would not pardon.” Again the flashpoint for God’s fury and wrath was the sins of the evil king, Manasseh.

Verse 5 “Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the

kings of Judah? So Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.

And the king of Egypt did not come out of his land anymore, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook of Egypt to the River Euphrates.” In 601 BC Egypt made one last attempt at stopping the Babylonian army. It failed. Egypt faded while Babylon continued to gain strength.

“Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem 3 months. His mother's name was Nehushta (named after the bronze serpent) the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.” Jeremiah called him, “*Coniah*”.

Verse 10 “At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.” This was in 597 BC.

“And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, as his servants were besieging it. Then Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his princes, and his officers went out to the king of Babylon; and the king of Babylon, in the eighth year of his reign, took him prisoner. And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.” The Babylonians recalled the treasures they'd been shown by Hezekiah, and made off with Judah's wealth.

Notice too they took Temple treasures. Daniel 5 recounts a party in Babylon years later when one of Nebuchadnezzar's successors, Belshazzar, is hosting a drunken orgy. He brings out the stolen treasures - holy vessels to serve his wine.

Belshazzar did so to mock the God of Judah. And at that moment handwriting appeared on the wall. God had judged Babylon, and that very night the Persians dammed up the Euphrates and invaded the city from under the walls of Babylon.

“Also (Nebuchadnezzar) carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, 10,000 captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths.” Among these exiles, the prophet Ezekiel was also taken to Babel.

“None remained except the poorest people of the land.”

“And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. All the valiant men, 7000, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all who were strong and fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.” Babylon gutted Judah of its wealth, skill, and leadership.

“Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king, and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem.” He'd be the last of Judah's kings. **“His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.**

He also did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.” Zedekiah was the king that had the prophet Jeremiah flogged and tortured. He placed Jeremiah in the stocks – then threw him into the miry pit to die.

Verse 20 “For because of the anger of the LORD this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, that He finally cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.” And this is when Nebuchadnezzar says enough is enough. He launches his third and final assault on Jerusalem.

Chapter 25 describes the ominous event - the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

“Now it came to pass in the 9th year of his reign, in the 10th month, on the 10th day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around. So the city was besieged until the 11th year of King Zedekiah.

By the 9th day of the 4th month the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.” The city of Jerusalem was so well fortified it took Nebuchadnezzar 1½ years to breach the walls. During the siege the conditions inside the city were desperate. Lamentations 2:20 recalls the rampant starvation. Women considered eating their own babies to survive.

“Then the city wall was broken through...” According to Ezekiel 24, among the exiles in Babylon, Ezekiel’s wife died the same day Jerusalem fell to Babylon.

It was God’s way of illustrating the death of his beloved bride.

“And all the men of war fled at night by way of the gate between two walls, which was by the king’s garden, even though the Chaldeans were still encamped all around against the city. And the king went by way of the plain.”

Everyone tried to escape, but the Babylonians had Jerusalem surrounded. “The army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his army was scattered from him. So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they pronounced judgment on him.”

Verse 7 recounts the awful punishment the Babylonians brought upon King Zedekiah. “Then they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon.” Zedekiah’s last sight etched on his memory was the death of his sons – a brutal torture.

Jeremiah 32:4 predicted that Zedekiah would see the king of Babylon eye to eye. Ezekiel 12:13 predicted Zedekiah would come to Babylon, but never see it.

On the surface the two prophecies seem contradictory. But Zedekiah saw Nebuchadnezzar at his field headquarters in Riblah – he was judged and his eyes were plucked out – so when he arrived in Babylon he was blind.

“And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month (which was the 19th year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.” A month after the invasion, the city has now been searched and secured. Nebuzaradan enters to oversee the dismantling of the city. Two days later he burns down the Temple.

“He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire. And all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls of Jerusalem all around.” Dismantling walls insured the city would be uninhabited.

Tradition tells us the Temple was destroyed on the 9th day of the 5th month.

One of the great ironies of history is that when the Romans invade Jerusalem in 70 AD, they destroy the temple on the very same day as the Babylonians did.

As you can imagine, the 9th day of the 5th month, or *Tisha 'B Av*, as the Jews call it, has become an infamous day on the Hebrew calendar. For the first 9 days of the month of Av the Jews neither eat meat nor bathe. They mourn the tragic event that shaped so much of their history. Then on *Tisha 'B Av* they read Jeremiah's book of Lamentation and weep over their loss.

Tish' B Av – or the 9th of Av – is a day of national mourning.

“Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive the rest of the people who remained in the city and the defectors who had deserted to the king of Babylon, with the rest of the multitude. But the captain of the guard left some of the poor of the land as vinedressers and farmers.

Verses 13-17 list some of the Temple treasures taken by the Babylonians.

Verses 18-19 list some of the Temple officials taken by the Babylonians.

Verses 20, “So Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, took these and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. Then the king of Babylon struck them and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive from its own land.” These leaders were executed by Nebuchadnezzar.

“Then he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, governor over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left.” The military captians come to Mizpah to pledge their support.

Verse 24, “And Gedaliah took an oath before them and their men, and said to them, “Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.”

But it happened in the 7th month that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with 10 men and struck and killed Gedaliah, the Jews, as well as the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah.

And all the people, small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans (or Babylonians.)” The Jews were afraid the Babylonians would retaliate for assassinating their governor.

But what a sad outcome for the Hebrews - after 900 years of history they end up right back where they started - in Egypt. Israel failed to follow the Lord.

Verse 27 “Now it came to pass in the 37th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the 12th month, on the 27th day of the month, that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon.” Jewish tradition tells us that during the reign of his father, Nebuchadnezzar, Prince Evil-Merodach got into trouble and ended up in prison where he became friends with Jeconiah.

After his release he remembered his friend, and freed him from prison.

“So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life... As for his provisions, there was a regular ration given him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life.”

Which gives us a glimpse of what happened to many of the Jews in Babylon – they rose to positions of prominence. Daniel was a classic example. He was exalted to a high rank among both the Babylonians and the Persians.

Let me close our study of the kings of Israel and Judah with a poem by Lois Cheney. It's entitled, "*God is no fool*"... and I think it will speak for itself...

They say that God has infinite patience, and that is a great comfort.

They say God is always there, and that is a deep satisfaction.

They say that God will always take you back, and I get lazy in that certitude.

They say that God never gives up, and I count on that.

They say you can go away for years and years, and He'll be there, waiting, when you come back. They say you can make mistake after mistake, and God will always forgive and forget. They say lots of things, people who never read the Old Testament. There comes a time, a definite, for sure time, when God turns around.

I don't believe God shed His skin when Christ brought the New Testament. Christ showed us a new side of God, and it is truly wonderful. But He didn't change God. God remains forever and ever, and that God is no fool.