

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

2 CHRONICLES 33-36

The name “**Manasseh**” means “**one who causes to forget**” – and this was the evil king’s legacy... *His idolatry caused the people of Judah to forget their God.*

The period from Solomon to Manasseh covered 234 years. Manasseh was the 14th ruler of the divided kingdom of Judah. Six more kings and 57 years will come after him. *Manasseh was the beginning of the end for the southern kingdom.*

When the Babylonians conquered Judah – *the nation is judged, Jerusalem is sacked, the Temple is destroyed* – God provides His people an explanation...

In Jeremiah 15:4 God says of the Jews, “**I will hand them over to trouble, to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.**” God identified Manasseh as the painful cause. Of Judah’s 20 kings – all but 8 were evil – and none were more so than Manasseh.

Verse 1, “**Manasseh was 12 years old when he became king, and he reigned 55 years in Jerusalem.**” No king was as wicked as Manasseh – and sadly, no king reigned longer. He ruled Judah from 697-643 – 5½ decades of depravity.

CH Surgeon said of Manasseh, “**David’s blood was in his veins, but David’s ways were not in his heart. He was a wild, degenerate shoot of a noble vine.**”

Verse 2 “He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.” He was into both idolatry and astrology.

“He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem shall My name be forever.” Manasseh brought his idols into the Temple. A *heretic* strays from the truth. A *blasphemer* attacks the truth. Manasseh did both.

“And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.” The Temple went from *consecration* to *constellation*. No longer was the Creator worshipped, but His creation. Astrology corrupted the house of God.

“Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (this was a reference to child sacrifices offered to the idol, Molech);

“He practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists.” Manasseh was a warlock – a Jewish Harry Potter.

“He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.”

And the beat goes on, verse 7, “He even set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, “In this

house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; and I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers - only if they are careful to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses."

Obviously, Manasseh broke that sacred trust God had established with David and Solomon. He scorned God's promise.

"So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel..."

2 Kings 21:16 adds to Manasseh's list of sins, "Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another..." Jewish tradition has it that Manasseh was the king who had Isaiah sawn in two.

"And the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen." Perhaps God spoke to Manasseh through Isaiah, *and king tried to cut him short.*

"Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon." The Assyrians flexed their muscle in the region arrested the Judean king. Manasseh was taken into exile in chains.

Notice, we're told the king of Assyria took Manasseh "with hooks." He put a hook in the conquered king's nose and led him along like he would an animal.

The other day I was at the store, where I saw a guy strolling through the aisles with a nose ring. I almost asked, “*how do you pick your nose while wearing one of those?*” I didn’t, but he got me thinking about Manasseh. When he was arrested his enemies put a hook in his nose, chains on his wrists, and took him prisoner.

Verse 12 is one of the most amazing verses in the Bible. “Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom.

Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.”

I like this comment on the plight of Manasseh, “God sent him to the dungeon to repent; as he did...Jonah into the whale’s belly to pray. Adversity has whipped many a soul to heaven, which otherwise prosperity had coached to hell.”

King Manasseh is to the Old Testament what *Saul of Tarsus* is to the New Testament. He was a vile and vicious enemy of God’s people converted in the midstream of his wickedness. Both men experienced miraculous conversions.

And both examples give us hope. If God can save a Manasseh He can save you and me. No one is beyond His reach – no matter how heinous their crimes.

Ted Bundy, the serial killer – and Jeffrey Dahmer the cannibal – both claimed to come to Jesus at the end of their lives. Will we see them in heaven? Why not?

If Manasseh repented and God forgave him – God can forgive anyone. Hey, the reason it's called “[amazing grace](#)” is because of people like Manasseh.

“After this he built a wall outside the City of David on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate; and it enclosed Ophel, and he raised it to a very great height.” He worked on the southwest wall of Jerusalem.

“Then he put military captains in all the fortified cities of Judah. He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem; and he cast them out of the city. He also repaired the altar of the LORD, sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.” Here's a sign of true repentance - Manasseh tried to repair the damage he'd done and lead the people to God.

“Nevertheless the people still sacrificed on the high places, but only to the LORD their God.” Manasseh is the classic example of someone whose sins are forgiven – but though he tries he can't erase his sin's consequences.

The question is never “[Can God forgive me?](#)” *Of course He can.* But there's no guarantee your repentance will erase your evil influence on your son or daughter.

Manasseh repented, but the evil shadow he'd cast over the nation remained.

Verse 18 “Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel.

Also his prayer and how God received his entreaty, and all his sin and trespass, and the sites where he built high places and set up wooden images and carved images, before he was humbled, indeed they are written among the sayings of Hozai. So Manasseh rested with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house. Then his son Amon reigned in his place.

Verse 21 “Amon was 22 years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem.” His father reigned 55 years. Amon ruled a mere 24 months.

“But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done; for Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and served them. And he did not humble himself before the LORD, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.” Amon had been far more influenced by his father’s *rebellion* than by his *repentance*.

“Then his servants conspired against him, and killed him in his own house.”

Amon was so wicked his servants refused to stand by and watch him plunge the nation into another 5 decades of depravity so they plotted his assassination.

“But the people of the land executed all those who had conspired against King Amon. Then the people of the land made his son Josiah king in his place.”

Chapter 34, “Josiah was 8 years old when he became king, and he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”

And I love verse 3, “For in the 8th year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David...” Notice the phrase, “while he was still young”. Josiah’s 8th year would make him 16 years old – the same age a lot of adolescent males start bucking authority, and sowing some wild oats.

While other 16 year olds rebelled – Josiah decided to get serious with God.

According to the MacNiel / Lehrer’s *Generation Next Project*, a group of 18-25 year olds were asked to name their number one goal in life... **81%** said, “be rich” - **51%** said, “be famous” - **30%** said, “help people in need” - **22%** said, “become a leader in my community” - and only **10%** said, “Become more spiritual.”

Obviously, a high percentage of today’s youth are in for a real letdown.

Once, an evangelist came home after a crusade. His wife asked how it went.

He answered, “We had 2½ salvations.” She remarked, “That’s great - 2 adults and 1 young person.” He corrected her, “No, 2 young people and 1 adult... The young people have a lifetime to live for God. The adult has wasted half his life.”

Young people – teenagers - why throw away your best years? Why waste half your short time here on earth with empty, selfish, temporal pursuits?

While you’re still young serve the Lord. Invest your whole life in the pursuit of God. Not only will you have longer to chalk up eternal rewards - you’ll also save yourself some scars. Be a Josiah, and start seeking God *while you’re still young!*

“And in the 12th year (Josiah) began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.

They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.” He desecrated the idols.

“He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. And so he did in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali and all around, with axes. When he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the

land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.” Massive reforms were ordered by this godly king, Josiah.

But the next big turning point in his life came during the Temple renovations.

After 55 years of Manasseh’s idolatry, depravity, and neglect of the Temple - major repairs needed to be done on the house of the Lord. A serious clean-up was in order. And while repairs were underway a vital discovery occurred...

Verse 8, “Now in the 18th year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.

When they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites who kept the doors had gathered from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, from all the remnant of Israel, from all Judah and Benjamin, and which they had brought back to Jerusalem.”

The next few verses tell us they paid faithful construction workers with the offering. And the author lists the overseers and officers and gatekeepers.

Verse 14 “Now when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses.” Under the reign of Manasseh all the copies of Scripture were either abandoned or destroyed. People in the know feared God’s

Word had been lost forever. But 20 years later, in the midst of these Temple repairs someone – a carpenter, or stone mason, or priest - finds a scroll in a back corner of the Temple.

It's a long, lost copy of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Verse 15 “Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. So Shaphan carried the book to the king...”

And he brought a report “saying, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing. And they have gathered the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers and the workmen.”

Verse 18 “Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." He drops the bombshell. “And Shaphan read it before the king.”

Understand Josiah was a good king who while he was still young sought God's will – now he finds God's Word. What a boon and blessing to his desires.

This discovery also had a profound impact on another man at the time. Some scholars identify Hilkiah the priest as the prophet Jeremiah's father. If so, the old priest hands his son the greatest gift a dad can pass on to a child – God's Word.

And Jeremiah remembers the moment he was handed the Book. He says to God in Jeremiah 15:16, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart...” Like a hungry, starving, man who was handed a box of Kristy Kremes... Jeremiah gobbled up God's

Word.

The Scriptures satisfied a deep-down longing that had never been quenched. It filled him with joy. Jeremiah found the Word of God to be *finger-licking good*.

But the Scriptures had a good, yet opposite effect on Josiah. Verse 19 “Thus it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes.” For the first time the king had read God’s Word and realized how far the people had fallen from God’s standards. He immediately takes action.

“The king commanded Hilkiyah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book." He wants to know if there’s any hope for the nation – they’ve fallen so far short of the Lord’s demands.

“So Hilkiyah and those the king had appointed went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.)” Today the Old City of Jerusalem is still divided into four quadrants – the Jewish, Christian, Armenian, and Muslim.

“And they spoke to (Huldah) to that effect.

Then she answered 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 curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah, 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 will be poured out on this place, and not be quenched.' The nation has passed the point of no returned as Josiah feared.

"But as for 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 God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD.

Surely 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 and its inhabitants." So they brought back word to the king." Sister Huldah's message from God was both good news and bad news.

Judgment would come, but not in the days of King Josiah.

"Then the king sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

And the king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem - the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small. 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.”
...a public reading of Scripture.

“Then the king stood in his place 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 the covenant that were written in this book. And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.” But note the problem, Josiah *“made all who were present... take a stand.”* Righteousness was enforced.

Obedience to God didn't come from the people's hearts. They were *made to take a stand*. Under King Josiah *reforms* occurred, but not *revival*. The king's passion for God never trickled down to the people. They never caught it.

“Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their fathers.” Josiah did his part, but it was too little too late.

In chapter 35 Josiah reinstates the Passover.

For 57 years – under Manasseh and Amon - the Passover had been neglected. “Now Josiah kept a Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the 14th day of the 1st month. And he set the priests in their duties and encouraged them for the service of the house of the LORD.

Verse 3 has fascinating implications, “Then he said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to the LORD: "Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built. It shall no longer be a burden on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and His people Israel.

Apparently, during the Temple desecrations of Manasseh faithful priests had taken the Ark outside of the Temple for protection. Verse 3 seems to imply the Levites held the Ark up on poles, and never sat it down outside the Temple.

Imagine for 50-plus years the Levites serving shifts holding up the Ark.

Verse 4 “Prepare yourselves according to your fathers' houses, according to your divisions, following the written instruction of David king of Israel and the written instruction of Solomon his son. And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brethren the lay people, and according to the division of the father's house of the Levites.

So slaughter the Passover offerings, consecrate yourselves, and prepare them for your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses." He

organizes the priesthood and tells them to prepare for the Passover.

“Then Josiah gave the lay people lambs and young goats from the flock, all for Passover offerings for all who were present, to the number of 30,000, as well as 3000 cattle; these were from the king's possessions.

And his leaders gave willingly to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites.

Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings 2,600 from the flock, and 300 cattle.

Also Conaniah, his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave to the Levites for Passover offerings 5000 from the flock and 500 cattle.” But notice the passion and sacrifice is shown by the leaders – not the people. This was not a grassroots movement of God.

“So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their places, and the Levites in their divisions, according to the king's command. And they slaughtered the Passover offerings; and the priests sprinkled the blood with their hands, while the Levites skinned the animals. Then they removed the burnt offerings that they might give them to the divisions of the fathers' houses of the lay people, to offer to the LORD, as it is written in the Book of Moses. And so they did with the cattle.

Also they roasted the Passover offerings with fire according to the ordinance; but the other holy offerings they boiled in

pots, in caldrons, and in pans, and divided them quickly among all the lay people.

Then afterward they prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the sons of Aaron, were busy in offering burnt offerings and fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron.” The priests had worked hard and needed to be fed.

“And the singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their places, according to the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer.

Also the gatekeepers were at each gate; they did not have to leave their position, because their brethren the Levites prepared portions for them.

So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the Passover and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to the command of King Josiah. And the children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days.

There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the 18th year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was kept.” Josiah’s Passover was the last high point in the history of the nation.

Josiah’s death marked the beginning of the end for the nation Judah.

Verse 20 “After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him.” Hey, Josiah makes a horrible mistake that costs him his life.

At the time, 605 BC, the world was headed for a showdown. On the global scene the Babylonians were threatening the Assyrian empire.

In 612 BC, the Assyrian capitol of Ninevah was overrun by Babylonians. The capitol moved to Harran. In 608 Harran fell and the capitol was moved again to Carchemish. The battle of Carchemish became the last stand for the Assyrians.

The Egyptian king, Pharaoh Necho, was on his way to Carchemish to assist Assyria - when Josiah tried to do Babylon a favor by impeding the Egyptian army as it passed through Judah. His mistake cost Josiah his life.

Verse 21 “But (Pharaoh Necho) sent messengers to him, saying, "What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I have not come against you this day, but against the house with which I have war; for God commanded me to make haste.

Refrain from meddling with God, who is with me, lest He destroy you." Necho understood the God of Israel was at work – arranging the rise and fall of nations.

This was not Josiah’s fight. He should’ve never gotten involved.

“Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself so that he might fight with him, and did not

heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God.” Hey, God had spoken to Josiah through the mouth of a pagan king.

But Josiah fails to listen. “So he came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, “Take me away, for I am severely wounded.” His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they brought him to Jerusalem. So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah.”

The death of Josiah teaches us an important lesson - **don't get involved in someone else's fight.** Josiah died because he stuck his nose where it didn't belong. Let's not make the same mistake. Be careful where *your nose goes*.

Recently, I was asked to mediate a squabble between two churches. I wasn't sure whether I should get involved, so I called a friend and asked for his advice.

He asked me, “*Sandy, do you remember how Josiah died?*” I said, “*Yea, he got involved in someone else's fight...*” I had my answer. I declined to get involved.

We're told more of Judah's mourning for King Josiah... “**And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments.**

Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his goodness, according to what was written in the Law of the LORD, and his deeds from first to last, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.”

Chapter 36 records the final days of the nation Judah. God's judgment comes upon His people in the form of the Babylonian army.

After their victory at Carchemish the Babylonians march south. They attack Judah on 3 occasions. Each time they deport a group of Jews to Babylon.

Verse 1 “Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's place in Jerusalem. Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem.

Now the king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold.” Necho had been soundly defeated at Carchemish. He was not a happy camper as he returned home.

On his way back through Judah he took out his frustrations on Josiah's successor, Jehoahaz. Josiah's son only reigned a whopping 3 months.

“Then the king of Egypt made Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother and carried him off to Egypt.” Jehoahaz couldn't believe the misfortune that had come upon him. He lived the rest of his days *in a state of de-Nile*.

“Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of

the LORD his God.” From now until the end the prophet Jeremiah will be God’s voice to Jehoiakim and Judah’s kings.

The first deportation of Jews occurs in 605 BC. Babylon is fresh off its victory at Carchemish and it sweeps south. The next kingdom to attack is Judah.

“Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against (Jehoiakim), and bound him in bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon.” History tells us the king’s plan was never carried out. Nebuchadnezzar received word his father had died, so he set Jehoiakim free, and rushed back to Babylon to solidify his claim to the throne.

Nebuchadnezzar did though take captive certain members of Judah’s royal court, and brought them back to Babylon. You’ll recognize their names: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego. He also remember the Temple treasures King Hezekiah had foolishly shown the Babylonian spies decades earlier...

“Nebuchadnezzar also carried off some of the articles from the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.”

Keep verse 7 in mind when you read Daniel 5 – the story of the handwriting on the wall. One reason God was so infuriated with the Babylonian king Belshazzar, was that he used these same holy vessels as wine goblets at his drunken orgy.

Belshazzar mocked the God of Israel... God decided to break up his party.

“Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, the abominations which he did, and what was found against him, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.”

“Jehoiachin was 8 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem 3 months and 10 days. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD.”

“At the turn of the year King Nebuchadnezzar summoned him and took him to Babylon, with the costly articles from the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah, Jehoiakim's brother, king over Judah and Jerusalem.

This was the second deportation to Babylonian. It occurred in 597 BC.

Along with King Jehoiachin, or as he's known elsewhere, Jeconiah or Coniah, Nebuchadnezzar also took a Jewish priest named *Ezekiel* captive to Babylon.

Before he leaves, Nebuchadnezzar puts another of Josiah's sons on the throne. He appoints Zedekiah to serve as his vassal or puppet king.

Verse 11, Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king, and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. He did evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD.” Jeremiah warned Zedekiah to surrender to the inevitable. The Babylonian oppression was God's will - His judgment on Judah. To fight it was to oppose God.

But Zedekiah didn't listen. “He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear an oath by God;

but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel.” God’s will was submission.

“Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem.

And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place.” FB Meyer writes these words, “How God yearned over that sinful and rebellious city! Like a man who had a sleepless night of anxiety for his friend or child, and rises with the dawn to send a servant on a message of inquiry, or a message of love. How eager is God for men’s salvation.”

“But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy.” There was no cure for Judah’s rebellion – nothing to avert judgment.

“Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand.”

Zedekiah’s alliance with the Egyptians against Babylon was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Nebuchadnezzar said enough is enough.

“All the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all these he took to Babylon. Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions.” In 586 BC the walls of Jerusalem were breeched - the city was pounded into submission, the Temple burned to the ground, and the remaining Jews were deported. The Babylonians showed no mercy.

“Those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill 70 years.”

It’s interesting, for 70 years the Jews were exiles in Babylon – *but why 70?*

The Law of Moses commanded the Jews to let the land lie dormant every 7th year. This allowed the land to replenish itself of its nutrients. But their greed drove the Jews ignored the Law. For 490 years, or 70 7th years, they refused to obey.

God gave the land its 70 years of rest by removing the people to Babylon.

Ezra closes 2 Chronicles by mentioning the event that ends the Jewish exile.

Verse 22, “Now in the 1st year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be

fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!”

In 536 BC Babylon is conquered by the Medes and Persians. And one of the first proclamations made by the new emperor - the Persian king, Cyrus - was to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem, and rebuild their temple.

Notice too, in verse 23 a pagan king acknowledges of the God of Israel as the source of his victories. Isaiah 44-45 prophesied of Cyrus – even mentioned him by name – 100 years before he was born. Perhaps Daniel pointed this out to Cyrus – and it impressed him enough to give God glory, and be gracious to His people.