

## 2 Kings 24-25

Last week we saw the nation of Judah basically go from ruin, to revival and back to ruin. Perhaps you recall that Josiah had come to experience revival personally, and it had a radical impact even publicly upon those around him. We listed all those “R” words that made for a renewal of revival in his life and seemingly in the land. 1<sup>st</sup> he came into a *relationship* with the Lord, then he noticed the temple was in need of *repair*. From there, there was a *rediscovery* of the Word of God; he realized that even though comparatively to where he had been he was doing well, in reality he had a long way to go. The Word of God shines on us like a light exposing every flaw, every area that’s in need of attention, we think we’re doing ok until we really begin to look into and study the word, then we realize, “I’m not where I thought I was, I’ve got so far to go.” So what did he do upon rediscovering the word, reading the word? He *repented*, he responded to the word, bore fruits worthy of repentance, and *requested* even further instruction. And it was at that point, when he had repented inwardly, and had been impacted so profoundly personally, that he began to make reflect those things publicly. And from that point forward he *renewed* the covenant, *removed* idolatry and carnality from any area of influence in his life and the life of the nation, he began to *reach* out into Israel, he came into the realization, “Hey, God has a plan for my life.” He *remembered* and reinstated the Passover, the remembering of the Lamb of God who was slain that they might have life, that they might be freed from the chains and bondage of Egypt. Even as we remember the Lamb of God who was slain for us, that we might be saved alive, and not see death, being delivered from the chains and bondage of sin, and through all of those things he became *renowned* for living for God.

But unfortunately as quickly as revival seemed to hit, it came into ruin even faster. Josiah experienced revival personally, it no doubt had an overall impact publicly, but in the big picture, on the national level it seems almost to have been more of a political *reform* rather than a genuine *transforming* of the inner man of the majority of the people. Because as soon as Josiah died it didn’t take any time for the entire nation to get right back into the pattern of the wicked/idolatrous practices that had been seemingly so long ingrained in them. And we’ve spoken before of how difficult it can be to establish a pattern, and a discipline of righteousness, but how easily we can cater to the flesh. How everything we’ve sought to build up concerning godliness can be so easily undermined in a moment’s time...that’s why it’s so important to seek the Lord daily.

I don’t know about you but if I get out the door with out spending time with the Lord, or if I get my day going and haven’t 1<sup>st</sup> spent time in the word, and in prayer, my day reflects it. Why? Because I’ve neglected my inner man, I’m not feeding on the word of God, which is nourishment to our soul, so I’m out the door in a spiritually weak and anemic disposition. Is it any wonder that when Jesus gave His disciples an outline for prayer that He taught them to pray, “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” Matt 6:11 Not just physically, we need to be supplied from the bread of life every day. That’s why the children of Israel were to gather manna daily, if they tried to get enough today to last them through tomorrow, it got all wormy and putrid.

Because we're to be looking to the Lord, and depending on the Lord daily for the nourishment and sustenance of our souls via prayer and the Word of God. We can't survive today off what we gleaned yesterday, we need to be filled fresh today.

Judah quickly crumbled and reverted to their old ways just as soon as Josiah died, the new king was a wicked man, and they all just followed the flow, which was real easy to do, they just did whatever their flesh desired.

Well we left off with Josiah's son Eliakim on the throne, he was a wicked king as well. And the Pharaoh of Egypt had put him there as a puppet king having brought Judah into subjection after he killed Josiah, and he removed Jehoahaz and placed his brother on the throne, changed his name to Jehoiakim and imposed a pretty healthy tax on them.

Vs1

Which was a huge mistake, what we don't see in the record here is how this transition took place between Egypt to Babylon. But you can probably figure it out, Nabopolassar (Nebuchadnezzar's dad) was really the one who was instrumental in seeing Babylon into a global superpower. But just about the time they were cresting as such he died, and his boy Nebuchadnezzar ascended to the throne, well he crushed Egypt and therefore by default the various areas that Egypt held in subjection made the segue into Babylon's control. So as to where he *was* paying heavy tolls to Egypt, now he's paying them to Babylon, and I guess there's only so much a guy can take because 3yrs into it he decides to rebel against him. Which as I said was a huge mistake, Jeremiah was hard and heavy in the prophetic scene during this period and he'd told them that Nebuchadnezzar would be coming their way and that he'd do damage and pretty much have his way with Judah because the Lord had ordained it for judgment. (Jer 25) and All throughout this period of history Jeremiah told them, "Don't fight against it, it's best to just flow with it, because the Lord has ordained this." In other words, it's never good to fight against the Lord, all you'll do is incur more damage. When God is dealing with you, or disciplining you, it's better to go with it, follow the flow of it, rather than kick against it, because God's going to have His way. And we can either accept it, learn *by* it, and grow *through* it, repent and renew our commitment to Him, or He can get out the bit and bridle and teach us in a more difficult manner, but either way He'll accomplish His objective.

Generally speaking it seems as human beings we're gluttons for the more difficult path. We don't like discipline, we kick *against* discipline, a guy like Jonah comes immediately to mind. God had a purpose and plan for his life, he didn't like it, so he began to rebel against it, go the opposite direction of it, did that deter from using him in the manner that He'd purposed? No, but it took some pretty serious discipline before Jonah finally saw things God's way. The "Storms of life" weren't enough to teach Jonah, and he was prepared to even die before doing things God's way. "Just throw me out of this ship (in the middle of who knows where) and then things will calm down for you." Which is to say, "I'll just die out here in the open seas."

Did that keep God from accomplishing His objective in Jonah's life? No, He just prepared a massive fish to swallow Jonah whole and take him 3 days and nights into the bottom of the deep and what do you know, Jonah finally began to see things God's way. I guess there's something about being in the belly of a fish incased by stomach lining, seaweed and various other things for a few days that causes you to be a bit more open to God and what He may be wanting to do in your life. Here Jehoiakim was determined to throw off the Babylonian yoke, but all he did was invite-multiplied nations to enter into the equation of oppressing and suppressing them. And there are other illustrations that we could point out, but the point is whether we choose to learn in humility, or kick against the grain of God's discipline in our lives either way we're not going to circumvent what it is that He's wanting to teach us, or work into us.

### Vs2-7

So verse 2 tells us that try though he may, it was to no avail because the Lord had spoken it through the prophets that chastisement, judgment was coming do to the sin and rebellion of the nation. Now the prophets in view here would've been Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and then also the prophetess that we encountered last week, Huldah. She told Josiah that Judgment was coming just as the Lord had said it would, even as the word of God declared back in Deut 28/Lev 26 and the prophets had confirmed over and over again. And therein lies a principle that we want to pick up on and that is this. God is always ample in His warnings. If there is sin in you life, the heavy hand of God's judgment doesn't just automatically smite you. God always gives you a season to repent, and we've spoken of this before. So often people mistake the fact that God's not dropping the bomb as God's approval, or perhaps they've slipped through the cracks, maybe God understands in their case, and so they keep on. But beyond that, before God brings about judgment He always sends the warnings, it might be by the unction of His Spirit, it might be through the reasoning voice of a friend, it might be through the teaching of, or reading through His Word, or any # of avenues, but He'll always warn you and give you a chance to repent. Isaiah warned Judah, Micah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, but the people didn't respond, now they're reaping the results of their ways.

Jeremiah tells us that when Nebuchadnezzar came up and caused Jehoiakim to be his vassal that he took some captives back to Babylon with him (the yr was 605B.C.) but in the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of their being led away was when Daniel and his buddies were 1<sup>st</sup> taken off into Babylon. So at this point you'd want to begin to familiarize yourself with the book of Daniel, he was on the scene as a young boy at this point. And he began to serve in the palace being of royal blood himself in that he was in the lineage and house of David. But at the same time Nebuchadnezzar took some (though not all yet) of the vessels of the house of the Lord of which Belshazzar would take one evening when he was throwing a big party and worshipping the gods of silver and gold and all the rest. And he took these vessels out and began to use them in his party to drink from as they were getting drunk. And you know the story, that's when the hand appeared and wrote on the wall and the king soiled himself and Daniel interpreted what was said and that's when he found out his # was up. (Now that's in Dan ch 5).

But just so that you're aware, and things can begin to focus for you regarding where some of these books fit in the history of the nation. Daniel was on the scene now, Jeremiah is prophesying big time right now (so you could read Jeremiah), in the next stage of being led off (which we'll see here in a second) Ezekiel was in *that* group. And it was at that point that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and *he* began to be used in the office of a prophet. So Daniel was there ministering to king Nebuchadnezzar and a few of his buddies there in the palace being a witness there, Ezekiel would be in Babylon ministering to those who'd been taken captive, and Jeremiah would remain in Judah ministering to the remnant that would remain. And I love the fact that God had those who were sold out to Him, and being used by Him in each area, because that's the heart of God. He was not without a witness throughout this entire time on every side, whether you were the king *of* Babylon, captive *in* Babylon, or remaining in Judah, God had His own in place, to accomplish His purpose.

But the other thing I want you to see here before we move on is that the brunt of what's taking place now is due ultimately to what? Vs3- "...the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done." During his day, he filled the wine cup of the wrath of God to the brim and now it's being pressed to the lips of the nation and they're being forced to drink it.

And we're told in verse 4 that no small part of what it was that set this in motion was because of the blood of the innocents that he'd shed. No doubt part of that was the prophets, those who feared God, wanted to be right with God, he had them killed. But we know that another big problem that God had was the shedding of all of the innocent blood of the children who were sacrificed to Molech, infants, toddlers, even in the upwards (in some cases) of 3-5 yrs old. And God hates the shedding of innocent blood, how much innocent blood is on the hands of our nation to the tune of over 40 million babies. And what have we done we've mistaken God's grace and the time He's giving us to repent as, "...it must be no big deal." But God will deal with this nation lest we repent, He can't not.

But the main thing I want you to see here is that our sin today can have long term ramifications long after we're gone. It had been around 50 yrs since Manasseh had died, yet the nation was still reaping the consequences of his sin, even though in the end he repented. So if you think that your choice to sin today doesn't really affect anyone else, you're sorely mistaken. Not only does it affect everyone around you, it might be still reaping consequences in the lives of future generations long after you're gone. How important it is to choose wisely the things that we avail ourselves *to*, and take part *in*.

Vs8-12

So he got 3 months on the throne, not long. But he was a wicked young man as well, and God didn't care much for him either, in the respect of the wickedness that he was about. Jeremiah had prophesied against him too. He said, "*As I live, says the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off; and I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life, and into the hand of those whose face you fear -- the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of the Chaldeans. So I will cast you out, and your mother who bore you, into another country where you were not born; and there you shall die.*" Jer 22:24-26. And here it is going down just like the Lord said, and over and over again God proves His faithfulness to His Word. The Psalms tell us, "...*You have magnified Your word above all Your name.*" Ps 138:2 Yet we so often struggle just believing what the Word of God says. But throughout the history of the earth there's not been 1 detail of God's Word that has failed, God help us to trust His Word. He told Jehoiachin that he'd be plucked off and given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, and he was told his mom would be joining him, and that's exactly what happened. Now rather than trying to fight Nebuchadnezzar he willfully surrendered, no doubt to seek for a better standing. Which perhaps worked in that Nebuchadnezzar didn't kill him, but rather placed him in prison.

Vs13-20

People just never learn, you'd think after all the calamity that's befallen them thus far that one of them might seek the Lord. But here's Mattaniah, A.K.A. Zedekiah rebelling and doing evil in the sight of the Lord just like the 2 before him.

Now in this 2<sup>nd</sup> deportation that we just read of, when you get to the book of Ezekiel you'll find him in this particular # and it was on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month during the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiachin's captivity that he says the heavens were opened up and he saw visions of God.

But again anyone who was a social/political or military anyone they took captive and they left the poorest of the land. So in some respects poverty has its advantages, the more you have the more you're hassled and harassed, the less you have, the less hassle you have to put up with.

Now what's the deal with the name change? The changing of someone's name represents what? Submission, subservience, that there is an authority over you, when you get married the lady assumes a name change. It represents that she's now under the authority of her husband.

This was similar whoever changed your name you were under the authority of and in submission to. Which for us is cool because we're told in Rev 2:17 that God has a new name for each of us that only He and we will know, it'll be between you and Him, but it speaks to the fact that He's over you, you're under Him, under His covering, under His authority, and He rules over you. But that's the idea here, Nebuchadnezzar changed his name, it meant that he was over Mattaniah, and that Mattaniah was subservient to Nebuchadnezzar.

And Zedekiah is another prominent name throughout the book of Jeremiah. He's brought up some 48 times throughout the book of Jeremiah. So though we don't get a lot of insight here, as you're reading through Jeremiah you'll begin to take on much more as to who he was, how he was a man pleaser, feared man more than he feared God. And it wound up being a snare to him even as the bible says that the fear of man brings a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord will be safe. And Jeremiah told him not to rebel, but rather to submit to the king of Babylon and it would go well with him. But the people branded Jeremiah as a traitor, and Zedekiah was afraid of what the people would do to him if he just went with the flow of what God was doing and so he rebelled, and it cost him not only his life, but the life of his sons as well, notice.

## Ch 25

### Vs 1-3

So basically what happened was the Nebuchadnezzar came and stationed his troops around the city and they didn't allow anything to come in, or anything to come out and in so doing he was starving out the city. It's actually a very effective way of warfare, it may take some time depending upon the ability of a city to supply for it's own (in this case nearly 2 years), but no one has to die (though certainly people did) but the bottom line is either give up, or starve to death. And it's at this point that you'd want to read the book of Lamentations the Jeremiah wrote, as he laments over the condition of the city here.

But what I want you to see is the specificity with which the dates have been recorded. You say, "Why? What's the big deal?" Well, so far the dates haven't really be brought up, but here the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to record them, as well as Jeremiah in Jeremiah ch 39. And the reason that's significant is because God had told them that they'd been given into captivity for 70 yrs. (You can read of that in Jeremiah 25 and again in ch 29). Now why 70yrs? We know why they were led off into captivity, but what determined the length of time. The law said that every 7<sup>th</sup> year the land was to have a Sabbath's year's rest . They were to work the land for 6yr and on the 7<sup>th</sup> they were to leave it lie. And God had said that He would provide enough for them in the previous year to take care of the Sabbath yr. Well in all these years they never once gave the land its rest 490yrs, now you divide that by 7, and you'll come up with 70. So God had said that He was going to hold them captive 1 year for every Sabbath year that'd deprived the land of. And so when you get to 2<sup>nd</sup> Chron 36 you read, "*And 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 seventy years.*" 2 Chron 36:20-21 Now what makes these dates so important is that it becomes the time clock for the release of Judah from captivity. That's how Daniel was able to know the exact time that they were to be released, you find when you're reading Daniel ch 9 that he tells you he was reading the book of Jeremiah and from that he was able to determine that the time of their captivity was about up, so he began to pray, confess the sins of the nation, fast, put on sackcloth, sat in ashes and all the rest.

Now that's when you need to be familiar with Ezra who was on the scene at *that time* (along with Nehemiah) and Ezra opens up like this. "*Now in the first 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,*" Ezra 1:1. And then it goes on to speak of how Cyrus is going to begin to send the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. But you begin to see how all the pieces fit together, where these books fit in historically, and it starts to make sense of the puzzle. If you don't get where they go, it might confuse you a bit, but as you begin to see it, it all starts coming together. That's what's so neat about studying the Kings is that you find out where the prophets, Ezra, Nehemiah and all these people work into the equation, and it helps you get a much better grasp on the OT. So these dates are important, they start the count down for their release.

#### Vs4-21

Zedekiah should've listened to Jeremiah, but the fear of man cost him his eyes, as well as his son's lives, the city was burned down, the temple was destroyed, they took everything of value, and left the poor to farm the land so that it wouldn't grow completely wild and they could pay tribute to Babylon. They should've just went with the flow of what God was doing, but their rebellion cost them, as it always does. Remember when Hezekiah showed the ambassadors of Babylon all the treasures of his kingdom and Isaiah said that everything he'd showed them, they'd take? Once again God's Word comes to full fruition.

#### Vs22-26

Now Gedaliah was Shaphan's grandson, you may recall that he was a scribe in Josiah's day, he was one of Josiah's advisors. But be that as it may, his major downfall was naivety, there in vs 24 when he encouraged them to go with the flow. Once again he was echoing what Jeremiah had told him, but the people didn't like that news. So Ishmael who was of royal blood decided that he'd kill him, and as you read Jeremiah ch 40 you find that Gedaliah was warned, a guy by the name of Johanan told him what was going on. Said, "Let me kill Ishmael for you, why should you die?" But Gedaliah didn't believe him, said, "No way, Ishmael's my bud, he'd never do that, you're lying, why do you speak falsely of him?" And of course Ishmael killed him.

And once that had happened all the people were worried about how Nebuchadnezzar would respond and so they all fled to Egypt and forced Jeremiah to come with them and so you have the scattering of Judah in its entirety. Jeremiah sought to get them to turn around, subject themselves to Nebuchadnezzar, but they refused. Now if you want a little more background as to some of the events that took place in Nebuchadnezzar's life, you'll need to read the book of Daniel. He eventually confesses Daniel's God as the only God and gets humbled by God, eats grass for 7 years and the whole bit. Shadrach Meshach and Abed-Nego all take place during this period.

#### Vs27-30

Evil Merodach was Nebuchadnezzar's son, and the book of kings ends on sort of an upswing of a note in that Jehoiachin (the king who surrendered willfully to Babylon) winds up receiving favor from Evil Merodach. Why? We're not sure, some believe he had a short stint in prison himself whereby he came to know Jehoiachin, others say he was converted by Daniel and showed kindness to him accordingly. We don't know, but to the reader it sends the signal that there's light at the end of the tunnel, God is not finished with neither the nation nor the house of David.

Prayer Points: Lord, thank You that even in Your Justice You look for opportunity to show grace. Thank You that You're true to Your Word, help us to trust in Your Word. And help us to be quick to repent, to willfully subject ourselves to Your plan and Your purpose for our lives, even when it involves chastening and discipline. Thank You that You love us enough to teach us the good and right way. And may we learn what it means to fear You, that we not be snared by the fear of man.