

Jeremiah

Chapter 39

The Fall of Jerusalem

In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the city. 3 Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and sat in the middle gate: Nergal-sar-ezer of Samgar, Nebu-sar-sekim the Rab-saris, Nergal-sar-ezer the Rab-mag, with all the rest of the officers of the king of Babylon. 4 When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled, going out of the city at night by way of the king's garden through the gate between the two walls; and they went toward the Arabah. 5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. And when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, at Riblah, in the land of Hamath; and he passed sentence on him. 6 The king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah at Riblah before his eyes, and the king of Babylon slaughtered all the nobles of Judah. 7 He put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains to take him to Babylon. 8 The Chaldeans burned the king's house and the house of the people, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. 9 Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, carried into exile to Babylon the rest of the people who were left in the city, those who had deserted to him, and the people who remained. 10 Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, left in the land of Judah some of the poor people who owned nothing, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

39:1–45:5 The most detailed account in the OT of the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and its aftermath. The section concludes with a brief appendix (ch. 45). (CSB)

39:1–10 A vivid summary of the siege and fall of Jerusalem and of the exile of its inhabitants (see 52:4–27). (CSB)

39:1–10 As foretold often and clearly in chs 1–38, Jerusalem was taken by the Babylonian army, Zedekiah the king was taken in fetters to Babylon, and the citizens of Jerusalem and Judah were carried into exile. (TLSB)

39:1 *ninth year of Zedekiah ... tenth month.* The final Babylonian siege of Jerusalem began on the tenth day of the month (see 52:4; 2Ki 25:1; Eze 24:1–2), or Jan. 15, 588 B.C. (CSB)

39:2 *ninth day ... fourth month ... eleventh year.* July 18, 586 B.C. (see 52:5–6; 2Ki 25:2–3). The siege lasted just over two and a half years. (CSB)

Tammuz 9 (July 29), 587 BC. Siege lasted c 1½ years. (TLSB)

39:3 *sat in the Middle Gate.* In fulfillment of 1:15. The Middle Gate may have been located in the wall separating the citadel of Mount Zion from the lower city, therefore serving as a strategic vantage point for the invaders. (CSB)

Likely the gate separating the new city and the old city. (TLSB)

Nergal-Sharezer. Means “Nergal [a god; see 2Ki 17:30], protect the king.” One of the two men so named here (see v. 13) is probably Neriglissar, who later became a successor of Nebuchadnezzar as ruler of Babylonia (560–556 B.C.). (CSB)

officers. Nebuchadnezzar’s commanders and officials listed here are not mentioned in 2Ki 25. Two of them apparently bore the name Nergal-sar-ezer. Rab-saris and Rab-mag are titles of offices in Nebuchadnezzar’s administration. (TLSB)

Rabsaris being chief of the chamberlains and the second Nergal-sharezer chief of the magi. (Kretzmann)

39:4 *between the two walls* – Those on the western edge of Ophel and on the eastern edge of Zion, for the royal gardens were situated southeast of the city, on the slopes of the Kidron Valley. (Kretzmann)

toward the Arabah – The meadows of the Jordan near Jericho. There may have been a gap in the lines of the besieging army at this point, since the upper city was almost impregnable from the east and southeast; so this plan was the only one which promised success. (Kretzmann)

39:5 *plains.* The Hebrew for this word is the plural of the word for “Arabah” (v. 4). (CSB)

39:7 *put out eyes* – Commanding that he be blinded, probably by passing a heated metal rod before his open eyes. (Kretzmann)

39:9 *Nebuzaradan* – Nebuchadnezzar sent him to destroy Jerusalem by burning the city and breaking down its walls (cf 2 Ki 25:8-9). He also oversaw the deportation of Judeans. (TLSB)

39:10 *poor people* – Unskilled labor, of little use to the empire. (TLSB)

gave them vineyards and fields – They received orders to cultivate the vineyards and fields, lest the country revert to its wild state and yield no revenue. Thus the threatening words of the Lord concerning the fate of the disobedient Jews were fulfilled in every detail, as an example of warning to the unbelievers of all times. (Kretzmann)

To appease them and maintain the land’s productivity for purposes of taxation. (TLSB)

39:1–10 After a siege of one and a half years, Zedekiah and his people experience the consequences of their idolatry and unbelief. Yet, as promised, God rescues a remnant of the people and will later return them to Judah. God’s Word of Law is kept, and His Word of Gospel is kept too. • Help us learn, O Lord, that You keep all Your Word, that we might keep the Word through faith in Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

The LORD Delivers Jeremiah

11 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave command concerning Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, saying, **12** “Take him, look after him well, and do him no harm, but deal with him as he tells you.” **13** So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, Nebushazban the Rab-saris, Nergal-sar-ezer the Rab-mag, and all the chief officers of the king of Babylon **14** sent and took Jeremiah from the court of the guard. They entrusted him to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, that he should take him home. So he lived among the people. **15** The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the guard: **16** “Go, and say to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will fulfill my words against this city for harm and not for good, and they shall be accomplished before you on that day. **17** But I will deliver you on that day, declares the LORD, and you shall not be given into

the hand of the men of whom you are afraid. 18 For I will surely save you, and you shall not fall by the sword, but you shall have your life as a prize of war, because you have put your trust in me, declares the LORD.”

39:12 *look after him.* Israelite deserters informed Nebuchadnezzar of Jeremiah’s repeated advice not to resist the invader. So Nebuchadnezzar considered the persecuted prophet an advocate of pro-Babylonian policy. (TLSB)

39:14 *took Jeremiah from the court.* Either (1) a summary statement of Jeremiah’s release from prison, the specific details of which are given in 40:1–6; or (2) a brief description of the first of two releases, the second of which (made necessary because Jeremiah had been arrested again by mistake in the confusion surrounding the capture and transporting of thousands of exiles) is detailed in 40:1–6. (CSB)

Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan. Ahikam being the man who had protected him on a former occasion, chap. 26, 24. (Kretzmann)

him home. The governor’s residence. An early sixth-century seal impression found at Lachish reads: “Belonging to Gedaliah [probably the man named in this verse], who is over the house.” (CSB)

Israelite deserters informed Nebuchadnezzar of Jeremiah’s repeated advice not to resist the invaders. So Nebuchadnezzar considered the persecuted prophet an advocate of pro-Babylonian policy. (TLSB)

This was as a free man, not as a captive under restraint. The apparent contradiction between this statement and that of chap. 40, 1 is very easily adjusted if we remember that Jeremiah, although transported to Ramah with the prisoners among his own countrymen, was still technically their prisoner, for he had not been released from his place in the court of the prison in Jerusalem. Nebuzar-adan separated Jeremiah from the other captives and gave him his choice of places to dwell. (Kretzmann)

39:16 *Go and say.* Though confined in prison, Jeremiah was permitted to have visitors. (CSB)

I will fulfill my words against this city. The pledge of safety given Ebed-melech (cf 38:7-13) is inserted here to show that God did not fail to do for an Ethiopian what he did for His prophet. (TLSB)

39:17 *men of whom you are afraid.* The court officials (see 38:1) who, in Ebed-Melech’s judgment, had “acted wickedly” (38:9). (CSB)

39:18 *a prize of war.* Preserved like Jeremiah, Ebed-melech shared in a prophet’s reward (cf Mt 10:41). (TLSB)

your trust in me. Ebed-Melech had expressed his faith in God by securing Jeremiah’s release from the cistern. (CSB)

Jehovah, the true God, is the Hope and Refuge of all those who put their trust in Him, and He delivers them from all the evil which may threaten and overwhelm them. (Kretzmann)

39:11–18 Nebuchadnezzar has Jeremiah released from custody and returned to his hometown. Before Jeremiah goes, he brings good news to Ebed-melech, who had rescued him from the dry cistern (38:7–13), that he will survive the fall of Jerusalem because he trusted in the Lord. You cannot avoid what you fear by disobeying God and trusting your own wisdom. Instead, trust that the Lord never forgets His people. Ultimately, He provides for you eternally through Jesus Christ. • Strengthen us, heavenly Father, when our way is difficult and danger seems so near. Show us our Savior, Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)