

# SECOND CHRONICLES

## Chapter 36

### Judah's Decline

The people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and made him king in his father's place in Jerusalem. 2 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. 3 Then the king of Egypt deposed him in Jerusalem and laid on the land a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. 4 And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But Neco took Jehoahaz his brother and carried him to Egypt.

5 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. 6 Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and bound him in chains to take him to Babylon. 7 Nebuchadnezzar also carried part of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon and put them in his palace in Babylon. 8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and the abominations that he did, and what was found against him, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. And Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.

9 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. 10 In the spring of the year King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, with the precious vessels of the house of the LORD, and made his brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem.

11 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. 12 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. 13 He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel. 14 All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the LORD that he had made holy in Jerusalem. 15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.

**36:1–4** Reign of Jehoahaz. The son of Josiah is placed on the throne by the people, the last king to be enthroned by them. Each succeeding king will be appointed by a foreign power. (TLSB)

**36:2–14** Josiah is the only king of Judah to be succeeded by three of his sons (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah). The Chronicler's account of the reigns of the remaining kings of Judah is quite brief. (CSB)

**36:2** See 2Ki 23:31–35. With the death of Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh Neco, Judah slipped into a period of Egyptian domination (vv. 3–4). (CSB)

*three months.* In 609 B.C. Neco's assertion of authority over Judah ended the brief 20 years of Judahite independence under Josiah. The Chronicler makes no moral judgment on this brief reign, though the author of Kings does (2Ki 23:32). (CSB)

**36:3** *Egypt deposed him.* Judah came under the rule of Neco of Egypt, a nation once an ally (cf 2Ki 18:21), and was required to pay tribute of 100 talents of silver (c 3½ tons) and a talent of gold (c 75 lb). (TLSB)

**36:4** Just as Neco took Jehoahaz into captivity and replaced him with Eliakim, whose name he changed to Jehoiakim, so also Nebuchadnezzar would later take Jehoiachin to Babylon, replacing him with Mattaniah, whose name he changed to Zedekiah (2Ki 24:15–17). Each conqueror wanted to place his own man on the throne; the change of name implied authority over him. (CSB)

Not only did Neco take Jehoahaz to Egypt as his prisoner, but he also changed the new king's name from Eliakim to Jehoiakim. *his brother.* Jehoiakim was Jehoahaz's older brother.

**36:5–8** See 2Ki 23:36–24:7. Jehoiakim persecuted the prophets and is the object of scathing denunciation by Jeremiah (Jer 25–26; 36). After the Egyptian defeat at Carchemish (Jer 46:2) in 605 B.C., Jehoiakim transferred allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. When he later rebelled and again allied himself with Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar sent a punitive army against him. But Jehoiakim died before the army arrived, and Nebuchadnezzar took his son Jehoiachin into captivity. (CSB)

Jeremiah provides additional information, not found in 2Ki or 2Ch, about Jehoiakim's reign (Jer 22:18–23; 25:1–26:24; 36). (TLSB)

**36:5** *eleven years.* 609–598 B.C. (CSB)

**36:6** *bound him.* Jehoiakim was bound, but apparently the plan to take him in fetters to Babylon was not carried out. In 605 BC, the critical battle of Carchemish took place, establishing Babylonian ascendancy and Jehoiakim's submission to the victor. In 601 BC, another battle was fought between Egypt and Babylon. This likely caused Jehoiakim to withhold tribute from Babylon. (CSB)

**36:7** *vessels.* Nebuchadnezzar took sacred objects from the Jerusalem temple to his temple in Babylon. (TLSB)

**36:9–10** See 2Ki 24:8–17; see also Jer 22:24–28; 24:1; 29:2; 52:31. Although Jehoiachin was taken into captivity (597 B.C.) with a large retinue, including the queen mother and high officials, and was succeeded by Zedekiah, the exiles continued to date in terms of his reign (Jer 52:31; Eze 1:2; cf. Est 2:5–6). (CSB)

**36:9** *three months and ten days.* 598–597 B.C. (CSB)

Reign of Jehoiachin. (TLSB)

*evil in the sight of the LORD.* The Babylonian Chronicle dates these events in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign on the second day of Adar. (TLSB)

**36:10** *brother.* A wider range of meanings than a biological brother; may also refer to a relative. Zedekiah was his brother in the broader sense. Strictly speaking, he was Jehoiachin's father's brother, thus an uncle. Jehoiachin disappears from the Chronicler's history at this point, but he appears at the end of Kings as the recipient of kindness by King Evil-merodach of Babylon (2Ki 25:27–30). Jehoiachin is the legitimate Davidic king; thus it is he, not Zedekiah, through whom the Chronicler traces the royal lineage in the genealogy of 1Ch 3:16–24. (TLSB)

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*Zedekiah.* Also known as Mattaniah. King of Babylon changed his name to Zedekiah. (TLSB)

**36:11–16** Rather than dwell on the events of Jerusalem’s last days, as given in 2Ki 24:18–25:21, the writer of Chronicles takes pains to make clear why the city was doomed. God was long-suffering, but finally there came a point when His wrath “rose against His people, until there was no remedy” (v 16). Let no one mistakenly believe that mocking God’s messengers, despising His Word, and scoffing at the threat of punishment is a less offensive crime today than it was when Jerusalem received the wages of sin (Gal 6:7). (TLSB)

**6:11–14** See 2Ki 24:18–20; Jer 52:1–3. Verses 13b–14 are unique to the Chronicler (cf. Jer 1:3; 21:1–7; 24:8; 27:1–15; 32:1–5; 34:1–7, 21; 37:1–39:7). Zedekiah succumbed to the temptation to look to Egypt for help and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Babylonian reaction was swift. Jerusalem was besieged (Jer 21:3–7) in 588 B.C. and held out for almost two years before being destroyed in the summer of 586. (CSB)

**36:11** *eleven years.* 597–586 B.C. (CSB)

**36:12** *Jeremiah.* Cf Jer 34:8–22; 37:1–2 for rejection of his message by Zedekiah and the people. (TLSB)

**36:13–16** Unique to 2Ch. (TLSB)

**36:16** *mocking ... despising ... scoffing.* Emphasize the disdain the people expressed toward the Word and the prophets. (TLSB)

**36:1–16** The Chronicler quickly describes the last kings of Judah (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah), who were dominated by Babylon. He likewise records how stubbornness dominates the people of Judah (vv 15–16). Though persistence can be a helpful trait, stubbornness leads to self-destruction. Always check your will against God’s will, recorded in Scripture, so that He may teach you persistence in faith and break your sinful stubbornness. Thanks be to God, He has a remedy for all your faults through His gift of forgiveness, His Spirit, and instruction in righteousness. • Remedy my faults, Great Physician, and grant me a willing heart to believe Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

#### *Jerusalem Captured and Burned*

**17** Therefore he brought up 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, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. **18** And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. **19** And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. **20** He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, **21** to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

**36:17–21** The Chronicler noted that Saul died because the Lord killed him (1Ch 10:13–14). Here he notes that the Lord brings the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to punish Judah. (TLSB)

**36:19** Babylonians razed the city to make it indefensible and prevent future rebellions. (TLSB)

**36:20–21** The conclusion of the two Biblical histories is interestingly different: The writer(s) of Samuel and Kings had sought to show why the exile occurred and had traced the sad history of Israel's disobedience to the exile, the time in which the writer(s) of those books lived. With the state at an end, he could still show God's faithfulness to his promises to David (2Ki 25:27–30) by reporting the favor bestowed on his descendants. The Chronicler, whose vantage point was after the exile, was able to look back to the exile not only as judgment, but also as containing hope for the future. For him the purified remnant had returned to a purified land (vv. 22–23), and a new age was beginning. The exile was not judgment alone, but also blessing, for it allowed the land to catch up on its sabbath rests (Lev 26:40–45). And God had remembered his covenant (Lev 26:45) and restored his people to the land. (CSB)

**36:21** Unique to 2Ch. *the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah.* Cf 29:10; 36:2. (TLSB)

*Sabbaths.* Cf Lv 26:34, 40–45 for the description of the exile as a Sabbath. This was a purifying time of rest and repentance and, despite its pain and horror, a time of hope for the future (cf Jer 29:10–14). Seventy years is a round or symbolic figure for the length of the exile. Some captives were carried off 20 years before the city fell in 587 BC (Dn 1:1–6). In 538 BC, the first exiles were permitted to return. Cf Ezr 1:1. (TLSB)

*The Proclamation of Cyrus*

**22 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:** 23 “**Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.’**”

**36:22–23** The writer of Kings concluded his history before the restoration; so this text is not paralleled in his account. It is repeated, however, at the beginning of Ezra (1:1–4), which resumes the history at the point where Chronicles ends—indicating that Chronicles and Ezra may have been written by the same author. See the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer 25:1–14; cf. Da 9). Cyrus also issued decrees for other captive peoples, allowing them to return to their lands. Under God's sovereignty, this effort by a Persian king to win the favor of peoples treated harshly by the Babylonians also inaugurated the restoration period. (CSB)

The Chronicler includes the return prophesied by Jeremiah and Isaiah, assuring the reader that the chosen people would not remain in the Babylonian captivity. See the same intimation of hope at the end of Kings (2Ki 25:27). (TLSB)

**36:23** *LORD, the God of heaven.* Cyrus's declaration implies he knew Yahweh, the true God (see notes, 1Ki 5:7; 10:9). However, he may express himself this way for the sake of the Judeans he ruled (i.e., “Your God told me to do this, so listen”; and “may the LORD his [a Judean's] God” [v 23b]). (TLSB)

**36:22–23** The Lord stirs the Persian king Cyrus to declare that the Judeans could return home from exile. Ironically, the people who would not hear God's Word from the prophets now hear His decree from the mouth of a foreign ruler who may have been a pagan. The Lord goes to great lengths to reach His people. How great is His patience and mercy toward us! • Fulfill Your Word for me, O Lord, according to Your mercy in Christ, who set me free. Amen. (TLSB)