

SECOND KINGS

Chapter 25

The Fall of Jerusalem

Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it.² The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.³ By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat.⁴ Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah,⁵ but the Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered,⁶ and he was captured. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him.⁷ They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.⁸ On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.⁹ He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down.¹⁰ The whole Babylonian army, under the commander of the imperial guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem.¹¹ Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had gone over to the king of Babylon.¹² But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields.¹³ The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the movable stands and the bronze Sea that were at the temple of the LORD and they carried the bronze to Babylon.¹⁴ They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service.¹⁵ The commander of the imperial guard took away the censers and sprinkling bowls—all that were made of pure gold or silver.¹⁶ The bronze from the two pillars, the Sea and the movable stands, which Solomon had made for the temple of the LORD, was more than could be weighed.¹⁷ Each pillar was twenty-seven feet high. The bronze capital on top of one pillar was four and a half feet high and was decorated with a network and pomegranates of bronze all around. The other pillar, with its network, was similar.¹⁸ The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest next in rank and the three doorkeepers.¹⁹ Of those still in the city, he took the officer in charge of the fighting men and five royal advisers. He also took the secretary who was chief officer in charge of conscripting the people of the land and sixty of his men who were found in the city.²⁰ Nebuzaradan the commander took them all and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah.²¹ There at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king had them executed. So Judah went into captivity, away from her land.²² Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon

appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to be over the people he had left behind in Judah. ²³ When all the army officers and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, and their men. ²⁴ Gedaliah took an oath to reassure them and their men. “Do not be afraid of the Babylonian officials,” he said. “Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you.” ²⁵ In the seventh month, however, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was of royal blood, came with ten men and assassinated Gedaliah and also the men of Judah and the Babylonians who were with him at Mizpah. ²⁶ At this, all the people from the least to the greatest, together with the army officers, fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians.

25:1 *ninth year ... tenth day ... tenth month.* Jan. 15, 588 B.C. (see Jer 39:1; 52:4; Eze 24:1–2). (CSB)

Nebuchadnezzar ... marched against Jerusalem. Earlier, Nebuchadnezzar had subdued all the fortified cities in Judah except Lachish and Azekah (see Jer 34:7). A number of Hebrew inscriptions on potsherds were found at Lachish in 1935 and 1938. These Lachish ostraca (or letters; see chart on “Ancient Texts Relating to the OT”) describe conditions at Lachish and Azekah during the Babylonian siege. (CSB)

25:2–3 *eleventh year ... ninth day ... fourth month.* July 18, 586 B.C. (see Jer 39:2; 52:5–7). Some scholars follow a different dating system and place the fall of Jerusalem in the summer of 587. (CSB)

25:2 *besieged.* A decade after the first capture of the city (24:10–17), the anger of the Lord burst upon Jerusalem and Judah with unrestrained vehemence. The prophet Jeremiah urged the king to keep his solemn pledge of allegiance to the Babylonian overlord (Jer 27). However, weak-willed Zedekiah yielded to a pressure group in the city that advocated rebellion. The anticipated help from Egypt proved a delusion (Jer 37:5–11; Ezk 17:15–21). Nebuchadnezzar’s patience was at an end. He directed the siege of Jerusalem from his headquarters at Riblah. (TLSB)

25:3 *famine in the city had become so severe.* See Jer 38:2–9. (CSB)

25:4 *breach was made.* After about a year and a half, the city’s fortification began to give way. (TLSB)

way of the gate. No longer identifiable; seems to have been on the eastern side of the city. (TLSB)

Arabah. Zedekiah and his men tried in vain to escape toward this valley of the Jordan. (TLSB)

25:5 *plains of Jericho.* Near the Jordan River. (TLSB)

25:6 *king of Babylon at Riblah.* See note on 23:33; see also Jer 39:5; 52:9. (CSB)

25:7 *killed the sons of Zedekiah ... put out his eyes ... took him to Babylon.* See Jer 32:4–5; 34:2–3; 38:18; 39:6–7; 52:10–11. Ezekiel (12:13) had predicted that Zedekiah would be brought to Babylon, but that he would not see it. Zedekiah could have spared his own life and prevented the destruction of Jerusalem if he had listened to Jeremiah (see Jer 38:14–28). (CSB)

It is unclear why the Babylonians did not kill Zedekiah. (TLSB)

25:8–9 In the year 587 BC, a month after “a breach was made in the city” (v 4), Nebuchadnezzar’s general carried out his orders to reduce to rubble the temple, the walls, and the other structures of the city. These actions made the city indefensible, incapable of rebelling again. (TLSB)

25:8 *seventh day ... fifth month ... nineteenth year.* Aug. 14, 586 B.C. (see Jer 52:12). (CSB)

25:9 *set fire to the temple.* See 2Ch 36:19; Jer 39:8; 52:13. (CSB)

25:11–12 Almost all of the remaining inhabitants were exiled. (TLSB)

25:13–17 Large quantities of bronze, silver, and gold, taken from furnishings and vessels of the temple, were sent as plunder to Babylon. The detailed interest in the parts of the temple implies the writer may have been a priest or Levite. (TLSB)

25:13 *bronze pillars.* See 1Ki 7:15–22. (CSB)

The two large pillars, named Jachin and Boaz, which Solomon erected at the entrance of the temple (1Ki 7:15–22). (TLSB)

movable stands. See 1Ki 7:27–39. (CSB)

bronze Sea. See 1Ki 7:23–26. (CSB)

25:14 *all the bronze articles used in the temple service.* See 1Ki 7:40, 45. (CSB)

25:17 *bronze capital ... was four and a half feet high.* See NIV text note. In 1Ki 7:16 and Jer 52:22 the height of the capital is given as seven and a half feet (five cubits). The three-cubit difference may be due to a copyist’s error. (CSB)

25:18–21 Nebuchadnezzar vented his fury not only on the king and his sons, but he also executed religious leaders, political officials, and “sixty men of the people of the land” (v 19). The latter were the more prominent citizens who had considerable influence in state affairs. (TLSB)

25:18 *Seraiah the chief priest.* Seraiah was the grandson of Hilkiah (see note on 22:4; see also 22:8; 1Ch 6:13–14). His son Jehozadak was taken captive to Babylon. Ezra was one of Jehozadak’s descendants (see Ezr 7:1). (CSB)

Grandfather or great-grandfather of Ezra. (TLSB)

three keepers of the threshold. Leaders of this group. (TLSB)

25:20 *brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah.* See v. 6 and note. (CSB)

25:21 *Judah went into captivity, away from her land.* Judah’s exile from Canaan fulfilled the prediction of judgment given during the reign of Manasseh (see 23:27). Exile was the most dire of the covenant curses (see Lev 26:33; Dt 28:36; see also Jer 25:8–11). (CSB)

Other nations that suffered the fate of Israel and Judah became extinct. Even the captors of Samaria and Jerusalem, Assyria and Babylon, disappeared under the sands of time. However, God did not let the ruins of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity become the grave of His chosen people. Humanly speaking, its hopes of revival were as dead as the dried skeletons in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezk 37:1–14). But God remained true to His covenant promise to bless all nations through Abraham’s Seed (Gn 12:3). By His “breath of life” (Gn 2:7), He raised the national corpse from its Babylonian tomb. (TLSB)

25:1–21 After Judah’s third rebellion, the Babylonians enforce sterner policies, killing off all manner of community leadership and ending Judah’s status as a kingdom and a holy land. Yet, all human institutions eventually fail, even mighty Babylon. The holy kingdom of God abides forever because its King, our God and Savior, cannot be overthrown. • Heavenly Father, rule among us by Your Word and Sacraments, that we might be Your own and live under You in peace. Amen. (TLSB)

25:22 *Gedaliah.* See note on 22:12. Gedaliah shared Jeremiah’s nonresistance approach to the Babylonians (see v. 24) and won their confidence as a trustworthy governor of Judah (see Jer 41:10). (CSB)

Name was found on a Judean administrative seal. Judah now was reduced to a Babylonian province. (TLSB)

Ahikam. Rescued Jeremiah from mob violence when the prophet urged submission to the Babylonians (Jer 26:24). No doubt, Nebuchadnezzar entrusted the son with the governorship, hoping that he, too, would advocate nonresistance Cf Jer 40–41 for a more complete account of Gedaliah’s ill-fated administration. (TLSB)

Shaphan. Josiah’s secretary had this name, but it may not refer to the same person. (TLSB)

governor. The term does not appear in the Hbr, but is provided by translators to describe Gedaliah's appointment. (TL SB)

25:23 *captains*. Can describe administrators or military men. (TL SB)

Mizpah. Had been a town of important political significance in the time just before the establishment of the monarchy (see note on 1Sa 7:5). Jeremiah found Gedaliah there (see Jer 40:1–6). (CSB)

Gedaliah set up headquarters a few miles north of ruined Jerusalem in a city that an earlier king of Judah had fortified (see note, 1Ki 15:22). Here, the governor met with the captains of the forces who had eluded the siege of Jerusalem. (TL SB)

Ishmael son of Nethaniah. Verse 25 gives a fuller genealogy. Elishama, Ishmael's grandfather, was the royal secretary under Jehoiakim (Jer 36:12). (CSB)

Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite. In 1932 an agate seal was found at Tell en-Nasbeh (Mizpah) bearing the name of Jaazaniah (perhaps the man mentioned here) with the inscription: "Belonging to Jaazaniah the servant of the king." (CSB)

Name was found at Mizpah on a seal impression that described a "servant of the king." (TL SB)

25:24 Gedaliah urged submission to the Babylonians as the judgment of God. He advocated the restoration of the normal pursuits of a peacetime society (see Jer 27). A similar message had been given by Jeremiah to the captives taken to Babylon in 597 B.C. (see Jer 29:4–7). (CSB)

officials. Lit, "servants"; no doubt officers in command of Babylonian garrisons. (TL SB)

25:25 *seventh month*. October, 586 B.C. (CSB)

assassinated Gedaliah. A more complete account of the assassination of Gedaliah is given in Jer 40:13–41:15. Ishmael appears to have had personal designs on the throne, to have resented Gedaliah's ready submission to the Babylonians, and to have been manipulated by the Ammonites, who also chafed under Babylonian domination (see Jer 40:14; 41:10, 15). (CSB)

Likely regarded as a traitor. (TL SB)

This fanatic member of the royal family acted on the instigation of the king of neighboring Ammon, where he had fled during the siege and fall of Jerusalem. (TL SB)

Jews. Lit, "Judeans," people of Judah. (TL SB)

25:26 *fled to Egypt*. Pharaoh Apries (Hophra) was then ruler in Egypt (see note on 24:20). (CSB)

Afraid that they were not safe from Nebuchadnezzar's long arm anywhere in Judah, the remaining Judeans fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them (Jer 43:7–8). As the only other great regional power, Egypt was the best refuge. Five years later, the Babylonian king exiled another contingent from Jerusalem, possibly in reprisal for Ishmael's rebellion or in anticipation of a similar incident. (TLSB)

25:22–26 Unable to adjust to changing times, the royal family of Judah continues to resist Babylonian governance of former Judean territory. Today, the Lord blesses us, not only with His Word (Jeremiah warned the royal family against further rebellion, Jer 42), but also with common sense. With God's counsel, adjust to the disappointments you face and make different plans for the future. Most of all, repent of your failures and confess your shortcomings. Your Lord yet has great blessings in mind for you, which He grants in Christ. • Turn my face, O Lord, in the way that I should go. Quiet my heart and grant me hope for the future. Amen. (TLSB)

Jehoiachin Released

27 In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the year Evil-Merodach became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin from prison on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month. **28** He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honor higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. **29** So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table. **30** Day by day the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived.

25:27 *thirty-seventh year ... twenty-seventh day ... twelfth month.* Mar. 22, 561 B.C. in the year Evil-Merodach became king of Babylon. 561 (some scholars place Evil-Merodach's succession to the throne in October, 562; see note on 24:1). His name means "man of (the god) Marduk." (CSB)

In title, not in fact. *Evil-merodach*. Hbr form of the name Amel-Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar's son. (TLSB)

released Jehoiachin from prison. Babylonian administrative tablets (see chart on "Ancient Texts Relating to the OT"), recording the payment of rations in oil and barley to prisoners held in Babylon, mention Yaukin (Jehoiachin) king of Iahudu (Judah) and five of his sons (cf. 24:15). No reason is given for Jehoiachin's release. Perhaps it was part of a general amnesty proclaimed at the beginning of Evil-Merodach's reign. (CSB)

As if prophesying a brighter future, the account ends with new freedom for a dynastic descendant of David. Jehoiachin's grandson was Zerubbabel (Hg 2:20–23; Zec 4), who with Jeshua the priest (Zec 3) "built the altar of the God of Israel" in Jerusalem for the freed Babylonian exiles (Ezr 3:1–7). (TLSB)

25:28 *spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honor.* The book of Kings ends on a hopeful note. The judgment of exile will not destroy the people of Israel or the line of David. God's promise concerning David's house remains (see 2Sa 7:14–16). (CSB)

Like Joseph (cf Gn 40–41), Jehoiachin rose in favor to secure a new future for his people. (TLSB)

25:30 *a regular allowance*. His former territory may have supported the king’s feasting (cf v 12) and could make Jehoiachin’s expected contribution to life at court (1Ki 2:7). Babylonian administrative records mention deliveries of oil for the sons of the king of Judah and rulers from other nations. (TLSB)

25:27–30 Despite all that has happened, the Lord provides for the preservation of the “house of David.” For the next 500 years, the Judeans would anticipate the restoration of David’s reign, which the heavenly Father fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, a “Son of David.” His kingdom—the Church—shall never end. • Rule over us, gracious Lord. Welcome and sustain us at Your banquet table, which is a foretaste of the feast to come. Amen. (TLSB)