

2 Kings 23-25 – Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

XXIII. JOSIAH (Judah) 22-23:30

A. A Good King 22:1-2

B. The Bible Rediscovered 22:3-20

We ended last week in the reign of good king Josiah.

He came to the throne at the ripe old age of 8 & though young he was *sold out to God*.

Chronicles tell us when he was in his mid-teens he realized he could use his position to install reforms & return the nation to God.

He cleared the temple & Jerusalem of all the idols & pagan altars his ultra-wicked grandfather Manasseh had installed.

While they were repairing the temple from it's many years of abuse & neglect, the workers discovered what seemed to be the only remaining copy of the Law.

They brought it to Josiah who had it read to him.

When he heard the many curses God had announced on their disobedience, he was overwhelmed & tore his royal robes in grief.

He realized that his own father & grandfather had violated God's command in the most vile way & had lead the entire nation in rebellion against God.

And God had already shown his wrath in the judgment of the northern nation of Israel that had been defeated & exiled by Assyria.

Josiah reasoned, surely Judah's judgment could not be far away

But he didn't resign himself to a futile acceptance of judgment.

Josiah knew it is never wrong to do right. And what was right was to use his authority as king to return the nation to the worship of Yahweh.

He was one of only a few kings who dared to tear down the high places the people worshipped at all over the land.

While a few others had also removed them, when the people snuck out and rebuilt them, they were left alone.

Josiah's campaign against the high places was different in that he not only had his forces dismantled them, he desecrated them so that people would never want to rebuild them.

They might build new ones someplace else but *those* high places were ruined by Josiah

We pick up the story right after Josiah has had the Law of Moses read to him & he's torn his robes in grief & repentance.

His next concern is, "What's next? What do I do to avert the disaster that is surely hanging over our heads because we have so hideously broken God's commands?"

He realizes step one is to make sure the other leaders of Judah hear what he's just heard.

C. Revival & Renewal 23:1-25

¹ Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. ² The king went up to the house of the LORD with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. 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.

Oh friends, take careful note of this – Josiah knew the first step in revival was to declare God's Word.

As Hebrews 11 says, without faith it is impossible to please God,

And as Romans 10 says, faith comes by hearing God's Word.

So he read them God's Word and let the Spirit use it to convict them of their sin and ignite the spark of faith.

³ Then the king stood by a pillar 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 this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant.

When Josiah finished reading to them all, he took a stand by the pillar in the temple court where kings were crowned, and he personally, publicly renewed his covenant with God.

When the people heard & saw this, they followed his example & joined him.

But take careful note of how the author describes it.

Josiah's commitment was sincere, involving his entire heart & soul to keep the commandments, testimonies & statutes.

The people are said to simply take a stand *for* the covenant; not *in* it – just *for* it.

As we'll see, while Josiah's heart was right & pure before the Lord & he used his authority as king to carry out massive reforms, it never became a full-scale, wide-spread revival among the people.

Too many of the people had been infected with the moral & spiritual decadence introduced by Manasseh.

Like a dog that's tasted blood & becomes forever ravenous for more, they'd been incited by the vile passions that marked Manasseh's reign.

Under Josiah, the political winds shifted to a moral & conservative agenda.

So like spiritual chameleons, they went along to get along.

When he read the Law, surely some of them were convicted as he'd been and when he renewed his covenant with the Lord, so did they.

But the *majority* merely shouted, "Amen! Here-here! Yeah, sure, the covenant with Yahweh is great!"

In other words, they were *for* renewing the covenant with God as good national policy, but they didn't take it personally.

How do we know this? Well, when Josiah no longer reigns & a wicked king comes to the throne, the people revert to form & go right back to their idolatry.

There are some striking parallels to the political situation in our nation today.

We hear a lot about the candidates' positions on different issues, including morality.

Traditional Family Values becomes a kind of litmus test for many people and several of the candidates are being hammered

because they've changed their position on key points, seemingly, just to court one groups' support.

There are candidates who've **taken a stand FOR TFV**, but looking at their own personal moral choices you'd have to say they don't seem to have taken a stand IN them.

But these candidates are merely reflective on the people.

There are LOTS of people who **believe in** TFV & want everyone else to live by them.

But when it comes to their own moral choices, well, that's a different story.

Josiah was a man who genuinely loved God & wanted to do what was right.

He did what he could to turn the spiritual & moral collapse of Judah around.

Those who shared his heart & faith in God rejoiced in his leadership.

The rest went along because it was politically expedient to do so.

As we pray for God to raise up a Josiah-like leader for our time & nation, we can't stop there.

We must pray for a deep sense of spiritual conviction for our entire land - beginning with the Church.

4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. 5 Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven.

Josiah not only removed the idolatrous *items*, he removed those *people* who were an influence FOR evil.

6 And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people.

Those ashes wouldn't defile the graves, it was the other way around; the graves desecrated the ashes.

Josiah was just showing his utter disdain & contempt for that disgusting image.

7 Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image.

Yep, you guessed it → the temple had been turned into a brothel!

Ritual prostitution was a standard feature of pagan worship.

So they'd set up little booths divided by richly colored curtain in the courtyard where both men & women could go to visit male & female prostitutes.

Do you see why maybe God was so angry & why Josiah was so urgent & harsh with his reforms?

When prostitution is going on in the House of God, you don't deal with it by negotiation & give them a week to move out.

You tear it down - now!

8 And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the gates which were at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were to the left of the city gate. 9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren.

The priests who'd been using the high places as the location of their offerings to Yahweh were all brought to Jerusalem where they weren't allowed to assist in service but they were provided for.

Josiah was intent on obeying God's command that all sacrifices & offerings were to be made **ONLY** at the temple.

10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech.

Topheth was a pagan shrine dedicated to the Ammonite god Molech which was worshipped by parents who burned their infants alive.

It was located in the Hinnom valley on the south of Jerusalem.

The rabbis said it was called **Topheth**, which sounds like a word for **drum**, because when parents approached the red-hot arms of Molech with their child, the drums would begin so as to drown out the sounds of the screams.

Josiah defiled Topheth by tearing down the shrine & making the valley of Hinnom Jerusalem's dump.

The fires that had once burned in Topheth ignited the garbage and continued to burn & smoulder ever after.

And it's from this scene that the Bible gets the term Gehenna = Ge-Hinnom; which becomes a synonym for hell.

11 Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the officer who was in the court; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

We're getting a feel here for just how far Manasseh had gone in investing in idolatry & paganism.

Chariots & their specially trained horses were incredibly expensive.

Archaeology tells us that in some of the more sophisticated solar-cults practiced by ancient kings, ritual chariots were used, since the sun was thought to be a god that rode the sky in a golden chariot.

Josiah didn't look at these seemingly glorious, expensive works of art as something to keep & place in a museum for posterity.

They were blasphemous causes of God's wrath & so had one fate – destruction.

12 The altars that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the 2 courts of the house of the LORD, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron. 13 Then the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon.

300 years before this, Solomon, of all people, had covered the southern slope of the Mt. of Olives with shrines & altars to the idols worshipped by his many wives.

What's shocking is to realize they'd lasted 3 centuries – they'd not been torn down by any of the previous good kings of Judah!

How is this possible?

Looking back over the nation's past, wondering how things could have gotten so out of hand, Josiah looked across the Kidron Valley and saw all these pagan altars & knew – because his predecessors had not removed them.

They'd been left to be a source of spiritual infection that now threatened the very survival of the land.

Josiah didn't care of Jerusalem's Society for the Preservation of Ancient Historical Sites staged a rally & press conference to decry his tearing down these ancient places.

They were malignant tumors that had to be cut out.

14 And he broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images, and filled their places with the bones of men.

Again, desecrating these places so they wouldn't be rebuilt later.

15 Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder, and burned the wooden image.

This wasn't even in Judah's territory, but Josiah saw it as a cause of trouble so he led an expedition the short distance north of the border and erased it – as should have been done long before.

16 As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

The tombs that were located next to the pagan shrine at Bethel were of the priests that had served the golden calf erected by Jeroboam nearly 300 years before.

Josiah had their bones disinterred & spread over the site.

What he didn't know was that he was fulfilling a prophecy given centuries before by an anonymous prophet who came to rebuke Jeroboam when he first set up the altar at Bethel.

In 1 Kings 13: 1-2 we read –

1 And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. 2 Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.'"

An amazing prophecy – fulfilled literally.

17 Then he said, "What gravestone is this that I see?" So the men of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel." 18 And he said, "Let him alone; let no one move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.

You can read about these 2 prophets & their interesting story in 1 Kings 13.

19 Now Josiah also took away all the shrines of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger; and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel. 20 He executed all the priests of the high places who were there, on the altars, and burned men's bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem.

Though Samaria was technically under the rule of Assyria at this time, they were so weak and preoccupied with their own problems they had no ability to stop Josiah's campaign to eradicate idolatry.

And Josiah, informed as he was by God's word, understood that the territory of Israel didn't stop at Judah's northern boundary with the northern Kingdom.

The whole split that took place between the 2 nations was wrong so he determined to extend his reforms throughout the length & breadth of the territory given them by God.

21 Then the king commanded all the people, saying, "Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant." 22 Such a Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. 23 But in the 18th year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the LORD in Jerusalem.

The Passover was a holiday that commemorated Israel's unique covenant with God.

As the covenant was now something everyone was talking about because it was the focus of all national policy, Passover became a major deal.

24 Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

Josiah's reforms weren't limited to demolishing major pagan sites.

They went all the way to the banning of little things like the little household idols and charms people had.

Anyone who practiced any form of the occult was exiled.

In other words, if they had had a daily newspaper, there would have been no more astrology section.

25 Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.

Just a really solid guy!

D. Impending Judgment 23:26-27

26 Nevertheless the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. 27 And the LORD said, "I

will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'"

God was not pushed over the edge by Manasseh alone.

If that were the case, he would have poured out his fury on Manasseh himself.

What we're seeing here is that AFTER Josiah's excellent reign, the SINS of Manasseh were still embedded in the people's hearts.

His reforms had not brought about a genuine revival.

They were enough to *delay* judgment, but not reverse it.

Know this – *if* the spiritual cancer of Manasseh had been *removed* by their sincere repentance, God would have put off this judgment.

E. Josiah's Death 23:28-30

28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 29 In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him.

At this point in history the Babylonians were finally moving to throw off the Assyrian dominance that had kept them down for generations.

They'd already taken 2 key Assyrian cities, including the capital at Nineveh.

Egypt had just begun the 25th dynasty & was once again rising as a major power.

They did not want to see either Assyria or Babylon gain prominence, so they threw in their lot with the weaker Assyrians hoping to crush the emerging Babylonian threat.

Josiah knew that Judah's recently gained independence could only be maintained by seeing all 3 powers kept weak, so he mobilized his forces and set up in the Plain near the fortress of Megiddo.

His plan was to meet the Egyptians as they emerged from the narrow valleys of the Carmel range & use the hillsides as an anvil to smash them against.

If things started going badly, they could retreat to Megiddo, knowing it would be Necho's plan to hurry on to meet up with the Assyrians before it was too late to stave off the Babylonians.

What Josiah wasn't counting on was a stray arrow that found & killed him and ended the battle.

But his delay worked. The Egyptians didn't arrive in time and the Assyrians fell to the Babylonians who become the undisputed power in the north.

30 Then his servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.

Jehoahaz was not the heir to the throne. 3 other sons were older, but Jehoahaz was picked by *popular* vote.

The people felt he'd be more pliable & subject to their desires.

His real name was Shallum; *Jehoahaz* was his throne name.

XXIV. JEHOAHAZ & ELIAKIM (Judah) 23:31-24:7

A. Jehoahaz 23:31-33

31 Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king, and he reigned 3 months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. 33 Now Pharaoh Necho put him in prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold.

With the Assyrians defeated & the Babylonians not yet moving south, the Egyptians took control of both Syria & Israel.

Necho set up a base in Syria at Riblah and ordered the new king of Judah to appear.

When he arrived, he was arrested and thrown in prison.

Later he was carted off to Egypt where he eventually died.

In his place, Necho installed his older brother Eliakim who was supposed to be more amenable to Egyptian rule.

B. Eliakim (Jehoiakim) 23:34-24:7

1. Vassal of Egypt 23:34-37

34 Then Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim.

The name means "Yahweh has established."

And Pharaoh took Jehoahaz and went to Egypt, and he died there. 35 So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from every one according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Necho. 36 Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebudah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. 37 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

The prophet Jeremiah was very active during this time & had a lot to say about the reign of this guy Jehoiakim.

He wasn't content to merely return to the practices Josiah sought to erase, he WAS hostile to the whole direction of his reforms.

In Jer. 36 we're told that he burnt a scroll of God's Word!

For this & his other sins, God declared that none of his descendants would ever sit *securely* on the throne.

2. Vassal of Babylon 24:1-7

1 In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for 3 years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.

The reason the Babylonians invaded was because the Egyptians attacked them first at the Battle of Carchemish.

They pursued the retreating Egyptians all the way to Egypt.

On the way back the young prince Nebuchadnezzar asserted his authority over Judah.

Judah's vassal kingdom switched from Egypt to Babylon. It was 605 BC.

All of this is well documented in the Babylonians chronicles housed in the British Museum.

Nebuchadnezzar may have planned to stay at Jerusalem longer but word reached him of his father's death so he hurried home to take the throne.

When he returned, he took with him only a few captives.

Daniel & his friends were among them.

After only 3 years, when the Egyptians managed to push back on Babylon in a minor victory, Jehoiakim thought he possessed the strength to assert independence & refused to send the tribute that was due Nebuchadnezzar.

2 And the LORD sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon; He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken by His servants the prophets.

Part of the genius of Nebuchadnezzar was to unite several nations under one banner.

The bands referred to here were this multinational force that now fought for Babylon.

3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, 4 and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD would not pardon.

There were many in Judah at this time who thought it was good & right to try & assert their independence by resisting Babylon.

But Jeremiah & the other true prophets were making it clear that – No! it was time for them to surrender & submit to their judgment.

5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 6 So Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.

While he gained the throne, his hold on it was tenuous – lasting only 3 months.

So Jeremiah's prophecy came true. None of his descendants ever did secure the throne and after Jehoiachin, the royal line departs from this branch of David's family altogether.

7 And the king of Egypt did not come out of his land anymore, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook of Egypt to the River Euphrates.

After the previous minor push-back victory by the Egyptians, the Babylonians came down & conquered Egypt.

XXV. JEHOIACHIN: The Fall of Jerusalem 24:8-16

8 Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem 3 months. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. 9 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done. 10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, as his servants were besieging it. 12 Then Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his princes, and his officers went out to the king of Babylon; and the king of Babylon, in the 8th year of his reign, took him prisoner.

The siege was so harsh Jehoiachin finally had to surrender & according to the terms, came out with the entire royal court.

13 And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.

While much of the decoration of the temple had been looted over the years, the main furniture & fixtures of the temple had managed to remain intact.

It was now that they were taken.

The one thing that may have been preserved was the ark of the covenant which ancient tradition says was hidden by the prophet Jeremiah.

When God told him Jerusalem would fall, it's said he moved to hide the ark to keep it from falling into enemy hands.

14 Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, 10,000 captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. 15 And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16 All the valiant men, 7000, and craftsmen and smiths, 1000, all who were strong and fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

Like the Assyrians, it was a Babylonian policy to shuffle populations between their conquered peoples.

The Babylonian chronicles refer to Jehoiachin as "Yaukin" king of the Judeans & lists the amount of provisions that were allocated for him & his family's support there in Babylon.

XXVI. MATTANIAH/ZEDEKIAH 24:17-25:21

A. A Wicked King 24:17-20

17 Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

The name means "Yahweh is my righteousness."

18 Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king, and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 19 He also did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that

Jehoiakim had done. ²⁰ For because of the anger of the LORD *this* happened in Jerusalem and Judah, that He finally cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Both Jeremiah & Chronicles tell us that Zedekiah's evil lay in his refusal to listen to God's Word, and returned Judah to the practices Josiah had sought to remove.

B. End of Judah 25:1-21

¹ Now it came to pass in the 9th year of his reign, in the 10th month, on the 10th day of the month, *that* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around. ² So the city was besieged until the 11th year of King Zedekiah.

A 2½ year siege! Hideous!

³ By the 9th day of the 4th month the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. ⁴ Then the city wall was broken through, and all the men of war *fled* at night by way of the gate between 2 walls, which was by the king's garden, even though the Chaldeans were still encamped all around against the city. And *the king* went by way of the plain. ⁵ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his army was scattered from him. ⁶ So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they pronounced judgment on him. ⁷ Then they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon.

Imagine the horror of watching your children tortured to death, then your own eyes put out so that the last thing you ever see is that!

⁸ And in the 5th month, on the 7th day of the month (which was the 19th year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹ He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire. ¹⁰ And all the army of the Chaldeans who were *with* the captain of the guard broke down the walls of Jerusalem all around.

The city was totally razed.

¹¹ Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive the rest of the people *who* remained in the city and the defectors who had deserted to the king of Babylon, with the rest of the multitude. ¹² But the captain of the guard left *some* of the poor of the land as vinedressers and farmers. ¹³ The bronze pillars that were in the house of the LORD, and the carts and the bronze Sea that were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried their bronze to Babylon. ¹⁴ They also took away the pots, the shovels, the trimmers, the spoons, and all the bronze utensils with which the priests ministered. ¹⁵ The firepans and the basins, the things of solid gold and solid silver, the captain of the guard took away. ¹⁶ The 2 pillars, one Sea, and the carts, which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these articles was beyond measure. ¹⁷ The height of one pillar was 18 cubits, and the capital on it was of bronze. The height of the capital was 3 cubits, and the network and pomegranates all around the capital were all of bronze. The 2nd pillar was the same, with a network.

Any & all metal was carted off as plunder.

¹⁸ And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the 2nd priest, and the 3 doorkeepers. ¹⁹ He also took out of the city an officer who had charge of the men of war, 5 men of the king's close associates who were found in the city, the chief recruiting officer of the army, who mustered the people of the land, and 60 men of the people of the land *who were* found in the city. ²⁰ So Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, took these and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²¹ Then the king of Babylon struck them and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive from its own land.

These men were executed because they'd been the main trouble-makers & resisters to Babylonian hegemony.

Because the prophet Jeremiah was well known to the Babylonians as telling the last 3 kings of Judah to submit to Nebuchadnezzar, he was left behind to help lead the few who were left to tend the fields.

XXVII. GOVERNOR GEDALIAH 25:22-26

²² Then he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, governor over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left.

Gedaliah seems to have been a good guy who was something of a pal to Jeremiah.

²³ Now when all the captains of the armies, they and *their* men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan the son of Careah, Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

These men of war had high-tailed it into hiding till the Babylonians withdrew to their headquarters in Syria, then they came out of the woodwork.

²⁴ And Gedaliah took an oath before them and their men, and said to them, "Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you."

These guys made an oath to not resist the Babylonian rule.

²⁵ But it happened in the 7th month that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with 10 men and struck and killed Gedaliah, the Jews, as well as the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah.

²⁶ And all the people, small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

They had every reason to believe this assassination would result in strong reprisal from the Babylonians, so they all fled to Egypt, even though they were told by the prophets not to do this.

History tells us that a substantial colony of Jews was planted in Egypt at this time.

XXVIII. JEHOIACHIM RELEASED 25:27-30

²⁷ Now it came to pass in the 37th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the 12th month, on the 27th day of the month, *that* Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. ²⁸ He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon. ²⁹ So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life. ³⁰ And as for his provisions, *there was a regular ration given him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life.*

A new regime often meant a change in policy.

This new king decided to treat some of the political prisoners with greater kindness.

The king of Judah was one of them to benefit from this.

Some see this positive turn around as a foreshadowing of God's return of the Jews to Judea after 70 years in exile.

As we conclude, let's just quickly review the Babylonian campaigns against Jerusalem.

605 BC → Nebuchadnezzar's initial subjugation

601 to 598 BC → Destruction from Nebuchadnezzar's marauding bands

597 BC → Siege & fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar's main army

586 BC → Babylonians return to completely destroy & depopulate Jerusalem

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