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APOSTOLIC VERSE BY VERSE BIBLE STUDY

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“JERUSALEM, ZEDEKIAH, AND JEREMIAH”

Jeremiah 39:1-18

Jeremiah 39:1 In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it."

Jeremiah 39:2 "[And] in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth [day] of the month, the city was broken up."

The bottom fell out for Judah when the Babylonians breached Jerusalem's walls and entered the city in 587–586 BC. The destruction of Jerusalem has been verified by excavations of the city of David (1982–present) which have now uncovered the destroyed remains of the Judean royal palace. Several details in chapter 39 are paralleled in other accounts of Jerusalem's fall. Thus, for the siege of Jerusalem, the breaching of its walls, and Zedekiah's flight, the looting of the city and the capture of its citizens Jeremiah 52:12–23; 2 Kings 25:1–17; 2 Kings 25:8–17; 2 Chronicles 36:18, 19. We see from this, that Jeremiah prophesied for about 40 years. Jeremiah is one of the few prophets who actually saw his prophecy fulfilled. Zedekiah reigned for approximately 11 years. This siege on Jerusalem lasted about 18 months. A city as fortified as Jerusalem was, could last a good while. In this case, the battle went on for a year and a half.

Jeremiah 39:3 "And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, [even] Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon."

The names given here are those of various Babylonian officials who fought against Jerusalem and prevailed. They include: Nergal-sharezer, the governor of the district of Samgar-nebo (or Sinmagir); Nebushazban, the Rab-saris; another Nergal-sharezer; plus the Rab-mag (high military official). The first Nergal-sharezer was probably the brother-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar's son Amel-marduk (562–560 B.C.), who subsequently became king in 559 B.C. The officials of Babylon sat at the Middle Gate to demonstrate that they were now in charge and to judge those still in the city who had resisted them.

Jeremiah 39:4 "And it came to pass, [that] when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain."

Jeremiah 39:5 "But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him."

Zedekiah attempted to escape, but it was not to be. There seemed to be a secret way between the walls to get out of the city, and that is what Zedekiah, and probably Zedekiah's sons, used. The plains of Jericho are a short distance from Jerusalem, so Zedekiah had not gone far, before he was caught. The Chaldean army took Zedekiah to Nebuchadnezzar to be judged. This might have been because he was a close relative of Nebuchadnezzar.

Jeremiah 39:6 "Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah."

Jeremiah 39:7 "Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon."

Judah's king was made to watch the execution of his own sons and Judah's nobles. Then he was blinded and led in chains to Babylon. There is no greater hurt than to see your sons slain before your eyes. This was a terrible grief to Zedekiah, and probably the last act to see with his own eyes. Remember, they all could have saved their lives, if they had listened to Jeremiah's prophecy from God, and heeded it. They did not, so they are paying the ultimate price. There are worse things than dying and putting out your eyes would be one of the things. It seems, Zedekiah would have a long time to regret not heeding the prophet, Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 39:8 "And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem."

Jeremiah 39:9 "Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained."

This is a fulfillment of the very thing Jeremiah had prophesied. He said the city would be burned, and that is just what happened. God will always save a remnant of His people. They were captives, but they were alive.

Jeremiah 39:10 "But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time."

The southern kingdom had fallen, with only a handful of poor people permitted to stay behind. The poor were left because they were no threat to Nebuchadnezzar. They {in a sense} benefited from the siege. They were given land that they had never been able to have before, and they were growing vineyards for themselves, instead of working them for someone else. They had nothing the Babylonians wanted, so they left them in the land.

Jeremiah 39:11 "Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying,"

Jeremiah 39:12 "Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee."

But God had his eye on Jeremiah. God is still taking care of Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar gave orders for Jeremiah to be treated kindly. Possibly, Nebuchadnezzar had heard of the predictions of Jeremiah. He, also, knew Jeremiah had tried to get the people to surrender without all this bloodshed. You remember, how Zedekiah's sons thought Jeremiah to be a traitor to his country. Perhaps, these Babylonians believe he was on their side. Both were wrong, Jeremiah was just

bringing the message to the people that God had given him. Now, Nebuchadnezzar tells Nebuzar-adan to give Jeremiah whatever he wants.

Jeremiah 39:13 "So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushasban, Rab-saris, and Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylon's princes;"

Jeremiah 39:14 "Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people."

Gedaliah took Jeremiah back to his home, which must have seemed a little surreal to the prophet with his nation in ruins. The Lord also preserved the life of Ebed-melech, the brave man who had saved Jeremiah's life. The prophet was entrusted to the care of a man named Gedaliah, whom the Babylonians had appointed as governor of the few people who were left behind in Judah. News of Jeremiah's messages advising Judah and Jerusalem to submit to Babylon were doubtless well known to Nebuchadnezzar and his forces. The Lachish Letters mention the presence of a prophet who appeared to voice a pro-Babylonian sentiment: "And behold: the words of the [prophet] are not good; they reduce morale; they sap the strength of the country and the city." Another ostrakon also mentions a letter sent by "the prophet": "As for the letter which Tobiyahu, the King's servant, took to Shallum, son of Yaddua, from the prophet, saying, 'Beware!': your slave has sent it to my lord."

Jeremiah 39:15 "Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying,"

Jeremiah 39:16 "Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be [accomplished] in that day before thee."

The sparing of Jeremiah and Ebed-melech is not recorded in the parallel accounts of Jerusalem's fall. The minister must be with his people. That is why Jeremiah had stayed in Jerusalem. Now, he will, again, be with his people. Jeremiah knew there would be affliction during the siege because he had prophesied it, yet he stayed with his people. Jeremiah is removed from imprisonment. This is looking back to the Word God had given him, while he was yet imprisoned. We remember that the Ethiopian had saved Jeremiah out of the cistern. This Word is a promise from God because God saw the Ethiopian's good work with Jeremiah. God would not overlook protecting someone who had protected His prophet. Surely the city of Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and was, as we read in the earlier part of this lesson.

Jeremiah 39:17 "But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou [art] afraid."

Jeremiah 39:18 "For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD."

The Ethiopian will not suffer in the siege. He would be protected by the LORD. It appears, this Ethiopian had feared the Babylonians. That would be a natural thing, since his master, Zedekiah feared them. God will bring the Ethiopian out of the city unharmed. This Ethiopian had won favor in the sight of the LORD, because he feared God more than man. He had bravely gone to his superior, and saved Jeremiah's life. God is rewarding him, now, by protecting him from harm.

Nahum 1:7 "The LORD [is] good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."

To trust in the Lord, brings protection beyond the world's comprehension. The following Scripture is the very thing that happened to the Ethiopian.

Psalms 91:7 "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; [but] it shall not come nigh thee."

QUESTIONS

1. About how many years did Jeremiah prophesy?
2. How many years did Zedekiah reign?
3. How long did the siege on Jerusalem last?
4. When was the city broken up?
5. What is verse 3 a listing of?
6. When Zedekiah saw the men of war, what did he do?
7. Who pursued Zedekiah and captured him?
8. Where did they catch him?
9. Who personally judged Zedekiah?
10. What was done to Zedekiah's sons, before his eyes?
11. What punishment was inflicted on Zedekiah?
12. What happened to the king's house?
13. What happened to the remnant of the people?
14. What happened to the very poor?
15. What did Nebuchadnezzar do to Jeremiah?
16. Whose side was Jeremiah on? Explain.
17. Where had Jeremiah been imprisoned?
18. Where did Jeremiah go?
19. Why had Jeremiah stayed in Jerusalem?
20. What is verse 15?
21. What was the name of the Ethiopian who helped Jeremiah?
22. What did God promise would not happen to him in the siege?
23. Why was the Ethiopian afraid of the Babylonians, probably?
24. Who had the Ethiopian feared, more than the king?