



## Second Kings - Chapter Twenty Four

### **XII 2 Kings 23:31-25:30 - The End of Judah (continues)**

#### Summary of Chapter Twenty Four

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon makes Judah his vassal state, taking over from the Egyptians, for the Babylonians now ruled the region. In addition, the Lord punished Judah by allowing other fighting bands from the surrounding nations, who were allied to the Babylonians, to come against Judah also at this time. Therefore Jehoiakim knew no real peace throughout his eleven year reign as a puppet king, first serving the Egyptians and then the Babylonians. When he died he was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin who, after just three months, was taken away in captivity to Babylon. In addition, Nebuchadnezzar took all the wealth from the city and several thousand of its most prominent citizens, those fit for military service and the skilled tradesmen.

The king was replaced by his uncle Mattaniah, whom Nebuchadnezzar renamed Zedekiah. He served as a puppet king to his Babylonian overlords for eleven years before rebelling against them.

#### **XII.c 2 Kings 24:1-7 - Judah Overrun by Enemies**

Jehoiakim is confronted by the armies of Babylon that have just dismantled the Assyrian Empire and now invade Palestine in pursuit of complete victory over Egypt. Their ruler is Nebuchadnezzar, who was never able to defeat Egypt completely but did enough to ensure that the king of Egypt did not come again out of his land. Jehoiakim first switched his allegiance from Egypt to Babylon in 604 BC, but after Nebuchadnezzar's failed attempt to invade Egypt in 601 BC, i.e. after three years, he rebelled against Babylon and looked once again to Egypt for help; refer to Jeremiah 46:14-28.

<sup>1</sup> In his days King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up; Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him.

### 2 Kings 24:1

In his days refers to the reign of King Jehoiakim (609-598 BC).

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up. Nebuchadnezzar II, king of the Babylonian Empire, was concerned with Judah because of its strategic position in relation to the empires of Egypt and Assyria. Therefore it was important to him to conquer Judah and make it a subject kingdom, i.e. his vassal state, thus securing loyalty to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem because the Pharaoh of Egypt invaded Babylon. In response the young prince Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Charchemish, and then he pursued their fleeing army all the way down to the Sinai. Along the way or on the way back, he subdued Jerusalem, who had been loyal to the Pharaoh of Egypt. This happened in 605 BC and it was the first but not the last encounter between Nebuchadnezzar and Jehoiakim. There would be two later invasions in 597 and 587 BC.

This specific attack is documented by the Babylonian Chronicles, a collection of tablets discovered as early as 1887 and held in the British Museum. In them, Nebuchadnezzar's 605 BC presence in Judah is documented and clarified. When the Babylonian Chronicles were finally published in 1956, they gave a first rate, detailed political and military information about the first 10 years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. L.W. King prepared these tablets in 1919; he then died, and they were neglected for four decades. Excavations also document the victory of Nebuchadnezzar over the Egyptians at Carchemish in May or June of 605 BC. Archaeologists have found evidence of battle, with vast quantities of arrowheads, layers of ash, and a shield of a Greek mercenary fighting for the Egyptians.

This campaign of Nebuchadnezzar was interrupted suddenly when he heard of his father's death and raced back to Babylon to secure his succession to the throne. He travelled about 500 miles in two weeks, showing remarkable speed for travel in that day. Nebuchadnezzar only had the time to take a few choice captives such as Daniel, a few treasures and a promise of submission from Jehoiakim.

Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. When Nebuchadnezzar had to make a hurried return to Babylon as noted above, Jehoiakim took advantage of his absence and rebelled against him.

<sup>2</sup> The Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldeans, bands of the Aramæans, bands of the Moabites, and bands of the Ammonites; he sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by his servants the prophets. <sup>3</sup> Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the Lord, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, for all that he had committed, <sup>4</sup> and also for the innocent blood that he had shed; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord was not willing to pardon.

#### 2 Kings 24:2-4

The Lord sent against him. The reader might think that God would honour the Judæan independence movement of Jehoiakim, but he did not bless it. God sent against him many adversaries because Jehoiakim was a patriot of the kingdom of Judah, but not a man submitted to the will of God.

Bands of the Chaldeans, bands of the Aramæans, bands of the Moabites, and bands of the Ammonites. Nebuchadnezzar's army was made up of several nations, who were willing to fight under the banner of such a puissant and victorious emperor.

Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the Lord. Many in the days of Jehoiakim believed that God's will was to deliver them from their enemies and to preserve an independent Judah. Yet that was not God's will; it was his will to bring Judah into judgement knowing they had not genuinely repented and would not. The best thing for Judah to do was to submit to this will of God, as Jeremiah told them to do despite great opposition.

Also for the innocent blood that he had shed. This reveals that one of the great sins of Manasseh was that he persecuted the godly in his day and he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. His name, like that of his brother, is omitted from the royal genealogy of Matthew Chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> Now the rest of the deeds of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>6</sup> So Jehoiakim slept with his ancestors; then his son Jehoiachin succeeded him. <sup>7</sup> The king of Egypt did not come again out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken over all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Wadi of Egypt to the River Euphrates.

#### 2 Kings 24:5-7

Now the rest of the deeds of Jehoiakim, and all that he did. The Chronicler states that Nebuchadnezzar intended to take Jehoiakim to Babylon, bound in

bronze fetters: <<*Against him King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up, and bound him with fetters to take him to Babylon*>> (2 Chronicles 36:6). Yet the prophet reveals that he would be disgracefully buried outside of Jerusalem: <<*With the burial of a donkey he shall be buried – dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem*>> (Jeremiah 22:19). Although Jeremiah was present during these events and the Chronicler recorded them later, it must be understood that Jeremiah spoke from the perspective of prophetic judgement rather than recording historic facts. Therefore, both statements can be accepted without contradiction.

The king of Egypt did not come again out of his land. In the geopolitical struggle between Egypt and Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt. They were then the dominant power in that part of the world.

About three years later, in 601 BC, Egypt tried one more time to return to power by attacking Babylon's army. It was after this brief Egyptian victory that Jehoiakim, hoping to renew his alliance with the Pharaoh against Babylon, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (v.3), an action Jeremiah sharply condemned.

#### XII.d 2 Kings 24:8-12 - Reign and Captivity of Jehoiachin

The Babylonian withdrawal from Palestine in 601 BC turned out to be only temporary, and Jehoiakim's rebellion brought the Babylonian army to the gates of Jerusalem at the end of the year 598 BC. The city surrendered to the Babylonians on the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> of March 597 BC, by which time Jehoiachin was king. Significant deportations followed. Although 1-2 Kings does not mention this, the prophet Ezekiel was among the exiles; his prophetic ministry began a few years later in Babylon; refer to Ezekiel 1:2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign; he reigned for three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, just as his father had done.

#### 2 Kings 24:8-9

Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign. Second Chronicles 36:9 states that Jehoiachin was eight years old when he became king. The difference between these two accounts is probably due to the error of a copyist in Chronicles. He was also known as Jeconiah, often abbreviated to Coniah.

He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, just as his father had done. The Lord's anger was kindled against him for his evil deeds: <<*As I live, says the Lord, even if King Coniah son of Jehoiakim of Judah were the signet ring on my right hand, even from there I would tear you off*>> (Jeremiah 22:24). God had spoken similar words concerning his father: <<*Therefore thus says the Lord concerning*

***King Jehoiakim of Judah: He shall have no one to sit upon the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night***>> (Jeremiah 36:30). The word ‘sit’ here means to ‘firmly sit,’ or ‘dwell’; and Jehoiachin’s short **three month** reign was not that surely. And Zedekiah, Jehoiachin’s successor, was Jehoiakim’s brother, not his son.

<sup>10</sup> At that time the servants of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. <sup>11</sup> King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it; <sup>12</sup> King Jehoiachin of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon, himself, his mother, his servants, his officers, and his palace officials. The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign.

### 2 Kings 24:10-12

King Jehoiachin of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon. The previous king of Judah, Jehoiakim, led a rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. Now the king of Babylon came with his armies against Jerusalem, and Jehoiachin hoped to appease Nebuchadnezzar by submitting himself, his family, and his leaders to the Babylonian king.

The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign refers to the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar. Since he came to the throne in 605 BC, then the year here would have been 597 BC, supporting historical documents that provide the same year. Like his rebellious father, God allowed Jehoiachin to be taken as a bound captive back to Babylon. His presence in Babylon is attested by tablets listing oil and barley supplies to him, his family and five sons in 592-569 BC and naming him as ‘Yaukin king of the Judæans’.

### **XII.e**      2 Kings 24:13-17 - Capture of Jerusalem

As well as the king and his family, all the items of value were taken along with thousands of prominent people, particularly the educated, those of military age and the skilled workers. Refer to the introductory comments on vv.8-12 above.

Nebuchadnezzar’s initial subjugation of the city was in 605 BC, with further destruction from Nebuchadnezzar’s marauding bands between 601-598 BC. This first capture of Jerusalem occurred in 597 BC, the eighth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonian Chronicle tells of the king’s army laying siege to Jerusalem, capturing it, and appointing his own king over it. He then took tribute from Judah. The siege and fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar’s main army occurred in March 597 BC, before Nebuchadnezzar returns to completely destroy and depopulate Jerusalem in the summer of 586 BC.

<sup>13</sup> He carried off all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the Lord, which King Solomon of Israel had made, all this as the Lord had foretold. <sup>14</sup> He carried away all Jerusalem, all the officials, all the warriors, ten thousand captives, all the artisans and the smiths; no one remained, except the poorest people of the land. <sup>15</sup> He carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon; the king's mother, the king's wives, his officials, and the elite of the land, he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. <sup>16</sup> The king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon all the men of valour, seven thousand, the artisans and the smiths, one thousand, all of them strong and fit for war.

### 2 Kings 24:13-16

He carried off all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house. On this second attack against Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar took whatever valuables remained in the temple or in the royal palaces of Jerusalem.

He cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the Lord, which King Solomon of Israel had made. This reveals what happened to the furniture and precious things of Solomon's temple. Some ancient traditions state that Jeremiah hid the Ark of the Covenant before this, so that it was not among the things that were cut up and carried back to Babylon.

No one remained, except the poorest people of the land. Nebuchadnezzar not only took the material treasures of Judah, but also the human treasures. Anyone with any skills or abilities was taken captive to Babylon. Among these captives was the prophet Ezekiel, who compiled his book of prophecies while in captivity in Babylon. With only the poor and unskilled people of the land remaining, it might be assumed that Jerusalem would cause no further trouble. Indeed, the Babylonians might have expected it to cease functioning as a city altogether.

<sup>17</sup> The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

### 2 Kings 24:17

The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place. Since Nebuchadnezzar had completely humbled Judah, he put a king on the throne who he thought would submit to Babylon. He chose an uncle of Jehoiachin, a brother to Jehoiakim. This king ruled from 597-587 BC and inherited a much reduced Judah, for the Negeb was lost: *<<Say to the king and the queen mother: 'Take a lowly seat, for your beautiful crown has come down from your head.' The towns of the Negeb are shut up with no one to open them; all Judah is*

*taken into exile, wholly taken into exile'*>> (Jeremiah 13:18-19), and the land weakened by the loss of its experienced personnel. There were both a pro-Egyptian element and false prophets among the survivors: <<*King Zedekiah said, 'Here he is; he is in your hands; for the king is powerless against you'*>> (Jeremiah 38:5). Refer also to Jeremiah Chapters 28-29.

And changed his name to Zedekiah. The name Zedekiah means, 'the Lord is righteous'. The righteous judgement of God would soon be seen against Judah.

#### XII.f 2 Kings 24:18-20a - Zedekiah Reigns over Judah

Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah ruled next, under the name of Zedekiah, as a Babylonian vassal. Jeremiah Chapters 27-29 suggest that from early in his reign he was plotting revolt, and eventually he rebelled.

<sup>18</sup> Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. <sup>19</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, just as Jehoiakim had done. <sup>20a</sup> Indeed, Jerusalem and Judah so angered the Lord that he expelled them from his presence.

#### 2 Kings 24:18-20a

He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Second Chronicles 36:11-20 records more of the evil of Zedekiah, specifically that he did not listen to Jeremiah or other messengers of God. Instead, they mocked and disregarded the message. His evil deeds included the fact that:

- He was not willing to listen to God's word through Jeremiah.
- He broke an oath made in Yahweh's name as a vassal of Babylon.
- He was unrepentant and failed to restrain leaders and priests from defiling the temple with the reintroduction of idolatrous practices.

Indeed, Jerusalem and Judah so angered the Lord that he expelled them from his presence. God's patience and longsuffering had finally run its course and He allowed - even instigated - the conquering of the Kingdom of Judah. Ultimately, there were many reasons for the exile. One mentioned by the Chronicler is that Judah was depopulated in exile: <<*to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had made up for its sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfil seventy years*>> (2 Chronicles 36:21).

#### XII.g 2 Kings 24:20b-25:21 - The Fall and Captivity of Judah

This section will be commented on in the next chapter.

<sup>20b</sup> Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.