

Events leading up to Babylonian Captivity (1st Destruction of Jerusalem)

Scripture reading – 2 Kings 24:18-20 (account of last king of Judah)

- My intent with this sermon is to discuss the events leading up to the first destruction of Jerusalem
- This destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 BC was a shadow of the events that took place during the second destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in 70 AD
- 70 AD was to be worse than 586 BC (Matthew 24:21)
- 1st destruction was still very brutal though
 - The Babylonian Captivity happened in 3 stages, so many lives were spared in this regard
 - 1st stage – 2 Kings 24:1 (under Jehoiakim)
 - Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego exiled during this stage (Daniel 1:1-21)
 - 2nd stage – 2 Kings 24:8-17 (under Jehoiachin)
 - During this stage, Ezekiel was exiled (Ezekiel 1:1-3)
 - 3rd stage – 2 Kings 25, Jeremiah 52 (under Zedekiah)
 - This is when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem
 - Babylon camped outside the city for 2 years with intent to starve the remaining inhabitants out (2 Kings 25:3, Ezekiel 4, Ezekiel 5)
 - Finally laid siege to it (2 Kings 25:4-25)
- Let's discuss the events that led up to this
- After David, Solomon became king over all of the 12 tribes for 40 years before he died (1 Kings 11:42, 2 Chronicles 9:30)
- Rehoboam follows Solomon, but he was much harder on the people than Solomon was
- 10 tribes (all minus Judah and Benjamin) secede from Rehoboam and make Jeroboam their king (1 Kings 12, 2 Chronicles 10)
 - Judah & Benjamin = Judah under Rehoboam (Rehoboam was wicked)
 - 10 others = Israel under Jeroboam (Jeroboam also wicked)
- Israel had many kings, but most famously Ahab (1 Kings 16)
 - Ahab did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any before him (1 Kings 16:30)
 - The works of Ahab were so evil that they made the works of Jeroboam seem trivial
 - Ahab married Jezebel
 - These 2 killed many prophets
 - As an example, Obadiah had to hide 100 prophets from Jezebel to protect them (1 Kings 18:3)
- Jeroboam and Ahab included, not 1 king of Israel did good in the sight of the Lord
- Eventually, during the reign of Hoshea, Israel was taken captive by Assyria (2 Kings 17)
- Ahaz was the king of Judah when all this happens and Judah was allowed to live on (2 Kings 16)
- Judah had a mix of good and bad kings
 - As example, Hezekiah was good (2 Kings 18-20), Amon was bad (2 Kings 21)

- Hezekiah was named to have been the king who destroyed the bronze snake made by Moses in the wilderness (2 Kings 18:4)
 - People were burning incense to it
 - Numbers 21:4-9
 - Israelites speak against God and Moses in the wilderness
 - God sent venomous snakes among them as a result, killing many
 - Israelites repent
 - Moses makes this bronze snake for Israelites to look at when bitten and they would live
 - It was under Hezekiah that Babylon first came into Jerusalem
 - This visit was friendly though
 - Hezekiah became sick and almost died after a spat with Assyria (2 Chronicles 32)
 - God spared Hezekiah and Hezekiah was sent gifts from the Babylonian king
 - Upon delivery of the gifts, Hezekiah showed the messengers everything in his palace and kingdom (2 Kings 20)
 - This was not Nebuchadnezzar (Babylon and Judah united over their enemy Assyria at this point)
- After Hezekiah came Manasseh and Amon who were both evil
 - Manasseh was the “straw that broke the camel’s back” (2 Kings 21:10-15)
 - At this time, God announced His plan to give them over to the Babylonians
 - Manasseh made several images to false gods, followed in the ways of Ahab, sacrificed his sons amongst other things
- Next came Josiah who turned out to be the last righteous king of Judah
 - Worked hard to undo the works of Manasseh and evil kings dating all the way back to Jeroboam (2 Kings 22-23)
 - Josiah made a military mistake at the end of his life though (2 Kings 23:29-30)
 - 2 Chronicles 35:20-24 describes how Egypt was marching North to Carchemish to assist Assyria in a battle against Babylon (God was on Egypt’s side)
 - Egypt had no quarrel with Judah
 - Josiah, in his alliance with Babylon dating back to the reign of Hezekiah, fought against Egypt at Megiddo and died
- After advancing passed Judah to Carchemish to fight Babylon, Babylon was victorious over Assyria and Egypt
- Following Josiah’s death, Judah established Jehoahaz as next king
- Egypt did not like this and made Jehoiakim king instead as Judah was made their vassal after the defeat at Megiddo
 - Jehoiakim paid reparations to Egypt as a result of the battle at Megiddo (2 Kings 23)
 - Jehoiakim was evil in the eyes of the Lord though
 - Incestual relationships
 - Established many idols
 - Killed prophets

- If God hadn't had enough with Manasseh, Jehoiakim would have put Him over the edge
 - Jehoiakim was loyal to Egypt though until they were defeated at Carchemish by Babylon and driven South back to Egypt
 - Jehoiakim rebels against Babylon eventually, ending his reign (2 Kings 24)
- Jehoiachin becomes king next and continues the rebellion against Babylon until he is captured (2 Kings 24)
- At this point, Babylon has had enough of the rebellion and appoints Zedekiah as final king of Judah
- Zedekiah did not learn from previous kings and continued in rebellion towards Babylon (2 Kings 24, 2 Chronicles 36)
 - Zedekiah tries to enlist the help of Egypt in their fight against Babylon (Ezekiel 17:11-18)
 - Egypt actually agrees to help and sends troops to Jerusalem
 - Upon hearing of this conspiracy, Babylon withdraws from Jerusalem
 - Egypt arrives and finds no Babylon at Jerusalem (must have thought Zedekiah was crazy) and goes back home (Jeremiah 37:5-8)
 - 2 Kings 25 – Babylon comes back and destroys Jerusalem
 - Zedekiah's last effort was to flee Jerusalem during the siege, but Babylon caught him
 - As punishment for his actions, his sons were killed in front of him and he was blinded immediately after (2 Kings 25:1-7)
- Judah was in Babylon until the Persians overtook Babylon
- That is a long history of what happened, now let's discuss why it happened
- These last few kings were rebellious towards Babylon, but more importantly they were rebellious towards God
- We discussed earlier how Manasseh was the turning point for Judah's fate (2 Kings 21:10-15)
- As a result, let's look at more details of what he did and what we can learn
 - 2 Kings 21:3-5 tells us Manasseh had all sorts of troubles with idols (Assyrian gods)
 - Having no idols dates all the way back to the wilderness (1st 2 of the 10 commandments in Exodus 20:2-3 deal with being faithful to God)
 - So what kind of things do we idolize today?
 - Money
 - Matthew 6:24 – cannot serve both God and money
 - Celebrities
 - Romans 14:11 – every knee will bow before the Lord, regardless of earthly status
 - God still does not like idols and demands our faithfulness
 - 2 Kings 21:16 tells us that Manasseh shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end
 - We all know that murder is wrong, but Jesus expands upon this
 - Matthew 7:21-22 – Jesus says to not even be angry with your brother
 - 2 Kings 21:9 tells us that Manasseh led the people astray

- Matthew 18:6 – Jesus says that if anyone causes others to sin, it would be better for him to be drowned
 - Manasseh did seem to have a change of heart towards the end of his life though
 - 2 Chronicles 33:11-17, 23
 - The actions of his change of heart were undone by Amon
- Also as discussed earlier, Josiah reigned shortly after Manasseh righteously
- But his righteous reign was not enough to spare Judah – their fate had already been sealed
- Rebellions of the last 3 kings against Babylon is the method God used
 - Real problem is that they were rebellious towards God
 - 2 Kings 23:37 – Jehoiakim did evil in the eyes of the Lord
 - 2 Kings 24:9 – Johoiachin did evil in the eyes of the Lord
 - 2 Kings 24:19 – Zedekiah did evil in the eyes of the Lord
- These last few kings were warned by the prophets and still disobeyed
 - 2 Chronicles 33:10 – Manasseh was warned (by God likely through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, or Zepheniah)
 - Jeremiah 26:1-6, 11, 20-23 – Jehoiakim warned by Jeremiah & Uriah
 - Jehoiakim did not listen – killed Uriah and threatened to kill Jeremiah
 - Jeremiah 27:1-4, 12-22 – Zedekiah did not listen to Jeremiah causing a severe famine in Jerusalem (brutality of famine can be read about in Ezekiel 4, 5) until Babylon finally sieged the city
 - Jeremiah 32:1-5 – rather than listening to further warnings from Jeremiah, Zedekiah had him imprisoned
- Zedekiah would not submit to Babylon willingly as instructed by God and when Babylon finally sieged Jerusalem, he tried to flee (2 Kings 25:1-7)
 - There is no fleeing God’s wrath if that is what you have reaped
 - Jonah tried but failed
 - Numbers 32:23 – your sins will find you out
- Jeremiah 3:6-11 – at the end of all this, Israel was better off than Judah
 - 2 Peter 2:21-22 is an equivalent NT scripture
- Matthew 10:32-33
 - Jesus will acknowledge before His Father those who acknowledge him. Whoever disowns will be disowned
- 2 Peter 3:9 – God wants no one to perish, but everyone to come to repentance
- We read in Revelation how evil is destroyed
 - Even Satan himself suffers the same fate as those he persuaded against God
- Just like these kings, we have our warnings as well
- We know that God triumphs over evil in the end (Revelation)
- We have the choice to obey God and escape His wrath or ignore God’s grace and suffer the same fate as Judah