

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem; it is taken, after having been sorely reduced by famine, etc.; and Zedekiah, endeavoring to make his escape, is made prisoner, his sons slain before his eyes; then, his eyes being put out, he is put in chains and carried to Babylon, 2 Kings 25:1-7. Nebuzar-adan burns the temple, breaks down the walls of Jerusalem, and carries away the people captives, leaving only a few to till the ground, 2 Kings 25:8-12. He takes away all the brass, and all the vessels of the temple, 2 Kings 25:13-17. Several of the chief men and nobles found in the city, he brings to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, who puts them all to death, 2 Kings 25:18-21. Nebuchadnezzar makes Gedaliah governor over the poor people that were left, against whom Ishmael rises, and slays him, and others with him; on which the people in general, fearing the resentment of the Chaldeans, flee to Egypt, 2 Kings 25:22-26. Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, releases Jehoiachin out of prison, treats him kindly, and makes him his friend, 2 Kings 25:27-30.

Verse 1

In the ninth year of his reign - Zedekiah, having revolted against the Chaldeans, Nebuchadnezzar, wearied with his treachery, and the bad faith of the Jews, determined the total subversion of the Jewish state. Having assembled a numerous army, he entered Judea on the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah; this, according to the computation of Archbishop Usher, was on Thursday, January 30, A.M. 3414, which was a sabbatical year: whereon the men of Jerusalem hearing that the Chaldean army was approaching, proclaimed liberty to their servants; see Jeremiah 34:8-10, according to the law, Exodus 21:2; Deuteronomy 15:1, Deuteronomy 15:2, Deuteronomy 15:12: for Nebuchadnezzar, marching with his army against Zedekiah, having wasted all the country, and taken their strong holds, except Lachish, Azekah, and Jerusalem, came against the latter with all his forces. See Jeremiah 34:1-7. On the very day, as the same author computes, the siege and utter destruction of Jerusalem were revealed to Ezekiel the prophet, then in Chaldea, under the type of a seething pot; and his wife died in the evening, and he was charged not to mourn for her, because of the extraordinary calamity that had fallen upon the land. See Ezekiel 24:1, Ezekiel 24:2, etc.

Jeremiah, having predicted the same calamities, Jeremiah 34:1-7, was by the command of Zedekiah shut up in prison, Jeremiah 32:1-16.

Pharaoh Hophra, or Vaphris, hearing how Zedekiah was pressed, and fearing for the safety of his own dominions should the Chaldeans succeed against Jerusalem, determined to succor Zedekiah. Finding this, the Chaldeans raised the siege of Jerusalem, and went to meet the Egyptian army, which they defeated and put to flight. Joseph. Antiq., lib. 10, cap. 10. In the interim the Jews, thinking their danger was passed, reclaimed their servants, and put them again under the yoke; Jeremiah 34:8, etc.

Verses 2-4

And the city was besieged, etc. - Nebuchadnezzar, having routed the Egyptian army, returned to Jerusalem, and besieged it so closely that, being reduced by famine, and a breach made in the wall, the Chaldeans entered it on the ninth day of the fourth month, (Wednesday, July 27), Zedekiah and many others endeavoring to make their escape by night.

Verse 5

The army of the Chaldeans pursued - Zedekiah was taken, and brought captive to Riblah in Syria, where Nebuchadnezzar then lay, who ordered his sons to be slain before his face, and then put out his eyes; and having loaded him with chains, sent him to Babylon, (see Jeremiah 39:4, Jeremiah 39:7; Jeremiah 52:7, Jeremiah 52:11), thus fulfilling the prophetic declarations, that his eyes should see the eyes of the king of Babylon, Jeremiah 32:4; Jeremiah 34:3; but Babylon he should not see, though he was to die there; Ezekiel 12:13.

Verse 8

In the fifth month - On the seventh day of the fifth month, (answering to Wednesday, Aug. 24), Nebuzar-adan made his entry into the city; and having spent two days in making provision, on the tenth day of the same month, (Saturday, Aug. 27), he set fire to the temple and the king's palace, and the houses of the nobility, and burnt them to the ground; Jeremiah 52:13, compared with Jeremiah 39:8. Thus the temple was destroyed in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the nineteenth of Nebuchadnezzar, the first of the XLVIIIth Olympiad, in the one hundred and sixtieth current year of the era of Nabonassar, four hundred and twenty-four years three months and eight days from the time in which Solomon laid its foundation stone.

Verse 10

Break down the walls - In the same fifth month, Jeremiah 1:3, the walls of Jerusalem being razed to the ground,

all that were left in the city, and all that had fled over formerly to Nebuchadnezzar, and all the common people of the city, with all the king's treasures, those of the nobles, and the whole furniture of the temple, did Nebuzar-adan carry off to Babylon. See Jeremiah 39:8, Jeremiah 39:9; Jeremiah 52:14, Jeremiah 52:23. And thus was Judah carried away out of her own land, four hundred and sixty-eight years after David began to reign over it; from the division of the ten tribes three hundred and eighty-eight years; and from the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, one hundred and thirty-four years; A.M. 3416, and before Christ five hundred and ninety. And thus ends what is called the fifth age of the world. See Usher's Annals.

Verse 18

Seraiah the chief priest - Zephaniah - The person who is here called the second priest was what the Jews call (sagan), a sort of deputy, who performed the functions of the high priest when he was prevented by any infirmity from attending the temple service. See on 2 Kings 23:4 (note).

Verse 19

And five men of them that were in the king's presence - These were principal counselors, and confidential officers.

In Jeremiah 52:25, it is said he took seven men who were near the king's person, and the same number is found in the Arabic in this place; and the Chaldee has no less than fifty men; but in Jeremiah this, as well as all the rest of the versions, reads seven. Probably they were no more than five at first, or, perhaps Jeremiah reckoned with the five the officer that was set over the men of war, and the principal scribe of the host mentioned here, as two with the five; and thus made seven in the whole.

Verse 21

The king of Babylon smote them - He had, no doubt, found that these had counselled Zedekiah to revolt.

Verse 22

Made Gedaliah - ruler - This was no regal dignity; he was only a sort of hind or overseer, appointed to regulate the husbandmen.

Verse 23

To Mizpah - This is said to have been situated on the east side of the river Jordan, and most contiguous to Babylon, and therefore the most proper for the residence of Gedaliah, because nearest to the place from which he was to receive his instructions. But there were several places of this name, and we do not exactly know where this was situated.

Verse 24

Gedaliah swore to them - He pledged himself in the most solemn manner to encourage and protect them.

Verse 25

Smote Gedaliah - This was at an entertainment which Gedaliah had made for them; see Jeremiah 41:1, etc. He was not content with this murder, but slew fourscore more, who were coming with offerings to the temple, and took several as prisoners, among whom were some of the king's daughters; and set off to go to the Ammonites: but Johanan, the son of Careah, hearing of these outrages, raised a number of men, and pursued Ishmael upon which Ishmael's prisoners immediately turned and joined Johanan; so that he, and eight of his accomplices, with difficulty escaped to the Ammonites. See Jeremiah 41:1, etc. Baalis, king of the Ammonites, had sent Ishmael to murder Gedaliah; and of this he was informed by Johanan, who offered to prevent it, by taking away the life of this murderer. But Gedaliah could not believe that he harbored such foul designs, and therefore took no precaution to save his life. See Jeremiah 40:13-16.

Verse 27

And it came to pass - Nebuchadnezzar was just now dead; and Evil-merodach, his son, succeeded to the kingdom in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin: and on the seven and twentieth day [Jeremiah says five and twentieth] of the twelfth month of that year, (Tuesday, April 15, A.M. 3442), he brought the long captivated Jewish king out of prison; treated him kindly; and ever after, during his life, reckoned him among the king's friends. This is particularly related in the four last verses of the book of Jeremiah.

Verse 30

A continual allowance given him of the king - He lived in a regal style, and had his court even in the city of Babylon, being supplied with every requisite by the munificence and friendship of the king. In about two years after this, Evil-merodach was slain in a conspiracy; and it is supposed that Jehoiachin, then about fifty-eight years of age, fell with his friend and protector. Thus terminates the catastrophe of the Jewish kings, people, and

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state; the consequence of unheard-of rebellions and provocations against the Majesty of heaven.