

# CHAPTER 25

Ever since David's time Jerusalem had been a celebrated place, beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth: while the book of psalms lasts that name will sound great. In the New Testament we read much of it, when it was, as here, ripening again for its ruin. In the close of the Bible we read of a new Jerusalem. Every thing therefore that concerns Jerusalem is worthy our regard. In this chapter we have,

**I.** The utter destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, the city besieged and taken (v. 1-4), the houses burnt (v. 8, 9), and wall broken down (v. 10), and the inhabitants carried away into captivity (v. 11, 12). The glory of Jerusalem was,

**1.** That it was the royal city, where were set “the thrones of the house of David;” but that glory has now departed, for the prince is made a most miserable prisoner, the seed royal is destroyed (v. 5-7), and the principal officers are put to death (v. 18-21).

**2.** That it was the holy city, where was the testimony of Israel; but that glory has departed, for Solomon's temple is burnt to the ground (v. 9) and the sacred vessels that remained are carried away to Babylon (v. 13-17). Thus has Jerusalem become as a widow, <sup><2500></sup>Lamentations 1:1. Ichabod — Where is the glory?

**II.** The distraction and dispersion of the remnant that was left in Judah under Gedaliah (v. 22-26).

**III.** The countenance which, after thirty-seven years' imprisonment, was given to Jehoiachin the captive king of Judah (v. 27-30).

## ~~<1251>~~ 2 KINGS 25:1-7

### JERUSALEM BESIEGED

We left king Zedekiah in rebellion against the king of Babylon (<sup><1241></sup>2 Kings 24:20), contriving and endeavouring to shake off his yoke, when he was no way able to do it, nor took the right method by making God his friend first. Now here we have an account of the fatal consequences of that attempt.

**I.** The king of Babylon's army laid siege to Jerusalem, v. 1. What should hinder them when the country was already in their possession? <sup><1241></sup>2 Kings 24:2. They *built forts against the city round about*, whence, by such arts of war as they then had, they battered it, sent into it instruments of death, and kept out of it the necessary supports of life. Formerly Jerusalem had been compassed with the favour of God as with a shield, but now their defence had departed from them and their enemies surrounded them on every side. Those that by sin have provoked God to leave them will find that *innumerable evils will compass them about*. Two years this siege lasted; at first the army retired, for fear of the king of Egypt (<sup><3571></sup>Jeremiah 37:11), but, finding him not so powerful as they thought, they soon returned, with a resolution not to quit the city till they had made themselves masters of it.

**II.** During this siege the famine prevailed (v. 3), so that for a long time they *ate their bread by weight and with care*, <sup><3046></sup>Ezekiel 4:16. Thus they were punished for their gluttony and excess, their *fulness of bread and feeding themselves without fear*. At length *there was no bread for the people of the land*, that is, the common people, the soldiers, whereby they were weakened and rendered unfit for service. Now they ate their own children for want of food. See this foretold by one prophet (<sup><3150></sup>Ezekiel 5:10) and bewailed by another, <sup><3043></sup>Lamentations 4:3, etc. Jeremiah earnestly persuaded the king to surrender (<sup><2487></sup>Jeremiah 38:17), but his heart was hardened to his destruction.

**III.** At length the city was taken by storm: it was *broken up*, v. 4. The besiegers made a breach in the wall, at which they forced their way into it. The besieged, unable any longer to defend it, endeavoured to quit it, and make the best of their way; and many, no doubt, were put to the sword, the victorious army being much exasperated by their obstinacy.

**IV.** The king, his family, and all his great men, made their escape in the night, by some secret passages which the besiegers either had not discovered or did not keep their eye upon, v. 4. But those as much deceive themselves who think to escape God's judgments as those who think to brave them; the feet of him that flees from them will as surely fail as the hands of him that fights against them. When God judges he will overcome. Intelligence was given to the Chaldeans of the king's flight, and which way he had gone, so that they soon overtook him, v. 5. His guards were scattered from him, every man shifting for his own safety. Had he put himself under God's protection, that would not have failed him now. He

presently fell into the enemies' hands, and here we are told what they did with him.

**1.** He was brought to the king of Babylon, and tried by a council of war for rebelling against him who set him up, and to whom he had sworn fidelity. God and man had a quarrel with him for this; see <sup><2676></sup>Ezekiel 17:16, etc. The king of Babylon now lay at Riblah (which lay between Judea and Babylon), that he might be ready to give orders both to his court at home and his army abroad.

**2.** His *sons were slain before his eyes*, though children, that this doleful spectacle, the last his eyes were to behold, might leave an impression of grief and horror upon his spirit as long as he lived. In slaying his sons, they showed their indignation at his falsehood, and in effect declared that neither he nor any of his were fit to be trusted, and therefore that they were not fit to live.

**3.** His eyes were put out, by which he was deprived of that common comfort of human life which is given even to *those that are in misery, and to the bitter in soul*, the light of the sun, by which he was also disabled for any service. He dreaded being mocked, and therefore would not be persuaded to yield (<sup><2489></sup>Jeremiah 38:19), but that which he feared came upon him with a witness, and no doubt added much to his misery; for, as those that are deaf suspect that every body talks of them, so those that are blind suspect that every body laughs at them. By this two prophecies that seemed to contradict one another were both fulfilled. Jeremiah prophesied that Zedekiah should be brought to Babylon, <sup><2475></sup>Jeremiah 32:5; 34:3. Ezekiel prophesied that he should not see Babylon, <sup><2523></sup>Ezekiel 12:13. He was brought thither, but, his eyes being put out, he did not see it. Thus he ended his days, before he ended his life.

**4.** He was *bound in fetters of brass* and so *carried to Babylon*. He that was blind needed not be bound (his blindness fettered him), but, for his greater disgrace, they led him bound; only, whereas common malefactors are laid in irons (<sup><24518></sup>Psalms 105:18; 107:10), he, being a prince, was bound with fetters of brass; but that the metal was somewhat nobler and lighter was little comfort, while still he was in fetters. Let it not seem strange if those that have been held in the cords of iniquity come to be thus *held in the cords of affliction*, <sup><24818></sup>Job 36:8.

## ~~2278~~ 2 KINGS 25:8-21

### THE TEMPLE DESTROYED

Though we have reason to think that the army of the Chaldeans were much enraged against the city for holding out with so much stubbornness, yet they did not therefore put all to fire and sword as soon as they had taken the city (which is too commonly done in such cases), but about a month after (compare v. 8 with v. 3) Nebuzar-adan was sent with orders to complete the destruction of Jerusalem. This space God gave them to repent, after all the foregoing days of his patience, but in vain; their hearts (for aught that appears) were still hardened, and therefore execution is awarded to the utmost.

**1.** The city and temple are burnt, v. 9. It does not appear that the king of Babylon designed to send any colonies to people Jerusalem and therefore he ordered it to be laid in ashes, as a nest of rebels. At the burning of the king's house and *the houses of the great men* one cannot so much wonder (the inhabitants had, by their sins, made them combustible), but that the *house of the Lord* should perish in these flames, that that holy and beautiful house should be burnt with fire (~~2364~~ Isaiah 64:11), is very strange. That house which David prepared for, and which Solomon built at such a vast expense — that house which had the eye and heart of God perpetually upon it (~~1008~~ 1 Kings 9:3) — might not that have been snatched as a brand out of this burning? No, it must not be fire-proof against God's judgments. This stately structure must be turned into ashes, and it is probable the ark in it, for the enemies, having heard how dearly the Philistines paid for the abusing of it, durst not seize that, nor did any of its friends take care to preserve it, for then we should have heard of it again in the second temple. One of the apocryphal writers does indeed tell us that the prophet Jeremiah got it out of the temple, and conveyed it to a cave in Mount Nebo on the other side Jordan, and hid it there (2 Macc. 2:4, 5), but that could not be, for Jeremiah was a close prisoner at that time. By the burning of the temple God would show how little cares for the external pomp of his worship when the life and power of religion are neglected. The people trusted to the temple, as if that would protect them in their sins (~~2104~~ Jeremiah 7:4), but God, by this, let them know that when they had profaned it they would find it but a refuge of lies. This temple had stood about 420, some say 430 years. The people having forfeited the promises made concerning it, those

promises must be understood of the gospel-temple, which is God's rest for ever. It is observable that the second temple was burnt by the Romans the same month, and the same day of the month, that the first temple was burnt by the Chaldeans, which, Josephus says, was the tenth of August.

**2.** The walls of Jerusalem are demolished (v. 10), as if the victorious army would be revenged on them for having kept them out so long, or at least prevent the like opposition another time. Sin unwalls a people and takes away their defence. These walls were never repaired till Nehemiah's time.

**3.** The residue of the people are carried away captive to Babylon, v. 11. Most of the inhabitants had perished by sword or famine, or had made their escape when the king did (for it is said, v. 5, *His army was scattered from him*), so that there were very few left, who with the deserters, making in all but 832 persons (as appears, <sup>3629</sup>Jeremiah 52:29), were carried away into captivity; only *the poor of the land were left behind* (v. 12), to till the ground and dress the vineyards for the Chaldeans. Sometimes poverty is a protection; for those that have nothing have nothing to lose. When the rich Jews, who had been oppressive to the poor, were made strangers, nay, prisoners, in an enemy's country, the poor whom they had despised and oppressed had liberty and peace in their own country. Thus Providence sometimes remarkably humbles the proud and favours those of low degree.

**4.** The brazen vessels, and other appurtenances of the temple, are carried away, those of silver and gold being most of them gone before. Those two famous columns of brass, *Jachin* and *Boaz*, which signified the strength and stability of the house of God, were broken to pieces and the brass of them was carried to Babylon, v. 13. When the things signified were sinned away what should the signs stand there for? Ahaz had profanely *cut off the borders of the bases*, and put *the brazen sea upon a pavement of stones* (<sup>2167</sup>2 Kings 16:17); justly therefore are the brass themselves, and the brazen sea, delivered into the enemy's hand. It is just with God to take away his ordinances from those that profane and abuse them, that curtail and depress them. Some things remained of gold and silver (v. 15) which were now carried off; but most of this plunder was brass, such a vast quantity of it that it is said to be *without weight*, v. 16. The carrying away of *the vessels wherewith they ministered* (v. 14) put an end to the ministration. It was a righteous thing with God to deprive those of the benefit of his worship who had slighted it so long and preferred false

worships before it. Those that would have many altars shall now have none.

**5.** Several of the great men are slain in cold blood — Seraiah the chief priest (who was the father of Ezra as appears, <sup><1570B></sup>Ezra 7:1), the second priest (who, when there was occasion, officiated for him), and three door-keepers of the temple (v. 18), the general of the army, five privy-counsellors (afterwards they made them up seven, <sup><3525></sup>Jeremiah 52:25), the secretary of war, or pay-master of the army, and sixty country gentlemen who had concealed themselves in the city. These, being persons of some rank, were brought to the king of Babylon (v. 19, 20), who ordered them to be all put to death (v. 21), when, in reason, they might have hoped that surely the bitterness of death was past. These the king of Babylon's revenge looked upon as most active in opposing him; but divine justice, we may suppose, looked upon them as ringleaders in that idolatry and impiety which were punished by these desolations. This completed the calamity: *So Judah was carried away out of their land*, about 860 years after they were put in possession of it by Joshua. Now the scripture was fulfilled, *The Lord shall bring thee, and the king which thou shalt set over thee, into a nation which thou hast not known*, <sup><1536></sup>Deuteronomy 28:36. Sin kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan, and now turned *them* out. The Lord is known by those judgments which he executes, and makes good that word which he has spoken, <sup><308D></sup>Amos 3:2. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*

## <sup><125D></sup> 2 KINGS 25:22-30

### DISPERSION OF THE REMNANT OF JUDAH

In these verses we have,

**I.** The dispersion of the remaining people. The city of Jerusalem was quite laid waste. Some people there were in the land of Judah (v. 22) that had weathered the storm, and (which was no small favour at this time, <sup><2485></sup>Jeremiah 45:5) had *their lives given them for a prey*. Now see,

**1.** What a good posture they were put into. The king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah, one of themselves, to be their governor and protector under him, a very good man, and one that would make the best of the bad, v. 22. His

father Ahikam was one that countenanced and protected Jeremiah when the princes had vowed his death, <sup><243></sup>Jeremiah 26:24. It is probable that this Gedaliah, by the advice of Jeremiah, had gone over the Chaldeans, and had conducted himself so well that the king of Babylon entrusted him with the government. He resided not at Jerusalem, but at Mizpah, in the land of Benjamin, a place famous in Samuel's time. Thither those came who had fled from Zedekiah (v. 4) and put themselves under his protection (v. 23), which he assured them of if they would be patient and peaceable under the government of the king of Babylon, v. 24. Gedaliah, though he had not the pomp and power of a sovereign prince, yet might have been a greater blessing to them than many of their kings had been, especially having such a privy-council as Jeremiah, who was now with them, and interested himself in their affairs, <sup><241></sup>Jeremiah 40:5, 6.

**2.** What a fatal breach was made upon them, soon afterwards, by the death of Gedaliah, within two months after he entered upon his government. The utter extirpation of the Jews, for the present, was determined, and therefore it was in vain for them to think of taking root again: the whole land must be plucked up, <sup><245></sup>Jeremiah 45:4. Yet this hopeful settlement is dashed to pieces, not by the Chaldeans, but by some of themselves. The things of their peace were so hidden from their eyes that they knew not when they were well off, nor would believe when they were told.

**(1.)** They had a good governor of their own, and him they slew, out of spite to the Chaldeans, because he was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, v. 25. Ishmael, who was of the royal family, envying Gedaliah's advancement and the happy settlement of the people under him, though he could not propose to set up himself, resolved to ruin him, and basely slew him and all his friends, both Jews and Chaldeans. Nebuchadnezzar would not, could not, have been a more mischievous enemy to their peace than this degenerate branch of the house of David was.

**(2.)** They were as yet in their own good land, but they forsook it, and went to Egypt, for fear of the Chaldeans, v. 26. The Chaldeans had reason enough to be offended at the murder of Gedaliah; but if those that remained had humbly remonstrated, alleging that it was only the act of Ishmael and his party, we may suppose that those who were innocent of it, nay, who suffered greatly by it, would not have been punished for it: but, under pretence of this apprehension, contrary to the counsel of Jeremiah, they all went to Egypt, where, it is probable, they mixed with the Egyptians

by degrees, and were never heard of more as Israelites. Thus was there a full end made of them by their own folly and disobedience, and Egypt had the last of them, that the last verse of that chapter of threatenings might be fulfilled, after all the rest, <sup><6388></sup>Deuteronomy 28:68, *The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again*. These events are more largely related by the prophet Jeremiah, 40 to 45. *Quaeque ipse miserrima vidit, et quorum pars magna fuit — Which scenes he was doomed to behold, and in which he bore a melancholy part.*

**II.** The reviving of the captive prince. Of Zedekiah we hear no more after he was carried blind to Babylon; it is probable that he did not live long, but that when he died he was buried with some marks of honour, <sup><2645></sup>Jeremiah 34:5. Of Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, who surrendered himself (<sup><12312></sup>2 Kings 24:12), we are here told that as soon as Evil-merodach came to the crown, upon the death of his father Nebuchadnezzar, he released him out of prison (where he had lain thirty-seven years, and was now fifty-five years old), *spoke kindly to him*, paid more respect to him than to any other of the kings his father had left in captivity (v. 28), gave him princely clothing instead of his prison-garments, maintained him in his own palace (v. 29), and allowed him a pension for himself and his family in some measure corresponding to his rank, *a daily rate for every day as long as he lived*. Consider this, 1. As a very happy change of Jehoiachin's condition. To have honour and liberty after he had been so long in confinement and disgrace, the plenty and pleasure of a court after he had been so long accustomed to the straits and miseries of a prison, was like the return of the morning after a very dark and tedious night. Let none say that they shall never see good again because they have long seen little but evil; the most miserable know not what blessed turn Providence may yet give to their affairs, nor what comforts they are reserved for, *according to the days wherein they have been afflicted*, <sup><3301></sup>Psalms 110:15. However the death of afflicted saints is to them such a change as this was to Jehoiachin: it will release them out of their prison, shake off the body, that prison-garment, and open the way to their advancement; it will send them to the throne, to the table, of the King of kings, the glorious liberty of God's children.

2. As a very generous act of Evil-merodach's. He thought his father made the yoke of his captives too heavy, and therefore, with the tenderness of a man and the honour of a prince, made it lighter. It should seem all the kings he had in his power were favoured, but Jehoiachin above them all,



some think for the sake of the antiquity of his family and the honour of his renowned ancestors, David and Solomon. None of the kings of the nations, it is likely, had descended from so long a race of kings in a direct lineal succession, and by a male line, as the king of Judah. The Jews say that this Evil-merodach had been himself imprisoned by his own father, when he returned from his madness, for some mismanagement at that time, and that in prison he contracted a friendship with Jehoiachin, in consequence of which, as soon as he had it in his power, he showed him this kindness as a sufferer, as a fellow-sufferer. Some suggest that Evil-merodach had learned from Daniel and his fellows the principles of the true religion, and was well affected to them, and upon that account favoured Jehoiachin.

**3.** As a kind dispensation of Providence, for the encouragement of the Jews in captivity, and the support of their faith and hope concerning their enlargement in due time. This happened just about the midnight of their captivity. Thirty-six of the seventy years were now past, and almost as many were yet behind, and now to see their king thus advanced would be a comfortable earnest to them of their own release in due time, in the set time. *Unto the upright there thus ariseth light in the darkness*, to encourage them to hope, even in the *cloudy and dark day*, that at *evening time it shall be light*; when therefore we are perplexed, let us not be in despair.