

# A Chronology Conundrum - The Prophet Jeremiah:

## 22

(0:03 - 2:51)

In our previous class, The Good and the Bad Figs, we watched as the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, David's last king, on the throne in Jerusalem. We also witnessed as Jeremiah interrupted an international meeting, including envoys from all the surrounding nations who had assembled in Jerusalem for one special cause. They were discussing the Babylonian problem.

We also saw Egypt strategically making its way to Jerusalem, and we ended the class with Jeremiah walking out the Benjamin Gate and being arrested. But, due to a simple error in chronology, an oversight, it pushed my final two points forward in time. Simply put, I hadn't noticed a piece of evidence, a piece of information that allowed me to unlock the chronological mystery of Zedekiah's reign.

I now have those keys. I call those keys Ben-Buzi's chronological keys. Of Zedekiah's reign, our primary sources tell us that Jeremiah received the word of the Lord during the entirety of Zedekiah's 11-year reign.

According to our historical narratives in Kings and Chronicles, we learn some data points that are important to understanding the unfolding story. For instance, we know that Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king and that he reigned for 11 years. We also know that he did bad or evil in the eyes of the Lord, but the historical writers don't tell us what that bad or evil in the eyes of the Lord actually was.

We have to look in other sources for that. We also read that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon, but we don't have a precise date for that rebellion. We're unsure because we don't know if it happened early in the reign of Zedekiah or towards the end of his 11-year reign, at least not according to Kings and Chronicles.

(2:51 - 6:09)

To complicate things even more in this chronological mystery, after it's mentioned that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon, the next thing we read concerns the ninth year of his reign. So if we're going to figure out the way that this flows in the narrative and how do we piece it together, we have to consult other sources. We have to consult other biblical sources, bring in other contemporary reports from the biblical text in order to begin making sense of that, and we are going to start that in the book of Jeremiah.

So we're going to go first thing this morning to Jeremiah chapter 37 where we were last week. We're going to pick up Jeremiah 37 beginning in verse 1. Zedekiah son of Josiah became king instead of Konyah the son of Jehoiakim for king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon set him up as king over the land of Judah. Neither he nor his courtiers nor the people of the land gave heed to the words with which the Lord spoke through the prophet Jeremiah.

Yet king Zedekiah sent Jehuchal son of Shalemiah and Zephaniah son of the priest Maaseah to the prophet Jeremiah to say, please pray on our behalf to the Lord our God. And then there's a parenthetical statement in verse 4 it says, Jeremiah could still go in and out among

the people for they had not yet put him in prison. In verse 5, the army of Pharaoh had set out from Egypt and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard the report they raised the siege of Jerusalem.

Now a cursory reading of those five verses indicates to us that this covers a pretty wide period of time. It begins with the beginning of Zedekiah's reign. It's not given a date however we know that date, we know when Zedekiah was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, but then it goes into other details that are either general, they're not specific enough to date, or we have to look deeper to find those dates.

So for instance when it says that the people, the courtiers, the king, that no one heeded the word that Jeremiah spoke, that could be pretty general because it seems from a reading of all the contemporary reports that that was the case during the entirety of the 11-year reign of Zedekiah. There is a request for prayer it says where Zedekiah sent certain men to Jeremiah to ask him for prayer. We don't really know when that could have been.

Presumably it would be early in the reign of Zedekiah and not later by which point things were totally out of control. However we also get this comment that Jeremiah was not yet in prison. We don't know according to this text when Jeremiah was imprisoned.

(6:10 - 12:13)

And then finally it mentions that Egypt was in route leading into the Babylonian siege. So if we read these verses, and only these verses, we're not quite sure what period of time we are in verse to verse to verse. So what we really need to do is to go to passages which are clearly dated and try to plug those in to, for instance, chapter 37 of Jeremiah, and thereby we can map out the entire chronology of the last 11 years of the Judean kingdom.

And this becomes essential as you will see as we progress. So last week we covered chapter 27 and 28 of Jeremiah. Now the reason that we covered chapter 27 and 28 is because those passages clearly were indicated in the text themselves to take place at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign.

Even though we don't have an exact date in 27, we do have a date in chapter 28. You'll recall that in chapter 27 that's the story of the nation sending the envoys for the secret meeting in Jerusalem to discuss the Babylonian problem, a meeting which is interrupted by Jeremiah. It also contains the famous story of the yoke, where Jeremiah put a yoke upon his shoulders and went into the meeting symbolizing, and he openly states that this represents the rule of Babylon.

His encouraging word was that all the would take that yoke upon themselves. Now I want you to look at chapter 28 and verse 1. In 28.1 of Jeremiah, it says that year, in other words, the year that we just covered in chapter 27, early in the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah, then it gets very specific. In the fifth month of the fourth year, the prophet Hananiah, son of Azur.

So you see, now we're really getting into a date. We know that it is the fourth year of King Zedekiah, and we have a date for that fourth year. We know that the fourth year of Zedekiah would be 593 BCE.

So what we need to do is begin with the known. We know the year 593, and we need to work our way forward through the various narratives and through the various sources to see if we can't get a date for Zedekiah's rebellion, for the imprisonment of Jeremiah, and can we possibly determine a date for Egypt involving itself in the goings-on in the land of Judea? The answer to those questions is yes, we can. Now, 593 BCE is going to prove in our study to be a year of decision.

There is a somewhat isolated and seemingly misplaced pericope, a passage, an event, a narrative that seems out of place in the book of Jeremiah, as you'll see, but I find that this provides a key to understanding and maybe even unlocking a part of this mysterious chronological timing when it comes to Zedekiah's reign. I want you to go with me to Jeremiah chapter 51, and I want to read verse 59 and following. And by the way, what I'm about to read is set off in the Hebrew Bible by white spaces, by these markings, these gaps in the text that go back to ancient times.

So here we go in verse 59, the instructions that the prophet Jeremiah gave to Saraiah, son of Nereiah, son of Maxiah, when the latter went with King Zedekiah of Judah to Babylonia in the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. Saraiah was quartermaster, and Jeremiah wrote down in one scroll all the disaster that would come upon Babylon, all these things that are written concerning Babylon, and Jeremiah said to Saraiah, when you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words and say, O Lord, you yourself have declared concerning this place that it shall be cut off without inhabitant, man or beast, that it shall be a desolation for all time. And when you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it, hurl it into the Euphrates, and say, thus shall Babylon sink and never rise again because of the disaster that I will bring upon it, and nations shall have wearied themselves for fire.

Now, this particular prophecy, this narrative describes something that's quite interesting in the unfolding chaos of the final years of the kingdom of Judea. This is presented as a word of the Lord concerning Babylon. Literally, by the way, Babylon is Babylon.

(12:13 - 20:30)

I know that there are prophecy teachers which want to take the biblical passages about Babylon and attribute them to a modern nation or some sort, trying to push these words into the future, into some eschatological scheme that they've produced, but this is not the case. This is concerning ancient Babylon, the Babylon that the Lord had given to be ruler over the nations for 70 years, that Babylon, the Babylon ruled at the time by Nebuchadnezzar. Now, notice, by the way, that this particular passage ends with, thus far, the words of Jeremiah.

This indicates that at some point in the evolution of Jeremiah's text, see we have a later product, but at some point this was the last word in Jeremiah's scroll. So, also, I want you to notice that chapter 50 and 51 leading up to this particular passage, which is set off by white spaces, that they concern Babylon. If you look back at chapter 50 and verse 1, it will be very clear because it says, "...the word which the Lord spoke concerning Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, through the prophet Jeremiah," and then begins two chapters worth of a declaration, a proclamation, that coming at some point will be the end of the Babylonian period, the end of the Babylonian 70-year rule.

This passage is essential for us to understand what's going on. The year that this was accomplished was 593 BCE. Jeremiah tells us that he had written a scroll concerning Babylon.

We're not exactly sure what was in that scroll, though it seems to follow logically that it was something very similar, if not precisely what we read in chapters 50 and 51 of Jeremiah. So, Jeremiah had written this scroll, and I want you to understand that he's predicting, he's pronouncing in the words of this scroll, the downfall of Babylon, which at this point in 593 BCE is only 16 years into the 70 years which God has given for Babylon to rule over the nations. That means that at the time the Babylon oracles were written by Jeremiah, he still had 54 years ahead of the downfall which he described in his Babylonian scroll.

Jeremiah has a mysterious mission. He needs to have the words of this scroll read in the land of the Chaldeans. There's something mystical about this.

The words need to be pronounced in the place where Babylon will meet its demise, where Babylon will fall. So, it has to happen there on Babylonian soil. So, he needs somehow to get this scroll to be read in that place because, remember, he tells Sariah, you're going, by the way, and ultimately he wants Sariah to read it in that place.

Now, here's the opportunity that presented itself. Mentioning Sariah, this story tells us that a man by the name of Sariah ben Neriah ben Maxiah, in other words, Sariah, whose father is Neriah, whose father is Maxiah, happens to be going to Babylon. So, Jeremiah takes his scroll and he gives it to Sariah.

And when he does, he tells him, take this scroll, and he assigns him this mission. Now, the question or the point that a lot of people miss is that why is it that Sariah happens to be going to Babylon? Even though it's reported in the text, a lot of people miss this. It says that Sariah is going with Zedekiah to Babylon.

Now, the Hebrew, it can mean either that he's going with Zedekiah, in other words, both of them are making the journey to Babylon, or it could indicate that he's going at the behest of Zedekiah, that Zedekiah sent Sariah to Babylon, and that gave the opportunity for Jeremiah to hand his scroll to him so that it could be read in Babylon. But we also know, if we read carefully, we also know why Sariah and or Zedekiah both are going to Babylon, and the clue is in the title that we're given of Sariah. The English translations tell us that Sariah was a quartermaster, a quartermaster.

That's the way it reads in English. Now, in Hebrew, the word that's translated quartermaster is sar-manukha. Sar can mean a prince or a chief, a high official, basically.

So, if it's sar-manukha, it means the prince or the officer of the rest. And you have to wonder, we don't know what that means. It's not used elsewhere.

It could mean an officer whose duty is to maintain tranquility. All right, now that's one thing, but there is another option, and I think that quite possibly this is the more accurate. Through a slight textual inundation, which is suggested by some scholars, this could read sar-manukha.

Now, sar-manukha means the officer of the tribute. This seems to make sense when we take into consideration the history, the historical setting, and so forth. Because what this would mean, whether or not Zedekiah was required to go, or just to send someone to Babylon, we know that the Babylonians would have enforced tribute on their subjects.

So, Sariah ben-Niriah ben-Maxiah is going to the land of Babylon with money, with a tribute to pay to maintain the rest in Judea. So, it's basically a payment to the Babylonians that is being described. So, one of the things that we take away from this is that the Judeans have not yet, Zedekiah has not yet rebelled against the king of Babylon, at least not in action.

He could be planning, which we think that he was, but he is at least on the face, on the surface, he is still paying the tribute and maintaining a peaceful existence with the world power at the time. Now, a question becomes, who is Sariah and why is Sariah being tasked by Zedekiah as this officer of the tribute? Here's what we know. We do know of another person who is called ben-Niriah ben-Maxiah.

(20:31 - 23:52)

So, who is that? If you look at Jeremiah chapter 32, I will show you in verse 12 this very name of the ancestry, if you will. In 32 12, it says the following. Let's look at verse 11.

I took the deed of purchase, the sealed text and the open one, according to rule and law, and gave the deed to Baruch, the son of Niriah, son of Maxiah, in the presence of my kinsman Hanamel. So, here we have evidence that Jeremiah's very close companion, his scribe, Baruch ben-Niriah ben-Maxiah. Now, Baruch ben-Niriah, as he's more commonly known, we find his name in six passages in the book of Jeremiah, but here in Jeremiah 32 verse 12, it tells us very clearly that Baruch was the son of Niriah and the grandson of Maxiah.

So, Sariah is from the same family. In fact, according to this, Sariah and Baruch are brothers, which seems to indicate and make sense to me that Jeremiah was very close with this family, and perhaps Baruch said, hey, you need the scroll written, you need the scroll read in Babylon. My brother, Sariah, is going to Babylon with the tribute, give it to him.

So, this is how we unpack the historical elements that are embedded within this text, and sure enough, Sariah, according to this, took the task, read the scroll, tied a rock around the scroll, and threw it into the Euphrates so that the words of the scroll would dissolve into the water over time, and then 54 years later, Babylon would be subjugated by the Persians, which comes later. So, with the accomplishment of this clandestine mission, Sariah returned to Judea. Now, thousands of Judeans have already been taken captive into Babylon by 593 BCE.

These include, of course, Jeconiah and the royal house associated with Jeconiah. We also have other deportees that we know, for instance, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, as they come to be called. This large group of people described in Jeconiah's deportation, where thousands were taken into Babylon, and there was also a priest, a priest by the name of Ben-Buzi, his family name, Ben-Buzi, the son of Buzi, and this particular priest, his name, Ezekiel.

(23:53 - 26:21)

As it turns out, Ezekiel and the writings attributed to Ezekiel will turn out to be the key to filling in many of the details of the final years of the kingdom of Judea. This is something that I had missed for many years. Of course, I knew that the majority of chapter 1 through 24 fits into the end days as far as the Judean monarchy at the time, but I had not noticed some very key things which really make things fit neatly into the chronological order in which these events took place.

So, let me put it this way. In 593 BCE, Sariah reads the words of the Jeremiah Babylon scroll on the banks of the Euphrates and then cast it into the river. The next year, in 592 BCE, a man by the name of Ezekiel Ben-Buzi begins to see visions in Babylon.

Now, this is important to recognize that he is in Babylon, but he's seeing things that are taking place far from where he's at. So, let me just tell you that the first thing that he says in the opening of his book is, he says, he tells us, I was in the community of exiles by the Kavar River, the heavens opened, and I saw visions of God. Now, look at chapter 1 of Ezekiel and verse 2. On the fifth day of the month, it was the fifth year of the exile of Jehoiakim.

The word of the Lord came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi by the Kavar Canal or the Kavar River in the land of the Chaldeans, and the hand of the Lord came upon him there. So, what I want to do is, I want to show you that Ezekiel Ben-Buzi, we have dates that are very important. We read from the book of Jeremiah that Sariah's mission is in 593 BCE.

(26:21 - 29:33)

This is the next year. This is 592 BCE, the fifth year of Jeconiah's exile. So, this is important that we plug in Ezekiel where we can to help straighten out the chronological difficulties and to shed light on the unfolding events of the last few years of Zedekiah's reign.

The book of Ezekiel Ben-Buzi offers a unique perspective on these days because it's shown from a different place. In other words, it gives us a view of the waning years of Zedekiah's reign, but not from Jerusalem. We have Jeremiah for that.

We have some information from Kings and Chronicles for that, but it's Ben-Buzi, it's Ezekiel Ben-Buzi who gives us the rounded out picture, the missing keys, if you will, to the chronology. Now, I want to show you how instructive Ezekiel is for these periods that we're talking about today. I want you to look at chapter 8. I'll give you a couple of examples of how we can plug in Ezekiel's prophecies to round out the picture of what's going on.

It begins in chapter 8, in the first verse, in the sixth year. Sixth year of what? The sixth year of Jehoiakim's exile. When you read in Ezekiel a certain year, it's dating it to the exile.

So it says in the sixth year, on the fifth day of the sixth month, I was sitting at home and the elders of Judah were sitting before me. There the hand of the Lord God fell upon me and as I looked there was a figure that it appeared had the appearance of fire from what appeared as his loins down. He was fire and from his loins up his appearance was resplendent and had the color of amber.

He stretched out the form of a hand, took me by the hair of his head, hair of my head. A spirit lifted me up between heaven and earth and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the Pneumic Gate that faces north that was the site of the

infuriating image that provokes fury. The presence of the God of Israel appeared there like the vision that I'd seen in the valley.

Now here's the interesting thing and you have to catch this. He's in Babylon but God brings him in the spirit, if you will, to Jerusalem to show him events that are going on. This is the sixth year of Zedekiah's reign so we know the year to place this in.

You can just simply map it out according to the timetable. So as we work through these particular passages we're going to gain information that we don't get from a reading of Jeremiah. So let's keep going.

(29:33 - 32:12)

Let's look at verse 5. Ezekiel, it says, and he said to me, O mortal, turn your eyes northward. I turned my eyes northward and there north of the gate of the altar was that infuriating image on the approach and he said to me, son of man, do you see what they're doing? The terrible abominations that the house of Israel is practicing here to drive me far from my sanctuary? You shall yet see even greater abominations. And indeed he is shown in visions things that are going on in Jerusalem at the time, at this crucial period of time, and he dates these events.

Now it's interesting without reading all of this particular passage, look at verse 11 of chapter 8 in Ezekiel. Before them stood 70 men, elders of the house of Israel, with Yazania son of Shaphan standing in their midst. Those of you who studied this particular period, you know because we've covered these names.

We know Shaphan. Shaphan is a key figure in Jerusalem at the time. So these names are historically tied to the events of the last days of the Judean kingdom.

Now go with me to chapter 11. I just want to hit a couple of the high points to show you some of these connections. In chapter 11 verse 1, then the spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the Lord, which faces eastward.

And there at the entrance of the gate were 25 men, among whom I saw Yazania son of Azur and Pelashia, the son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. And the Lord said to me, son of man, son of man, these are the men who plan iniquity and plot wickedness in this city, who say there is no need now to build houses. This city is the pot and we are the meat.

I adjure you, prophesy against them, prophesy oh son of man. Now the reason that a lot of people miss the connection with Jeremiah in this particular passage is they don't pay attention to the subtle clues. In chapter 29 of Jeremiah, in verse 28, very clearly, Jeremiah tells the exiles.

(32:12 - 33:11)

Jeremiah from Jerusalem wrote a letter to the exiles and the summary of that letter is, make yourself comfortable, build yourself houses, plant gardens, give your children in marriage, because you're going to be there a while. Build houses was in that letter. This statement is showing, and God is hearing this and sharing with Ezekiel, that some present at the time were actually countering, contradicting Jeremiah's advice.

Their point is, why build houses? God's forsaken this place, it's going to be ruined, no one should be focused on building. It's a direct connection to the historical events of the time. So now let's look at Ezekiel 17.

(33:12 - 44:32)

In Ezekiel chapter 17, Ezekiel is told in verses 1 through 8, I'm not going to read the entire thing, but he's told, present a parable, present an allegory to this particular group of people, and in the allegory he describes a great eagle, and this great eagle seized the uppermost branch of a cedar, snapped it off, and he took the branch and carried that branch to another place. Then, says the great eagle, took some of the seed of that land and planted it and watered it. He put it in a fertile place, and then the parable or the analogy, the allegory says that another great eagle came and the planted seed that the first eagle planted began to bend towards the second great eagle, and he did that for the purpose of hoping that the second eagle would give water, that it would provide nourishment and support for the thing which the first eagle had planted.

And God asked Ezekiel, can this plant survive? Can it thrive? Now what do these visions represent? Before people begin to speculate, the text actually tells us exactly what it means. So look at chapter 17, and we're going to go to 11. The word of the Lord came to me, say to the rebellious breed, do you not know what these things mean? Say, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and carried away its king and its officers and brought them back with him to Babylon.

He took one of the seed royal and made a covenant with him and imposed an oath on him, and he carried away the nobles of the land so that it might be a humble kingdom and not exalt itself, but keep his covenant and so endure. But that prince rebelled against him and sent his envoys to Egypt to get horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Shall he break a covenant and escape? As I live, declares the Lord God, in the very homeland of the king who made him king, whose oath he flouted and whose covenant he broke, right there in Babylon, he shall die.

Pharaoh will not fight at his side with a great army and with numerous troops in the war when mounds are thrown up and siege towers erected to destroy many lives. He flouted a pact and broke a covenant. He gave his promise and did all these things.

He will not escape. Assuredly, thus says the Lord God, as I live, I will pay him back for flouting my pact, breaking my covenant. I will spread my net over him and he shall be caught in my snare.

I will carry him to Babylon and enter with him into judgment there for the trespass which he committed against me and all the fugitives of all his battalions shall fall by the sword. Those who remain shall scatter in every direction. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken." This particular passage, presented as an allegory, is then interpreted to say that the person, that the first eagle, is Nebuchadnezzar.

The one who was carried away, the cedar branch, is Jeconiah. And the seed of the land which was planted is Zedekiah. And the covenant that was made at the time, which Zedekiah later broke, it's not talking about the covenant as in the covenant in the biblical text between God and his people.



It's talking about an agreement that was made between Zedekiah and the king of Babylon. And he made him swear. We're going to see this.

He made him swear, but it was this covenant that he broke at the time that he rebelled against Babylon. It's an oath. He made him swear an oath and you just biblically, anciently, an oath was something very important.

Now, we see that Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon and was leaning on Egypt to provide sustainment. He was leaning upon Egypt for military power. Here in the 17th chapter of Ezekiel, Ezekiel reveals something that we didn't know when we read Jeremiah 37.

That is that Zedekiah sent envoys to Egypt to garner their support and encourage them to come fight with them in a rebellion against Babylon. Now, with this certainty and understanding the historical underpinning, the view from Babylon, we can go back and we can go back into Jerusalem with more certainty and understand the way things are supposed to be in terms of timing. Now, we'll say this, the Pharaoh that we're talking about is Hophra, and Hophra was Pharaoh from 589 BCE until 570 BCE.

We have evidence from other sources outside the biblical text which support those dates. So now we know when Pharaoh Hophra made his way to Jerusalem and we can begin to sort this out. So go back now to Jeremiah chapter 37.

We have more information now so we can properly put this in perspective. Look at verse 5 of chapter 37 of Jeremiah. The army of Pharaoh had set out from Egypt and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard the report, they raised the siege of Jerusalem.

Then the word of the Lord came to the prophet Jeremiah, thus says the Lord the God of Israel, thus shall you say to the king of Judah who sent you to me to inquire of me, the army of Pharaoh which set out to help you will return to its own land to Egypt and the Chaldeans will come back and attack this city and they will destroy it and destroy it by fire. Thus says the Lord, do not delude yourself into thinking the Chaldeans will go away from us. They will not.

Even if you defeated the whole army of the Chaldeans that are fighting against you and only wounded men were left lying in their tents, they would get up and burn this city down. Pretty powerful words. The year was 588 BCE.

Khofra, the pharaoh of Egypt who had just become pharaoh a year prior to this in 589, taking over from Somaticus II, the second. Khofra, one year into his rule as pharaoh, accepts the invitation to join forces against Babylon but this prophecy says it will come to nothing. If sick dying men are lying in their tents, even these will get up and burn this city to the ground.

588 BCE was the ninth year of King Zedekiah. At this point, Jeremiah realized that the end was near. That the rebellion which he preached against, he had told over and over to Zedekiah, submit to Babylonian rule.

The Lord has granted 70 years of Babylonian rule. Submit and you'll live. But he rebelled.

He listened to the wrong people. He listened to prophets. He listened to the wrong prophets.

The evil in the eyes of the Lord that Zedekiah did that we read in our historical sources in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, the evil that he did is that he broke the covenant of submission and tribute to the Babylonians. Look at 2 Chronicles chapter 36. We'll see this very clearly.

2 Chronicles 36 and I want to look beginning in verse 12. It says, He did what was displeasing, meaning Zedekiah, to the Lord his God. He did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah, who spoke for the Lord.

He also rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, who made him take an oath by God. Remember in Ezekiel 17, it talks about the oath that he broke. Here it is.

He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart so as not to turn to the Lord God of Israel. All the officers of the priest and the people committed many trespasses following all the abominable practices of the nations. They polluted the house of the Lord, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

The Lord God of their fathers had sent word to them through his messengers daily without fail, for he had pity on his people in his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God and disdained his words and taunted his prophets until the wrath of the Lord against his people grew beyond remedy. Ultimately, there was no remedy.

There was nothing to save the people. And so, as it's recorded in 2 Kings 25.1, Jeremiah 39.1, and Jeremiah 52.4, it says this, it was the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, the tenth month, the tenth day of the month, when the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and all his army, came to Jerusalem and laid siege ninth year, tenth month, tenth day.

(44:33 - 44:46)

Go with me to Ezekiel 24. Ezekiel 24. Meanwhile, back in Babylon, Ezekiel sees the very same thing.

(44:47 - 45:29)

24.1, in the ninth year, on the tenth day of the tenth month, the word of the Lord came to me, mortal, son of man, record this date, this exact date, for this very day the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem. Further, speak an allegory to the rebellious breed and say to them, thus says the Lord God, put the cauldron on the fire, put it on. You know what cauldron he's talking about? The first two visions that Jeremiah sees, back in Jeremiah chapter one.

(45:29 - 47:52)

In chapter one, verse 13, one of the visions that God shows Jeremiah, he says, what do you see? He says, I see a cauldron tipped from the north. He was envisioning what was to come. Jeremiah saw this cauldron and Ezekiel, on the very day that the northern tipped cauldron is at the wall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel sees the same vision.

This is confirming and it matches to the day. It's remarkable how well these prophecies weave together from Jerusalem to Babylon and they overlap. The difference is Jeremiah provides the missing key.

Now I want you to go down in Ezekiel 24 to verse 15. The word of the Lord came to me, oh son of man, I'm about to take away the delight of your eyes from you through pestilence, but you shall not lament or weep or let your tears flow. Moan softly, observe no mourning for the dead, put on your turban, put your sandals on your feet, do not cover over your upper lip and don't eat the bread of comforters.

Listen to this, and in the evening my wife died. Ezekiel was to be important for the people of Israel. God took his wife to show Ezekiel the way that the people would feel, just as Ezekiel's wife was considered to be the delight of his eyes.

Look down at verse 21. Tell the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God, I'm going to desecrate my sanctuary, your pride and glory, the delight of your eyes and the desire of your heart, and sons and daughters you've left behind shall fall by the sword. This is a horrible time.

It's a horrible way for the prophet to understand the feelings of the people. But remember, these prophets live lives that are unlike anything else in history. In this case, the portent, the example that Ezekiel has to be for the people includes the death of his wife.

(47:52 - 50:29)

She dies on the very day. Now, meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, Jeremiah makes every effort to save as many lives as he can, and so in chapter 38 of Jeremiah, verse 2, it says, this is what Jeremiah was saying. Thus says the Lord, whoever remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, by pestilence, but whoever surrenders to the Chaldeans shall live.

He'll at least gain his life and shall live. Thus says the Lord, the city will be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon's army. He shall capture it.

Verse 4, then the official said to the king, let that man be put to death. He disheartens the soldiers and all the people who are left in this city by speaking such things to them that that man is not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm. And King Zedekiah replied, he's in your hands.

The king can oppose you in nothing. And so what happens? If you look at chapter 37, remember these aren't in order, but if you look at verse 11, you ultimately will see that Jeremiah is indeed arrested. They're on the lookout for Jeremiah as he's walking out.

So look at verse 11, when the army of the Chaldeans raised the siege of Jerusalem on account of the army of Pharaoh. Remember this is ninth year, tenth month, tenth day. Jeremiah was going to leave Jerusalem.

No sense in him staying. They've utterly rejected his word. He was going to go to the territory of Benjamin to share in some property there among the people.

When he got to the Benjamin gate, there was a guard officer there named Iriah, son of Shalemiah, son of Hananiah. And he arrested the prophet saying, you're defecting to the Chaldeans. Jeremiah answered, that's a lie.

I'm not defecting to the Chaldeans. But he wouldn't listen to him. He arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials.

So ultimately, they place him in a pit and he remains in a pit. And this matches the record in chapter 38 as well. And Jeremiah would have stayed there under the very end in this horrible condition.

(50:30 - 51:36)

But God spoke a word to a Cushite by the name of Ebed-Melech. If you look at chapter 7 of chapter 38, verse 7 of Jeremiah, it says, Ebed-Melech the Cushite, a eunuch who was in the king's palace heard that they had put Jeremiah in the pit. The king was sitting at the Benjamin gate.

So Ebed-Melech left the king's palace and spoke to the king. Oh, Lord king, those men have acted wickedly and all that they have done to the prophet Jeremiah. They put him down in a pit to die there of hunger, for there was no bread in the city.

The king instructed Ebed-Melech the Cushite, take with you 30 men from here, pull the prophet Jeremiah up from the pit before he dies. So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and he went to the king's palace to a place below the treasury. They got there worn clothes and rags in which they let down to Jeremiah in the pit by ropes.

(51:36 - 54:09)

And Ebed-Melech the Cushite called to Jeremiah, put the worn clothes and rags under your armpits inside the ropes and Jeremiah did so. They pulled Jeremiah up by the ropes and got him out of the pit and Jeremiah remained in the prison compound. So he doesn't take him out of jail, but he pulls him into the compound and out of this well, this pit that he was in and brings him up on higher ground.

And the interesting thing is that he's remembered for this act. If you look at chapter 39 and verse 15 of Jeremiah, the word of the Lord had come to Jeremiah while he was still confined in the prison compound. Go and say to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, thus said the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, I'm going to fulfill my word concerning this city for disaster, not for good.

And they shall come true on that day in your presence, but I will save you on that day, declares the Lord. You shall not be delivered into the hands of the men you dread. I will rescue you and you shall not fall by the sword.

You shall escape with your life because you trusted me, declares the Lord. I find this to be fascinating that in all of the wickedness in the kingdom at that time, an Ethiopian eunuch by the name of Ebed-Melech, God told him to go rescue Jeremiah and he did. And God later says here that he's going to honor him.

He's going to save his life. I think it's important that even today, the people of the book who stand out in their generations be remembered. And one of those happens to be Ebed-Melech.

Over the next 17 months from the 10th day of the 10th month, 588 BC until the 10th day of the 5th month, 586 BCE, the word of the Lord would continue to go forth, but it would go forth through visions of Ezekiel-Ben-Buzi in the land of exile and by Jeremiah-Ben-Hilkiah as prophecies from the pit.