

The Good & The Bad Figs - The Prophet Jeremiah:

21

(0:08 - 6:51)

Last week in our class, The Burial of an Ass, we talked about the end of Jehoiakim's reign. The son of Josiah, Jehoiakim's reign came to an end, an ignoble death. He was replaced by his son Jeconiah.

Jeconiah had a short-lived reign of only three months and he was carried away captive. This week, we pick up with David's last king, with a king known as Metaniah, later called Zedekiah. We're going to cover several things in the early years of Zedekiah's reign.

We're going to talk about a letter that Jeremiah writes in the early days of King Zedekiah's reign, sent to the exiles in Babylon, and the message that he gave to those in Babylon. What was that message? We actually have that letter in the book of Jeremiah. We're going to talk about that.

We'll also talk about a vision of figs, good figs and bad figs, and we're going to see Jeremiah, the prophet from Anatote, interrupt a meeting, a League of Nations meeting, where he acts out a certain prophetic message to all the nations of the world at the time. Stay tuned. In the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king invaded Judea and took captives.

He took Jeconiah, also known as Jehoiakim, also known as Konyah. He took the king, members of the family, and thousands of other captives. He also took treasures from the temple back to Babylon, but in the wake of this invasion, the king of Babylon put another Davidic king on the throne of Judea.

The king that he placed on the throne is known in one passage by the name Metaniah. The question is, who is Metaniah, David's last king? Now, I'm being careful with my words here. When I say last king, I'm not suggesting that he is the final king, because we have other passages in the Hebrew Bible which indicate to us that a future descendant of David, if not David himself, will once again sit upon the throne of this kingdom.

But according to the biblical narratives, 2,600 some odd years ago, the last Davidic king took the throne. He's known to us, at least in one passage, by the name Metaniah. But it's only in one passage that we come across the name Metaniah.

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, according to an account in 2 Kings 24, verse 17, changes Metaniah's name to another name that he chooses. And the name that he chooses for Metaniah is Zedekiah. Now, nowhere else can we find this king referred to as Metaniah.

After the mention in 2 Kings 24, verse 17, he becomes known from that point forward only by the name given to him by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. We only know of him by the name Zedekiah. History only knows of king Zedekiah.

If we look at the book of Kings, if we look at the book of Chronicles, if we look at the book of Jeremiah, even if we were to open the pages of the Christian New Testament, the king who assumed the Judean throne in the wake of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judea in the eighth year of his reign, this particular name of this particular king is only recorded as Zedekiah.

Now, a similar thing happens to Jehoiakim. If you recall, Jehoiakim's name is recorded in one passage as Eliakim, but history remembers him too by the name given to him by a foreign ruler.

So in Jehoiakim's case, it was the king of Egypt, King Necho, who changed his name from Eliakim to Jehoiakim, and in this case, David's last king, we know as Metaniah, until the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar changes his name to Zedekiah. Now, the question is, who is Zedekiah? Who is this king originally called Metaniah that his name was changed to Zedekiah? Who is he in the Davidic line? So we're going to start this morning in 2 Chronicles chapter 36 and verse 10. In 2 Chronicles chapter 36 10, it says the following.

In 2 Chronicles 36 10, in the spring of the year, King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, talking about Jehoiakim, with the precious vessels of the house of the Lord, and made his brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem. So according to the chronicler, in the spring of the year, in the eighth year of his reign, he invades, Nebuchadnezzar invades the kingdom of Judea, takes captives, among them Jehoiakim, and in Jehoiakim's place, he puts his brother, Jehoiakim's brother, a man by the name of Zedekiah. That's according to the chronicler.

(6:52 - 13:17)

But our sources don't agree on his pedigree. In other words, the sources don't all say that Jehoiakim's brother was named Zedekiah, and that the brother of Jehoiakim, now taken captive into Babylon, that his brother would reign in his stead. According to 2 Kings chapter 24 and verse 17, it says the following.

And the king of Babylon made Matanah, again this is the only reference to Matanah, Jehoiakim's uncle king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah. So here, in the parallel account, in fact, if you again look at a synoptic harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles by Newsome, if you look at those texts side by side, 2 Kings 24, 2 Chronicles 36, 2 Chronicles 36 tells us that the king who replaced the exiled Jehoiakim is Zedekiah, who is the brother of Jehoiakim. But if we look at 2 Kings 24, the king who replaces Jehoiakim is Jehoiakim's uncle, Matanah, whose name was changed to Zedekiah.

Now, if we look at this and we look at other sources, we can make sense of this. We can even determine what happened and why the confusion entered into the text. It's really quite easy to follow.

If we look at, for instance, 1 Chronicles chapter 3 and verse 15, which is a list, a genealogical list, and it's going to make some sense of this. So first of all, let's go to 1 Chronicles 3 15, and it says the following. The sons of Josiah, Yochanan the firstborn, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, and the fourth Shalom.

Now, we know these four boys of Josiah. Yochanan, not so much, because Yochanan is not one who reigns on the throne of David. He's not one that takes the throne in the stead of his father.

The other three sons of Josiah all reign in their father's stead. You go down the list. If you look and you read the names, remember when Josiah dies in 609 BCE at the hands of

Necho, the fourth son of Josiah, Shalom, Yehoahaz, is made king in his father's stead by the people of the land.

Remember, he's removed. He's taken into exile by Necho and replaced by Jehoiakim, whose name was originally Eliakim. You'll get it straight.

So, Eliakim, Jehoiakim, is the second son of Josiah. He assumes the throne next. And then we have Jeconiah, who is the son of Jehoiakim.

And then finally, we have Zedekiah, who, according to 1 Chronicles 3 15, is the third son of Josiah. So, this agrees with 2 Kings 24. Remember, the writer of Kings seems to be intimate, a person on the street who knows details that Chronicles simply doesn't know, perhaps because Chronicles is written at a later time, perhaps because the writer of Kings could, in fact, be Jeremiah of Anatote, as many people believe.

But nonetheless, we get details in Kings. So, we have 2 Kings 24, which knows another name for this last king of David. And we also know that King says that Zedekiah was the uncle of the exiled Jehoiakim, or Konyah.

This passage in chapter 3 of 1 Chronicles, verse 15, indicates that one of the sons of Josiah was named Zedekiah. Now, if we know that Jeconiah is a son of Jehoiakim, then Zedekiah would, in fact, be his uncle. So, that checks out.

So, we'll also see later that in chapter 27 and 37 of Jeremiah, Zedekiah is referred to as a son of Josiah. So, the proper way to think of Zedekiah is that Zedekiah is, in fact, an uncle and not a brother of Jehoiakim. So, you might say, well, what does that mean about the reading in 1 Chronicles 36? I can show you how the confusion came in.

There are actually 2 men by the name of Zedekiah very close in this period, and we're going to look at them right now. We're in 1 Chronicles 3 15, where we just learned the names of the 4 sons of Josiah. So, if you look at 1 Chronicles 3 16, the next verse, it says the descendants of Jehoiakim, his son Jeconiah, his son Zedekiah.

So, what we have is we have Jehoiakim has 2 sons, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. So, Jehoiakim, who was taken captive in the 8th year of Babylon, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar's 8th year of his reign, that king has a brother named Zedekiah, but he also has an uncle named Zedekiah. The writer simply confuses the 2 Zedekiahs.

(13:17 - 16:48)

It's very easy to do. In fact, chronology and reading these genealogies is quite confusing. It's the reason that many people, students of the Bible, simply don't take the time to read the begets, he begat him, and so forth.

But within these genealogical tables are very important pieces of information, important data. Because of our study of this, we can see that the king, the last of David's kings, Zedekiah, is in fact an uncle of Jehoiakim. Now, based on our sources, we've determined where the confusion came in.

We know that the last king of David's line, in biblical time, the last king in David's line was Zedekiah, a son of Josiah. In fact, he's one of 3 sons of Josiah who reigned. So, what we essentially get with the family of Josiah is a Josianic dynasty, if I may.

A dynasty of Josiah within the larger Davidic dynasty. So, this is sort of interesting in a way. You have the Davidic dynasty of kings, and then at the very end, because of Josiah and how righteous he was perhaps, we have 3 of his sons who sit upon that throne.

Now, it's this Josiah's dynasty that would bring us to the end of the biblical period. So, the last king of David's line, in the biblical period, it's been more than 2600 years, is a son of Josiah by the name of Zedekiah. His name, by the way, is that which he received from the Babylonian king.

It's this Zedekiah, son of Josiah, who assumes the throne when Jeconiah is taken captive. Now, the captivity takes place. Jeconiah is taken away, and Jeremiah writes a letter to the captives, to the exiles, and we have that letter.

We're going to talk a little bit about the letter that Jeremiah wrote to the captives, and it's found in Jeremiah chapter 29. This is the beginning of Zedekiah's reign. When we sort out the chronology and we sort out the chapters, we find that this takes place at the beginning.

I'm going to read you from Jeremiah 29, beginning in verse 1. This is the text of the letter which the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the priest, the prophets, the rest of the elders of the exile community, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon. After King Jeconiah, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, the smiths, had left Jerusalem. See, we're in the right context here.

(16:49 - 19:47)

The letter was sent through Elisha, son of Shaphan and Gamariah, son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah, king of Judah, had dispatched to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Now you'll remember the family of Shaphan. We talked about that in a previous class, but what I want you to know is that the letter that goes from Jeremiah in Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon is recorded here in chapter 29.

I'm not going to read the entire letter, but what I will do is sum it up, and that summing it up is from one who heard the letter, and it's, if you look at Jeremiah chapter 29 and verse 28, it says the following. He actually sent a message to us in Babylon. This is on the receiving end of that letter.

To this effect, it will be a long time. Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and enjoy the fruit.

Now, the recipient of Jeremiah's letter sums up the letter by saying that the letter was basically telling the exiles, get comfortable. You're going to be there a while. Build and plant, which reminds us of Jeremiah's original message, his original mission, if you will, in Jeremiah chapter 1. I just want to pick this up because we're going to see it a little bit further on as well.

In chapter 1 and verse 10, when Jeremiah is made a prophet, when the Lord puts his words in his mouth, he tells him this. See, verse 10, I appoint you this day over nations and kingdoms to uproot, to pull down, to destroy, to overthrow, to build, and to plant. So, when Jeremiah writes the letter to the exiles in chapter 29, the recipient of that letter says that Jeremiah tells them to build and to plant.

Now, there's a connection between Jeremiah's original calling, his mission, and the words of this letter. He is identifying the group that will be used to fulfill that part of his mission. The building and planting is a group that is exiled to Babylon.

So, we're going to build on this. Now, what I want to do is go to verse 10 of chapter 29. This is a part of the letter which talks about this group who's going to be used to fulfill the building and planting that's mentioned all the way back in Jeremiah 1 10.

(19:48 - 20:27)

Jeremiah 29 10, for thus says the Lord, when Babylon's 70 years are over, I will take note of you, and I will fulfill to you my promise of favor to bring you back to this place, for I am mindful of the plans I have made concerning you, declares the Lord, plans for your welfare, not disaster, to give you a hopeful future. When you call me, come and pray to me, I will listen to you. You'll search for me and find me if only you seek me with all your heart.

(20:27 - 21:55)

I'll be at hand for you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I banished you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I have exiled you. Now, he's talking to the group that are exiled to Babylon, not to the group in Jerusalem. He's writing from Jerusalem, but the point of the letter is to tell that group, you have a hopeful future.

Now, but he tells them it's going to be a while. The 70 years of Babylon, remember we did this class, Babylon's 70 years, that we have to make sure that people understand this 70-year period is a 70-year period. The math is not complex.

You're going to be there for 70, after which I'm going to bring you back. It's also interesting to note that this particular passage uses a Deuteronomic phrase. It's quoting from Deuteronomy.

If you seek for me with all your heart, you'll find me. Remember the law book that was found in the days of Josiah? It was quoting Deuteronomy because that law book is best represented by what we know from the literature that is in our current book of Deuteronomy. The message is very simple.

(21:55 - 23:18)

Good is coming after 70 years, for right now, build houses, plant gardens, enjoy the fruit, etc. Now, one prophecy stands out in the letter to the exiled community in this chapter 29, which contains it. Look at verse 16.

So now, it's a letter. It's describing the letter from Jeremiah to the exiled community, but there's also a bit of information for the locals in Jerusalem, and here's that piece. Thus said

the Lord, verse 16, concerning the king who sits on the throne of David and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your brothers who did not go out with you into exile.

So, the message is telling the exiles about the group that did not go. They hid. They stayed behind.

They somehow didn't get forced into exile. Here's what the message is for them. Thus says the Lord of hosts, I'm going to let loose sword, famine, pestilence against them, and I will treat them as loathsome figs, figs so bad that they can't be eaten.

(23:19 - 23:44)

I'll pursue them with the sword, with famine, with pestilence. I'll make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, a curse and an object of horror and hissing and scorn among all the nations to which I shall banish them, because they did not heed my words, declares the Lord. When I persistently sent to them my servants, the prophets, they did not listen.

(23:45 - 26:08)

So, the group that's exiled, if they're patient, there's a hopeful future. In 70 years they'll be brought back. They'll be built and planted in their own land.

Everything will be restored, but not so with this other group who didn't go into exile. This group, the group who didn't go into exile, is compared to loathsome figs, rotten figs. And so the question becomes, what does that mean? The letter to the exiles talks about figs.

We're going to look more at this idea, but it's in Jeremiah 24. Go to Jeremiah 24. There are two groups, and this explains what we have before us.

In Jeremiah 24, it says, the Lord showed me, verse 1, two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the Lord. This was after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had exiled King Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim of Judah and the officials of Judah and the craftsmen and smiths from Jerusalem and had brought them to Babylon. One basket contained very good figs, like first ripened figs.

The other basket contained very bad figs, so bad they could not be eaten. So here we've got a vision that Jeremiah has. Right after the exiles go, he has a vision of two baskets sitting before the temple filled with figs, one very good figs, first ripe, just picked, the other rotten.

He gets a vision from God that these represent the whole of the people of Judea. The good figs we just read, he takes this vision and he tells the group in Babylon about the vision that he had that's recorded here in 24. This vision holds that the people who stayed behind are the bad figs, the rotten figs.

(26:08 - 39:11)

Look at verse 3, and the Lord said to me, what do you see, Jeremiah? I answered, first person, by the way, figs. The good ones are very good and the bad ones are very bad, so bad they cannot be eaten. In this particular passage, God asked the prophet, ma'atal roi, ma'atal roi, what do you see? It's a common phrase that God says to the prophets.

It's used seven times in the Hebrew Bible, three of those times are here in Jeremiah. The first time is in chapter 1, verse 11 of Jeremiah, ma'atal roi, Jeremiah, and he said, I see an

almond branch. Remember, almond, the message of the almond branch, when he sees that vision, it indicates that destruction is hastening because it's a play on the word for almond, which means to hasten.

So the vision of the almond, ma'atal roi, an almond branch. Later, he says, ma'atal roi, Jeremiah, in verse 13, he says, I see a cauldron tipped from the north, this boiling cauldron. The vision meant, what did he see? He saw that danger and destruction was coming from the north.

And this final occurrence of ma'atal roi, what do you see, Jeremiah, here in chapter, later in chapter 24, is he said, I see two baskets of figs. This indicates the people, so you have destruction is hastening, you have danger is coming from the north, and the third vision, the third vision that is recorded in the book of Jeremiah of what he sees is this idea of what's going to happen to the people. Some are going to be destroyed, some are going to be saved.

Now, it's interesting, too, that we know in the Bible that before prophets were called prophets, they were called seers. It's tied to the same root word here. The idea is that they're allowed to see visions, they are shown things, they have eyes to see what others don't see.

Now, go back to Jeremiah 29. In Jeremiah 29, look at verse 5, Jeremiah 29 5. Actually, let's look at verse 4. Thus says the Lord of hosts, this is part of the letter that was sent from Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to the whole community which I exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon, build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit, take wives and beget sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands that they may bear sons and daughters.

Multiply there, don't decrease, and seek the welfare of the city to which I've exiled you, and pray to the Lord in its behalf, for in its prosperity you shall prosper. But thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, let not the prophets and diviners in your midst deceive you. Pay no heed to their dreams they dream, for they prophesy to you in my name falsely.

I did not send them, declares the Lord. For thus says the Lord, when Babylon's 70 years are over, I'll take note of you, I'll fulfill to you my promise of favor and bring you back to this place. So again, the emphasis is on the longevity of the exile.

Again, this is not some complicated math problem that so many people make the 70 years. It's very clear the exile is going to be this long period of time, but it's really the 70 years are about Babylon's rule over the nations. That's the key.

So he's telling them very clearly, make yourself comfortable, live your lives, reproduce, don't decrease, because ultimately the good figs I'll bring back. So again, the language of the mission of Jeremiah all the way back in Jeremiah chapter 1 verse 10 of building and planting being the final phase of his mission, he's now putting that only now really in the reign of David's last king, Jeremiah begins to put forward the mission which is going to lead to restoration, going to lead to a building and a planting. The exiled are the favored ones, the exiled are the good figs, those who did not go into exile are the bad figs and destruction will soon make its presence known to those who stayed behind.

Jeremiah's message is a very consistent one, except that Babylon is going to rule for 70 years, except the yoke of Babylon's rule and everything will be okay. Now you're going to have to be patient because he's explained several times that Babylon will be over the nations for 70 years, so make yourself comfortable, but you can rest assured that if you accept the yoke of Babylon, ultimately all will go well and this will bring about a building and a planting, a restoration, a future of hope. If on the other hand, if you choose to refuse and rebel, negative consequences are assuredly going to follow, ultimately leading to an overthrow and destruction.

Now all of this in Jeremiah's message is based on his initial call all the way back in Jeremiah 1 10. He's told these are the things that are going to take place, you're going to be over nations and it mentions this, but one of the things that's in there in verse 10 is that ultimately part of his mission is to build and to plant. Now one of the things that I want to say is that Ezekiel chapter 1, Ezekiel chapter 8 are two examples of giving us the view from Babylon, from the captivity.

We've got references there. Now the name Zedekiah is not mentioned, but it will say in Ezekiel in a couple of places where we are in terms of the timing, and that's based on the fifth year, the fourth year of Jehoiakim's exile. So we have to consider that.

Now we're not going to get into that today, but just recognize that in chapter 1 of Ezekiel, chapter 8 of Ezekiel, you're actually getting the from the Babylonian side. Now we'll say this in Ezekiel chapter 8, Ezekiel sees in a vision events that are going on that are atrocities, basically horrible events that are going on in Jerusalem. He's seeing that from the captive side, but he's got visions that show him some of the bad things that are going on.

Now go with me to Jeremiah chapter 27, Jeremiah chapter 27. This is the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, so it's at the earliest part of Zedekiah's reign. Interestingly enough though, if we look at 27 verse 1, there is a scribal error.

We've talked about this in previous classes. It says, "...at the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim, son of Josiah of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord." Now the reason we know it's a scribal error is because in context it is clearly Zedekiah's reign, and that's where we're going next. "...Thus says the Lord to me, make for yourself thongs and bars of a yoke and put them on your neck." Now let me give you a little context here.

There is at the time in Jeremiah chapter 27 a meeting. A meeting, let's say a league of nations have come to Jerusalem. Delegates from Edom and Moab and Ammon and Tyre and Sidon have all converged on Jerusalem.

What's the meeting about? How can we work together? Could we become confederates and fight against Babylon and ultimately win? Okay? So there's the league of nations meeting going on in Jerusalem. Jeremiah is told by the Lord to bring a message to the envoys who are in Jerusalem for this meeting, and the news is not good. I mean it can be.

It can be if you follow Jeremiah's consistent message. Submit to Babylonian rule. So Jeremiah goes into this meeting where the envoys of these nations are gathered to discuss the Babylonian problem, and he's got a yoke made of wood.

He's got this yoke upon his shoulders, and he goes into the meeting. Now the year is believed to be about 593 BCE, around the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. Jeremiah is told to give a message to these kings who've come together in Jerusalem, and here is that message from God to the king's envoys.

Verse 6, 27. Here I herewith deliver all these lands to my servant King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I even give him the wild beast to serve him.

All nations shall serve him, his son and his grandson, until the turn of his own land comes, when many nations and great kings shall subjugate him. The nation or kingdom that does not serve him, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and does not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I visit, declares the Lord, with sword, famine, pestilence, until I have destroyed it by his hands. As for you, give no heed to your prophets, augurs, dreamers, diviners, and sorcerers who say to you, don't serve the king of Babylon, for they prophesy falsely to you.

With the result that you shall be banished from your land, I will drive you out and you shall perish. But the nation that puts its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him will be left by me on its own soil, declares the Lord, to till it and dwell on it." So this is the message that Jeremiah, for effect, he's got this yoke upon his shoulders and he goes to all the envoys of the nation. He says, you have to hear me, even though there are voices saying not to submit, you need to submit.

Whoever submits to Babylon, I'll leave you on your own land. And he tells them, look, it's only for a period of time. At the end of that 70-year period, other nations will put Babylon in its place.

The same message is given to the king of Judah in verse 12 of chapter 27. Everybody gets the same message. Babylon has a 70-year rule.

Now, Jeremiah, with the yoke on his neck in the meeting, also encounters what we call fake news. Another prophet, a false prophet, by the name of Hananiah ben Azur, is making rounds about the same time. And he gives a different message.

(39:11 - 40:57)

And that's recorded in chapter 28. It's from the same period of time as the League of Nations meeting. But here's what happens.

In verse 2, this is from Hananiah ben Azur, thus says the Lord of hosts. So he is saying that he is bringing a message from the Lord of hosts. He says the I hereby break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

In two years, I will restore to this place all the vessels of the house of the Lord which King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took from this place and brought to Babylon. And I'll bring back to this place King Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. And all the Judean exiles who went to Babylon declares the Lord, yes, I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Jeremiah has just said, this yoke that I'm wearing represents the fact that all nations will come under the yoke of the king of Babylon. Hananiah ben Azur says, thus says the Lord, I'll

break the yoke within two years. So he totally counters everything that Jeremiah has just told the nations.

So what does Jeremiah say? Jeremiah answered the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priest and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord. The prophet Jeremiah said, amen. It's like he applauds.

Amen. May the Lord do so. May the Lord fulfill what you have prophesied and bring back from Babylon to this place, the vessels of the house of the Lord and all the exiles.

(40:57 - 48:18)

But listen to this word, which I addressed to you and all the people. And then he tells Hananiah, you have prophesied lies. Now, how does Hananiah respond to that? What we see next is very interesting because Hananiah takes the yoke that is on Jeremiah and he breaks it.

Listen to this in verse 10. But the prophet Hananiah removed the bar from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah and broke it. And Hananiah said in the presence of all the people, thus says the Lord, so will I break the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon from off the necks of all the nations in two years.

And the prophet Jeremiah went on his way. So after Jeremiah is affronted by this false prophet who takes the yoke from off his neck and breaks it, he simply goes home. Now look at chapter 28, verse 12.

And after the prophet Hananiah had broken the bar from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, go to Hananiah. Thus said the Lord, you broke the bars of wood. I will make bars of iron instead.

For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel. I've put an iron yoke upon the necks of all those nations that they may serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and serve him. They shall.

I've given even the wild beast to him. And the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah, listen, Hananiah, the Lord did not send you and you've given this people lying assurances. Assuredly, thus said the Lord, I'm going to banish you from off the earth this year.

You shall die for you have urged disloyalty to the Lord. And the prophet Hananiah died that year in the seventh month. Jeremiah's prophecy was true.

Hananiah was prophesying a message that seemed to be a message that they wanted to hear that Nebuchadnezzar wouldn't last, that his rule would only be a couple more years. And then the exiles and all of the things he had taken from Jerusalem, both in treasure and in people would be returned. Jeremiah's message was very simple.

He was consistent except the yoke of Babylon's rule and all will go well. You'll live. You'll be built and planted, reject the message.

You'll be destroyed. Jeremiah chapter 37 contains yet another account from another source relating the beginning of Zedekiah's reign. Look at chapter 37, verse one.

Zedekiah son of Josiah became king instead of Konyah 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 which the Lord spoke through the prophet Jeremiah.

Yet King Zedekiah sent Jehuchal son of Shalemiah and Zephaniah son of the priest Masaiah to the prophet Jeremiah saying, please pray on our behalf to the Lord our God. Then there's a parenthetical statement. Jeremiah could still go in and out among the people for they had not yet put him in prison.

This passage presented at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign goes with the other passages from Kings and Chronicles that tell us how old he was and some of the details that we need to know about the beginning of his reign. The purpose of this passage is to let us know that Zedekiah is torn. He's torn between listening to Jeremiah, he wants in some ways it seems to accept the message of Babylon and what he should do, but he's being torn because there's such an anti-Babylonian group of people who are urging him to fight off Babylon.

So he's kind of torn. So he's sending secretly to the prophet Jeremiah and asking for prayer. And notice it was before Jeremiah was imprisoned that everything was about to change.

The rulers that were at the meeting in Jerusalem, the League of Nations meeting in Jerusalem, they chose Hananiah's message. They chose the message of one who broke the yoke over the pleas of Jeremiah of Anatod. 2 Kings 24 20, Jeremiah 25, Jeremiah 52 3, and 2 Chronicles chapter 36 verse 13 all report that Judah rebelled against Babylon, rejecting Jeremiah's warning.

They assumed that Egypt's new king would save them. And we're going to look at this because Egypt's king is actually en route. This is a different king.

Necho was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish, but this is another king. Another king of Egypt rises up a few years later, and one of his missions is to assert Egypt back on the world stage of domination. One nation is in his way, and that's Babylon.

So he's coming towards Judah, to Judea, to not necessarily to help the Judeans, but to fight Babylon to reassert Egyptian strength in the world at the time. Jeremiah makes plans to leave this city. He's walking out the northern gate of the city called the Benjamin Gate, and he's arrested.

Jeremiah was arrested for desertion. The person who makes the arrest said, you're deserting to the Babylonians. See, because Jeremiah is getting the reputation as being pro-Babylonian.

He's actually trying to save the people. But ultimately what happens is he's arrested, he's put into captivity, and this is where I'll meet you next week at the Benjamin Gate on Ross Kay Nichols TV.