

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S INVASIONS INTO JUDAH

2 Kings 23:31 - 25:21; Jeremiah 26:1-27; 27:1-15; 36:1-27; 37:13-16; 52:1-3

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Nebuchadnezzar and Jeremiah

Key-locations: Jerusalem and Babylon

Key-repetitions:

- Jeremiah: he told Judah to submit to Babylon, but was considered a traitor (Jer 25 - 28); he dictated God's words but Judah's king threw the scroll into a fire (Jer 36:4, 21-23); he wore a yoke and told Judah's king to harness himself to Nebuchadnezzar's yoke (Jer 27:2-11).
- Nebuchadnezzar's actions: he invaded Judah and took captive some youth and utensils from the temple (Dan 1:1-2); he invaded Judah a second time and emptied the treasures of the temple and the palace and carried into exile Judah's leaders and skilled craftsmen (2 Kin 24:13; Jer 52:1-3); he invaded Judah a third time and killed King Zedekiah's sons, blinded him and took him to Babylon (2 Kin 25:5-7); he destroyed buildings and broke down the walls of Jerusalem (2 Kin 25:9-10); he took all articles of bronze, gold, or silver from the temple (2 Kin 25:13-17); he carried into exile the populace of Judah (2 Kin 25:21).

Key-attitudes:

- Judah's resistance to Babylonian rule.
- Jeremiah's courage and dedication to God.
- Nebuchadnezzar's cruelty.

Initial-situation:

The Assyrians had already defeated Israel, the Northern Kingdom.

King Josiah of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, obeyed the Lord with all his heart, soul and strength. Nevertheless, the Lord's fierce anger burned against Judah because of all the evil that his predecessor, King Manasseh, had done. King Josiah died and his son became king. His son did evil in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kin 23:31-37).

Initial-problem:

Two years after King Josiah's death, Nebuchadnezzar began his reign in Babylon, and Babylon became a major power.

Final-situation:

The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the city, and carried into exile its citizens.

BIBLE STORY

King Nebuchadnezzar began his reign in Babylon, and Babylon became a major power. Prophet Jeremiah asserted that Judah should submit to Babylon. Judah's leaders considered Jeremiah a traitor. They persecuted and imprisoned Jeremiah (Jer 25 - 28).

Prophet Jeremiah dictated the words that the Lord gave him, and they were written on a scroll. Judah's king cut the scroll into pieces and threw it into a fire (Jer 36:1-27).

Jeremiah was arrested, beaten, and imprisoned in a dungeon where he remained a long time (Jer 37:13-16).

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Judah three times. Babylon's first invasion took place in 605 B.C. during the first year Nebuchadnezzar was king. The king of Judah and his nobles surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar took captive to Babylon some youth from the royal family, including Daniel and his friends. Also, Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylon some utensils from the temple (2 Kin 24:10; Dan 1:1-2).

Babylon's second invasion into Judah took place in 597 B.C., during the eighth year that Nebuchadnezzar was king. The Babylonians emptied the treasures of both the temple and the palace, and carried into exile the leaders and skilled craftsmen of Jerusalem (2 Kin 24:18-19; Jer 52:1-3).

The Lord ordered Prophet Jeremiah to make a yoke and put it on his neck. Jeremiah told Judah's king to harness himself to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar who was Babylon's king and God's servant, and not to listen to lying, false prophets (Jer 27:1-15).

King Zedekiah of Judah rebelled against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. Babylon's third invasion into Judah took place in 587 B.C., during the eighteenth year that Nebuchadnezzar was king. King Zedekiah and his soldiers fled by night. The Babylonians captured King Zedekiah. Nebuchadnezzar had Zedekiah watch the Babylonians kill his sons. Then Nebuchadnezzar blinded Zedekiah and took him to a prison in Babylon. The Babylonians destroyed with fire the temple of the Lord, the royal palace, all the houses of Jerusalem, and every important building. They took from the temple all the articles made of bronze, gold, and silver. The Babylonian army broke down the walls around Jerusalem. They carried into exile the people who were in the city, along with the rest of the people of Judah. But they left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields (2 Kin 25:1-21).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How many times did Babylon invade Jerusalem?
2. Why did God allow Babylon to destroy Jerusalem?
3. Why did the people of Judah consider Prophet Jeremiah a traitor?
4. When should God's spokesperson (preacher/teacher) declare an unpopular message?
5. What subjects does the Bible speak about that causes people in our culture to strongly react?
6. What did it cost Jeremiah to faithfully declare God's message?
7. What can it cost today to be faithful to God's message?
8. What were the results of Judah's king refusing to listen to God's word spoken through Prophet Jeremiah?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **God is faithful to keep his promises.** He kept his promises and punished Israel and Judah when they abandoned him to serve other gods.
2. **At times, God allows his work to suffer.** The Babylonians raided the temple of God and took articles of worship to the temple of a god in Babylon (Dan 1:2). They destroyed with fire the temple of the Lord and took from the temple all the articles made of bronze, gold, and silver (2 Kin 25:9, 14).
3. **People who rebel against the Lord do not want to hear his word and they reject those who pronounce God's message.** King Jehoiakim took the scroll on which was written the words of the Lord. He cut it into pieces and burned it in the fire (Jer 36:1-6, 23). King Zedekiah confined Prophet Jeremiah to jail because Jeremiah prophesied the Lord's words (Jer 32:1-44). Zedekiah did not humble himself before Prophet Jeremiah when he spoke the word of the Lord (2 Chr 36:12).
4. **God is sovereign in relation to history.** He used the king of Assyria to punish Israel with defeat (2 Kin 17:3-6). God used King Nebuchadnezzar as his instrument to crush Judah politically, economically, and religiously (2 Kin 24:20 - 25:7).
5. **God has the power to use wicked people as instruments to bring about his purpose.** Nebuchadnezzar was a wicked king who had no respect for God nor to things dedicated to God, yet Jeremiah refers to Nebuchadnezzar as God's servant (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 45:1). Nebuchadnezzar was God's instrument to completely destroy Judah and the surrounding nations because of their sins.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Twitter Prayers (short, concise prayers):

Invite listeners to pray about the story in “twitter” length prayers. Tell God:

- How they feel about the story.
- How they believe their nation is similar to or different from Judah.
- What they should do in order to not be blamed if God were to one day punish their nation.