

When Jerusalem Fell

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Judah, Babylon, and the God Who Still Speaks in Captivity

Main Text

2 Kings 25:1–12
2 Chronicles 36:17–21
Jeremiah 25:8–11
Jeremiah 29:1–14
Lamentations 1:3
Daniel 1:1–7
Ezekiel 36:19

Sermon Theme

Judah's fall to Babylon was not merely a political defeat. It was the righteous judgment of God upon a people who had turned from His word, polluted His house, and refused His prophets. Yet even in captivity, God did not cease to speak. He judged, scattered, preserved a remnant, appointed a season, and promised that those who sought Him with all their heart would find Him.

Introduction

There are few moments in the Old Testament more sorrowful than the fall of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was not just another city. It was the city where God had placed His name. It was the city of David. It was the city where Solomon had built the temple. It was the place where sacrifices were offered, where priests ministered, where the songs of Zion were sung, and where the people gathered before the Lord.

Yet Jerusalem fell.

The walls were broken.
The king was captured.
The princes were judged.
The nobles were carried away.
The craftsmen were deported.
The temple vessels were taken.
The house of the Lord was burned.
The people were scattered.
Judah went into captivity.

2 Kings 25:21 says:

2 Kings 25:21
"So Judah was carried away out of their land."

That sentence is short, but it is heavy. Judah, the surviving kingdom after the fall of Israel, was now removed from the land. The people who had seen what happened to the Northern Kingdom did not sufficiently learn from it. The people who had the temple did not honor the God of the temple. The people who had the prophets did not obey the word of the prophets.

And Babylon came.

But Scripture does not explain Jerusalem's fall as the triumph of Babylon's gods. It does not say Nebuchadnezzar was stronger than the Lord. It does not say God lost His city. It does not say the covenant had failed.

Scripture says Judah was judged because of sin.

Ezra 5:12 says:

Ezra 5:12

"But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon..."

That is the spiritual explanation.

Babylon came, but God gave Judah into Babylon's hand.

The message of this sermon is solemn, but it is also full of mercy. God warned Judah before judgment came. God spoke during the siege. God spoke to the captives in Babylon. God preserved Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and a remnant. God appointed seventy years. God promised a future and a hope. God said that those who sought Him with all their heart would find Him.

So this sermon is about judgment, but not judgment only. It is about sin, warning, captivity, grief, preservation, prayer, and the mercy of God that still speaks in exile.

1. Judah's Fall Began With Rebellion Against the Lord

2 Kings 24:1 says:

2 Kings 24:1

"In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him."

This verse gives the political beginning: Nebuchadnezzar came, Jehoiakim served him, then rebelled. But the Bible quickly moves from politics to theology.

2 Kings 24:3 says:

2 Kings 24:3

"Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight..."

This is the key. Babylon's invasion was not outside God's commandment. The Chaldeans marched, but the Lord ruled. Nebuchadnezzar made war, but God's word stood behind the judgment.

Judah's leaders may have thought their greatest problem was Babylonian pressure. But Scripture says the deeper problem was the commandment of the Lord against Judah because of sin.

2 Kings 24:4 says:

2 Kings 24:4

"And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon."

The land was polluted with innocent blood. The city that should have been holy had become guilty. The people may still have had religious forms, but their moral condition was corrupt.

This teaches us that national ruin often begins before the armies arrive. The walls may still stand while the soul of a people is already collapsing. The temple may still be open while the heart is far from God. The city may still look secure while judgment is already moving.

Babylon came because Judah had first departed from the Lord.

The outward invasion revealed the inward rebellion.

2. God Warned Judah Before Captivity Came

Jeremiah 13:17 says:

Jeremiah 13:17

"But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride..."

Jeremiah was not a cold preacher of doom. He wept. He warned. He pleaded. He carried the burden of God's word with tears.

Jeremiah 13:18–19 says:

Jeremiah 13:18–19

"Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down... The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them: Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive."

The warning was clear: humble yourselves, or captivity will come.

The problem was pride.

Jeremiah says, "my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride." Pride keeps a people from hearing God. Pride makes correction offensive. Pride says, "This cannot happen to us." Pride says, "We have Jerusalem. We have the temple. We have the throne of David. We are safe."

But God said Judah would be carried away captive.

A warning from God is mercy before judgment. God spoke before the city burned. He warned before the walls broke. He sent prophets before the captives were chained. He called them to humble themselves before humiliation came.

Jeremiah's tears show the heart of faithful preaching. True warning is not cruelty. It is love speaking before destruction.

A preacher who warns of judgment should do so with tears, not with pride. Jeremiah did not delight in Judah's fall. He wept over it.

3. God Appointed the Ways Judgment Would Come

Jeremiah 15:2 says:

Jeremiah 15:2

"And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity."

This is a terrifying verse.

God appointed death, sword, famine, and captivity.

Jeremiah 15:4 says:

Jeremiah 15:4

"And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth..."

The people could not escape by pretending nothing was happening. Judgment had been appointed because sin had been persisted in.

This is a solemn truth: there comes a point when warnings ignored become judgments appointed.

The people had heard, but would not repent. They had prophets, but rejected them. They had the law, but disobeyed it. They had the temple, but trusted in it falsely. They had time, but wasted it.

Now the question was not, "Will judgment come?" The question was, "How will it fall?"

Some by sword.

Some by famine.

Some by captivity.

Some by death.

This passage strips away false confidence. No one can outmaneuver the judgment of God. If God appoints a thing, man cannot cancel it by denial.

Yet even here, the word of God is still speaking. The people still have to face the truth. Truth is painful, but it is better than lies. Jeremiah's task was to tell the truth in a generation that preferred comfort.

4. Judah Would Be Given Into Babylon's Hand

Jeremiah 20:4 says:

Jeremiah 20:4

"For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies..."

Jeremiah 20:5 says:

Jeremiah 20:5

"Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof... into the hand of their enemies..."

Jeremiah 20:6 says:

Jeremiah 20:6

"And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity..."

The phrase "into the hand" appears again and again in this story.

Judah would be given into Babylon's hand. The city's strength, treasures, labor, and people would be delivered over.

Jeremiah 21:10 says:

Jeremiah 21:10

"For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire."

This is a fearful statement: "I have set my face against this city."

Jerusalem's danger was not first that Nebuchadnezzar had turned his face against her. It was that the Lord had set His face against her for judgment.

When God is for a people, no enemy can finally overcome them. But when God sets His face against a people because of persistent rebellion, no wall can save them.

The burning of Jerusalem was foretold before it happened. The city would be given to Babylon, and Babylon would burn it with fire.

This shows that judgment was not random. It was spoken, warned, appointed, and fulfilled.

5. The First Deportations Were Warnings Before the Final Burning

2 Chronicles 36:6–7 says:

2 Chronicles 36:6–7

“Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon...”

Before the temple was burned, temple vessels were carried away.

This was more than political plunder. It was a sign. The holy vessels being taken to Babylon showed that Judah’s sin had brought shame even upon the visible symbols of worship.

2 Chronicles 36:10 says:

2 Chronicles 36:10

“And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the LORD...”

Again the king is carried away. Again the vessels are taken. Again God is warning the people.

2 Kings 24:10–16 gives the same pattern. Jerusalem is besieged. Jehoiachin goes out to the king of Babylon. The treasures of the house of the Lord and the king’s house are carried away. The king, his mother, his princes, officers, mighty men, craftsmen, and smiths are deported.

2 Kings 24:14 says:

2 Kings 24:14

“And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour... and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.”

This was a great wound, but it was not yet the final destruction. God was still showing them the seriousness of their condition.

Sometimes God removes props before He removes the whole structure. He takes away false securities. He allows partial losses. He exposes weakness. These are warnings.

Judah saw the king carried away.

Judah saw the nobles taken.

Judah saw the craftsmen deported.

Judah saw temple treasures carried to Babylon.

They should have humbled themselves.

But the deeper rebellion continued.

6. Daniel and the Noble Youths Were Taken to Babylon

Daniel 1:1–2 says:

Daniel 1:1–2

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar... And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand...”

Again, the Bible says, “the Lord gave.”

Babylon took, but the Lord gave. Nebuchadnezzar conquered, but God ruled.

Daniel 1:3–4 says that certain of the children of Israel, of the king’s seed, and of the princes were brought to Babylon. They were children “in whom was no blemish,” skillful in wisdom, cunning in knowledge, understanding science, and able to stand in the king’s palace.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were among them. Their names were changed. Their environment changed. Their language and education changed. Babylon tried to reshape their identity.

This reminds us that captivity does not only move bodies. It pressures identity.

Babylon did not merely want Judah’s treasures. Babylon wanted Judah’s future. It took the young, the gifted, the noble, the teachable, and tried to train them for Babylon’s purposes.

Yet even in captivity, God preserved witnesses.

Daniel would pray in Babylon. Daniel would refuse defilement. Daniel would interpret dreams. Daniel would stand before kings. Daniel would later confess:

Daniel 9:7

“O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces... because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.”

Daniel understood the captivity spiritually. It was “because of their trespass.”

Even in Babylon, God had a witness who knew how to confess sin and uphold God’s righteousness.

7. Jeremiah Saw Two Groups: Those Carried Away and Those Left Behind

Jeremiah 24:1 says:

Jeremiah 24:1

“The LORD shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD...”

This vision came after Nebuchadnezzar had carried away Jeconiah, the princes of Judah, the carpenters, and the smiths from Jerusalem to Babylon.

There were two baskets: very good figs and very evil figs.

Jeremiah 24:5 says:

Jeremiah 24:5

“Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah...”

This is surprising. The captives looked like the punished ones, yet God said He would set His eyes upon them for good.

Jeremiah 24:6–7 says:

Jeremiah 24:6–7

“For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land... And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD...”

Captivity was judgment, but for some it would also become discipline unto restoration. God would work in the captives. He would give them a heart to know Him. He would bring them back.

But those who remained in pride and false security were compared to evil figs.

This teaches us that outward circumstances do not always show the whole spiritual story. Some who were carried away were under God’s severe mercy. Some who remained behind were still under coming judgment.

God can work in exile. God can teach in Babylon. God can preserve in captivity. God can give a new heart far from Jerusalem.

The question is not merely where a person is. The question is whether God is dealing with that person and whether that person returns to Him.

8. Judah Would Serve Babylon Seventy Years

Jeremiah 25:8–9 says:

Jeremiah 25:8–9

“Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north... and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant...”

Notice the reason again: “Because ye have not heard my words.”

The issue was the word of God.

Jeremiah 25:11 says:

Jeremiah 25:11

“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”

The judgment had a set period: seventy years.

This is both severe and merciful.

Severe, because the land would be desolate and the people would serve Babylon. Merciful, because God placed a boundary around the captivity. It would not last forever. The Lord who appointed the exile also appointed its end.

2 Chronicles 36:21 says the land would enjoy her sabbaths, "to fulfil threescore and ten years."

Judah had ignored God's ways, and the land would rest while the people were gone.

This shows that God's commands are never empty. What people refuse to honor willingly, God can enforce through judgment.

But the seventy years also show hope. God measured the captivity. He knew its beginning and its end. Babylon would not have the last word.

God's clock still ran in captivity.

9. The Temple Vessels Would Be Taken to Babylon

Jeremiah 27:21–22 says:

Jeremiah 27:21–22

"Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts... concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the LORD... They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them..."

This is sorrowful, but again it contains hope.

The vessels would be carried to Babylon. That was judgment. But God says, "until the day that I visit them." That was hope.

Even the vessels had an appointed return.

God was not finished.

The temple would be burned. The vessels would be taken. The people would be carried away. But God still spoke of a day of visitation.

This matters because the visible loss was enormous. To see temple vessels carried to Babylon would have felt like defeat beyond recovery. Yet God said there was an "until."

Faith often lives on that word: until.

The captivity will last until.

The vessels will remain there until.

The discipline will continue until.

The tears will endure until.

The night will remain until.

God's judgments have boundaries when His mercy appoints an end.

10. Jeremiah Wrote to the Exiles in Babylon

Jeremiah 29:1 says:

Jeremiah 29:1

“Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives...”

God sent a word to His people even in Babylon.

That alone is mercy.

They were far from Jerusalem, but not beyond God’s voice. They were captives, but not forgotten. They were under judgment, but God still addressed them.

Jeremiah 29:4 says:

Jeremiah 29:4

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives...”

The Lord still calls Himself “the God of Israel.” Even in Babylon, He speaks as their God.

He tells them to build houses, dwell in them, plant gardens, take wives, have children, and seek the peace of the city where He had caused them to be carried away captive.

Jeremiah 29:7 says:

Jeremiah 29:7

“And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives...”

This was not the message they might have wanted. They may have wanted a quick return. False prophets were promising easy deliverance. But God told them the truth: settle down. This will take time. Live faithfully in exile.

This teaches us that God can give instructions for seasons we did not want.

Captivity was not their home forever, but it was their assignment for now. They were to live, pray, work, build, and remain faithful until God’s appointed time.

Faithfulness in Babylon matters.

11. God Promised an Expected End

Jeremiah 29:10 says:

Jeremiah 29:10

“For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you...”

There is the appointed time again: after seventy years.

Jeremiah 29:11 says:

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

This beloved verse was spoken to exiles. It was not a promise that they would avoid captivity. It was a promise that captivity would not cancel God’s purpose.

God knew His thoughts toward them.

They were in Babylon, but God’s thoughts were not lost.

They were under discipline, but not abandoned.

They were far from the land, but not far from God’s plan.

They were suffering consequences, but God still promised an expected end.

Jeremiah 29:12–13 says:

Jeremiah 29:12–13

“Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”

This is the heart of hope in captivity.

God says they will call, pray, seek, and find. But they must seek Him with all their heart.

Captivity would strip away false worship, false confidence, and shallow religion. In Babylon, God would teach His people to seek Him sincerely.

Jeremiah 29:14 says:

Jeremiah 29:14

“And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity...”

That is mercy.

The God who judged them was still the God who could be found.

12. Jerusalem Would Be Given to the Chaldeans

Jeremiah 32:28–29 says:

Jeremiah 32:28–29

“Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans... And the Chaldeans... shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it...”

Again, the city would be given. Again, the burning is foretold.

Jeremiah 34:21–22 says:

Jeremiah 34:21–22

“And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies... I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire...”

The Babylonians had temporarily withdrawn because of Egypt’s movement, but God said they would return. Judah may have thought the danger had passed. But Jeremiah warned that Babylon would come back and burn the city.

False hope is dangerous.

A temporary easing of pressure is not the same as repentance. If the heart remains unchanged, judgment may only be delayed.

Judah saw Babylon withdraw for a time, but God said they would return. The people needed repentance, not wishful thinking.

This is a word for every heart: do not mistake a pause in consequences for pardon without repentance. Do not mistake temporary relief for spiritual restoration. If God is calling you to return, return.

Jerusalem’s burning had been spoken before the flames rose.

13. The Siege of Jerusalem Was Bitter

2 Kings 25:1–3 says:

2 Kings 25:1–3

“Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem... and the city was besieged... And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city...”

The siege was long. The famine prevailed.

Jeremiah 39:1–2 gives the same account: the city was besieged, and after many months it was broken up.

War is not romantic in Scripture. It brings hunger, fear, sorrow, and collapse. The people inside Jerusalem suffered. Families were desperate. Food was gone. Hope was fading.

Lamentations later gives the emotional and spiritual aftermath of that fall.

Lamentations 1:3 says:

Lamentations 1:3

“Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude...”

Lamentations 1:18 says:

Lamentations 1:18

“The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment...”

That is the confession sorrow must make: “The LORD is righteous.”

The suffering was real, but God was righteous. The grief was deep, but God had not done wrong. Judah had rebelled against His commandment.

This is hard but necessary. True repentance does not accuse God. It says, “The LORD is righteous.”

14. The City Was Broken and the King Was Captured

2 Kings 25:4 says:

2 Kings 25:4

“And the city was broken up...”

What a terrible sentence.

The city that had stood through many dangers was broken. The walls were breached. The defense failed. The last king of Judah fled by night, but he could not escape.

2 Kings 25:6 says:

2 Kings 25:6

“So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him.”

Jeremiah 39:5–7 records the same tragedy. Zedekiah was captured. His sons were slain before his eyes. His eyes were put out. He was bound in chains and carried to Babylon.

This was the end of Judah’s throne in its visible form at that time.

The king could not save the city. The princes could not save the people. The walls could not save Jerusalem. The temple could not save those who had rebelled against the God of the temple.

Jeremiah had warned the king. God had spoken. But Zedekiah would not truly humble himself.

This teaches us that position cannot protect a man from the consequences of disobedience. A crown cannot hide a rebellious heart from God. Leadership increases responsibility; it does not remove accountability.

The king of Judah was judged.

15. The Temple Was Burned

2 Kings 25:8–9 says:

2 Kings 25:8–9

“And in the fifth month... came Nebuzar-adan... unto Jerusalem: And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem...”

This is one of the darkest moments in Judah’s history.

The house of the Lord was burned.

The temple Solomon had built was destroyed. The place of sacrifice, priesthood, music, prayer, and covenant worship was consumed by fire. The city of David burned.

2 Chronicles 36:19 says:

2 Chronicles 36:19

“And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire...”

The temple was holy, but the people had profaned the holy things. The house bore God’s name, but the people had defiled worship. They had treated the temple as a guarantee of safety while they rejected the Lord’s word.

This is a warning against religious presumption.

Sacred buildings do not protect rebellious hearts. Holy language does not cover unholy living. Religious heritage does not excuse disobedience.

The people had said in Jeremiah’s day, “The temple of the LORD,” but God had warned them not to trust in lying words. The temple was not a charm. The God of the temple demanded truth, justice, obedience, and repentance.

When the people despised Him, even the temple was not spared from judgment.

That should make every worshiper tremble.

16. Judah Was Carried Away Out of Their Land

2 Kings 25:11 says:

2 Kings 25:11

“Now the rest of the people that were left in the city... did Nebuzar-adan... carry away.”

2 Kings 25:21 says:

2 Kings 25:21

“So Judah was carried away out of their land.”

This is the exile.

The land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob now sat under judgment. The people who had crossed the Jordan under Joshua were carried eastward into captivity. The people who had been brought out of Egypt were now carried into Babylon.

It is a tragic reversal.

Out of Egypt by mercy.
Into Babylon by judgment.

Out of bondage by God's mighty hand.
Into captivity because of rebellion.

The promised land was not lost because God was weak. It was lost because Judah broke covenant.

2 Chronicles 36:20 says:

2 Chronicles 36:20

"And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons..."

The survivors became servants in Babylon.

This is what sin does. It promises freedom and brings servitude. It rejects God's yoke and comes under a harsher yoke. Judah did not want to serve the Lord faithfully, and they became servants in Babylon.

When people refuse the Lord's rule, they do not become free. They become captive to another power.

17. The Captivity Fulfilled the Word of the LORD

2 Chronicles 36:21 says:

2 Chronicles 36:21

"To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah..."

That phrase is vital.

Judah's fall fulfilled God's word.

Jeremiah was mocked, rejected, imprisoned, and ignored. But his word was true because it was God's word.

The city fell "to fulfil the word of the LORD."

This should teach us to value the word of God before events prove it true. The wise hear Scripture and humble themselves now. The foolish ignore Scripture until consequences force them to admit it was true.

The word of God does not become true when we believe it. It is true whether we believe it or not.

Judah learned too late that Jeremiah had spoken truth.

2 Chronicles 36:17 says:

2 Chronicles 36:17

“Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees...”

The word “therefore” points back to their refusal, mocking of messengers, despising of words, and misuse of prophets.

The fall came because the word of the Lord had been rejected.

18. God’s Messengers Had Been Despised

2 Chronicles 36:15–16 says:

2 Chronicles 36:15–16

“And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending... But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets...”

This is one of the clearest explanations of the Babylonian captivity.

God sent messengers.

God rose up early and sent them.

God had compassion on His people and His dwelling place.

But the people mocked, despised, and misused.

They mocked the messengers.

They despised the words.

They misused the prophets.

Then the verse says:

2 Chronicles 36:16

“...until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.”

Those words are terrifying: “till there was no remedy.”

There is a time when warning is still calling. There is a time when repentance is still being offered. There is a time when mercy is pleading. But if a people keep despising the word, there can come a point when judgment has no remedy.

This does not mean God lacks power. It means the season of warning has been exhausted.

Judah did not fall because God failed to speak. Judah fell because they refused the speech of God.

This is one of the greatest applications of the sermon: how do we treat the word of God?

Do we receive it?

Do we tremble at it?

Do we obey it?

Do we humble ourselves before it?

Or do we mock, despise, and misuse?

A people's treatment of God's word reveals the direction of their future.

19. Lamentations Shows the Grief After Judgment

Lamentations 1:3 says:

Lamentations 1:3

"Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude..."

Lamentations 2:9 says:

Lamentations 2:9

"Her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD."

Lamentations 5:2 says:

Lamentations 5:2

"Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens."

Lamentations is not detached history. It is grief poured out before God.

The city is personified as a widow. The streets are empty. The people mourn. The inheritance is turned to strangers. The king and princes are among the Gentiles.

Lamentations 1:18 gives the proper confession:

Lamentations 1:18

"The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment..."

Grief becomes godly when it confesses God's righteousness.

There is a sorrow that only mourns consequences. But biblical lament goes deeper. It grieves sin. It recognizes God's justice. It does not pretend the pain is small, but it also does not accuse God of wrong.

The fall of Jerusalem was terrible. Children suffered. Families were separated. The city was ruined. But the Lord was righteous.

That is a hard truth, but it is a holy truth.

20. The People Were Scattered and Pursued

Lamentations 4:15 says:

Lamentations 4:15

“They cried unto them, Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not...”

This verse carries the sense of scattering, uncleanness, and rejection. The people once called holy were now treated as defiled and driven away.

Lamentations 4:19 says:

Lamentations 4:19

“Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains...”

The judgment was not only in the city. Those who fled were pursued. The collapse spread beyond the walls.

Ezekiel 5:10 says:

Ezekiel 5:10

“...and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.”

Ezekiel 5:12 says:

Ezekiel 5:12

“...and I will scatter a third part into all the winds...”

Ezekiel 36:19 says:

Ezekiel 36:19

“And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries...”

Scattering was one of the great judgments of the exile.

The people who had been gathered into the land were dispersed through countries. Families were separated. Communities were broken. Worship was disrupted. Their identity was tested among foreign peoples.

But even scattering did not place them outside God’s knowledge.

God knew where they were. He spoke through Ezekiel among the captives. He spoke through Daniel in Babylon. He gave Jeremiah words for those already carried away.

The people were scattered, but God's word was not scattered. It still reached them.

21. Ezekiel Prophesied Among the Captives

Ezekiel 1:1 says:

Ezekiel 1:1

"Now it came to pass... as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened..."

Ezekiel 1:3 says:

Ezekiel 1:3

"The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest... in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar..."

This is astonishing.

The temple was in Jerusalem, but the heavens opened in exile. Ezekiel was among the captives, but the word of the Lord came to him in the land of the Chaldeans.

Captivity did not silence God.

Babylon could remove people from Jerusalem, but Babylon could not prevent heaven from opening. Babylon could carry away captives, but Babylon could not bind the word of the Lord. Babylon could place Ezekiel by the river Chebar, but God could meet him there.

This is comfort for every believer in a far place.

You may be far from what you knew.

You may be in a place you never wanted.

You may be living with consequences.

You may be grieving loss.

But God can still speak.

Ezekiel among the captives reminds us that God is not limited to former places of blessing. He can meet His people in exile.

22. Ezekiel Acted Out the Exile

Ezekiel 12:3 says:

Ezekiel 12:3

"Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight..."

Ezekiel was commanded to act out exile before the people. He was to pack as one going into captivity and go forth in their sight.

Ezekiel 12:11 says:

Ezekiel 12:11

“I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity.”

God used Ezekiel’s actions as a sermon.

Sometimes God’s word becomes visible. The prophet’s life becomes the message. Ezekiel’s packed baggage showed what was coming to Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 12:15 says:

Ezekiel 12:15

“And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations...”

This phrase appears often in Ezekiel: “they shall know that I am the LORD.”

Even judgment was meant to reveal God. Israel had forgotten His holiness. They had treated His warnings lightly. Through scattering, they would know that He is the Lord.

Judgment teaches what rebellion refused to learn.

23. The King and Princes Were Carried to Babylon

Ezekiel 17:12 says:

Ezekiel 17:12

“Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon.”

The leadership of Judah was taken.

The king and princes were carried to Babylon. The political head of the nation was removed. The visible structure of stability was broken.

This was not just punishment for individuals. It was the collapse of a system that had refused God’s rule.

Leaders have deep responsibility before God. When rulers rebel, people suffer. When princes reject truth, nations fall. When those with authority do not fear the Lord, their decisions bring consequences upon many.

Judah’s king and princes were taken because Judah’s leadership had failed under the covenant.

But even in this, God was preserving the line of promise in ways not immediately visible. Human thrones can fall, but God’s purposes do not fall.

24. The Sanctuary Was Profaned

Ezekiel 24:21 says:

Ezekiel 24:21

“Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes...”

The sanctuary was “the desire of your eyes.” The people cherished the temple, but many had not cherished the Lord in truth.

Ezekiel 24:21 continues:

Ezekiel 24:21

“...and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword.”

This is one of the most painful announcements in Ezekiel.

The sanctuary would be profaned. Sons and daughters would fall. Survivors would come with the news.

Ezekiel 24:26 says:

Ezekiel 24:26

“That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears.”

Ezekiel 33:21 says:

Ezekiel 33:21

“The city is smitten.”

Those words must have pierced the captives.

“The city is smitten.”

What they feared had happened. What the prophets warned had come to pass. Jerusalem had fallen.

There are moments when news confirms what God had already said. For the captives, the report of Jerusalem’s fall was not merely news from home. It was the fulfillment of the word of the Lord.

25. Yet God Promised a Remnant

Ezekiel 6:8 says:

Ezekiel 6:8

“Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations...”

Even in judgment, God speaks of a remnant.

A remnant is mercy. A remnant means God has not made a full end. A remnant means judgment is real, but preservation is also real.

Ezekiel 6:9 says:

Ezekiel 6:9

“And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives...”

There it is: they shall remember.

Captivity would become a place where some finally remembered the Lord. In the land, they had forgotten Him. Among the nations, they would remember Him.

This is severe mercy.

Sometimes God allows removal from comfort so the heart may remember what it forgot. Sometimes the far country becomes the place of awakening. Sometimes loss clears the fog of rebellion.

Ezekiel says the remnant will remember the Lord among the nations.

That is hope.

26. God Was a Little Sanctuary in the Countries

Ezekiel 11:16 says:

Ezekiel 11:16

“Although I have cast them far off among the heathen... yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.”

This is one of the tenderest promises in the exile.

The temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed, but God Himself would be “as a little sanctuary” to His people in the countries where they came.

They lost the visible sanctuary, but God did not cease to be present with the humble remnant.

This is not a denial of the seriousness of temple destruction. It was a terrible judgment. But God’s presence is not finally confined to a building. He could meet Ezekiel by Chebar. He could preserve Daniel in Babylon. He could hear prayer from exile. He could be a sanctuary to His people in foreign lands.

Ezekiel 11:17 says:

Ezekiel 11:17

“I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered...”

God promises gathering.

So in the midst of scattering, God speaks of assembling. In the midst of exile, God speaks of return. In the midst of judgment, God speaks of sanctuary.

The city fell, but God's mercy still spoke.

27. The Survivors Remained in Affliction

Nehemiah 1:3 says:

Nehemiah 1:3

"The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach..."

Even after the first returns, the consequences remained heavy. The survivors were in great affliction and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem was broken down. The gates were burned with fire.

Captivity leaves scars.

Even when God begins restoration, the damage of sin may still be visible. Broken walls do not rebuild themselves overnight. Reproach does not vanish instantly. The aftermath of judgment is real.

Nehemiah's response was to sit down, weep, mourn, fast, and pray.

That is the right response to brokenness.

He did not shrug. He did not say, "That was the past." He did not blame God. He prayed. He confessed. He remembered God's word. He sought mercy.

Nehemiah shows us how to respond after judgment: with grief, prayer, confession, and hope in God's covenant mercy.

28. What Judah's Fall Teaches Us About God

First, God is patient.

He warned Judah through many prophets. He rose early and sent messengers.

Second, God is holy.

He did not overlook innocent blood, idolatry, pride, and rebellion.

Third, God is sovereign.

Babylon came, but God gave Judah into Babylon's hand.

Fourth, God is faithful to His word.

The captivity fulfilled the word spoken by Jeremiah.

Fifth, God is merciful even in judgment.

He promised seventy years, wrote to the exiles, preserved a remnant, and became a little sanctuary.

Sixth, God can speak in captivity.

Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah's letter show that exile did not silence God.

Seventh, God calls His people to seek Him with all their heart.

Jeremiah 29:13 says:

Jeremiah 29:13

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

29. What Judah's Fall Teaches Us About Sin

First, sin despises God's word.

Judah mocked messengers and despised God's words.

Second, sin trusts religious symbols while rejecting the Lord.

The temple could not protect a rebellious people.

Third, sin brings bondage.

Judah would not serve the Lord faithfully and became servant to Babylon.

Fourth, sin affects the next generation.

Young men, maidens, nobles, craftsmen, and royal children were carried away.

Fifth, sin produces grief.

Lamentations is the sound of a people reaping sorrow.

Sixth, sin scatters.

God said, "I scattered them among the heathen."

Seventh, sin eventually removes what it once presumed upon.

The land, city, king, temple, and vessels were all affected.

30. What Judah's Fall Teaches Us About Hope

First, God appoints limits to discipline.

The captivity would be seventy years.

Second, God can work in the lives of captives.

Daniel and Ezekiel prove God can raise witnesses in Babylon.

Third, God can give a heart to know Him.

Jeremiah 24:7 says:

Jeremiah 24:7

"And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD..."

Fourth, God hears prayer in exile.

Jeremiah 29:12 says:

Jeremiah 29:12

"Then shall ye call upon me... and I will hearken unto you."

Fifth, God can be a sanctuary in a far country.

Ezekiel 11:16 says:

Ezekiel 11:16

"...yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary..."

Sixth, God promises gathering after scattering.

Ezekiel 11:17 says:

Ezekiel 11:17

"I will even gather you from the people..."

Seventh, God can restore after ruin.

Nehemiah's burden shows that broken walls can become the subject of prayer and rebuilding.

Closing Exhortation

Jerusalem fell.

The city of David was broken.
The house of the Lord was burned.
The vessels of the temple were carried to Babylon.
The king was captured.
The princes were taken.
The nobles and craftsmen were deported.
The young were trained in a foreign court.
The people were scattered.
Judah was carried away out of their land.

And Scripture tells us why.

2 Chronicles 36:16 says:

2 Chronicles 36:16

“But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets...”

2 Kings 25:21 says:

2 Kings 25:21

“So Judah was carried away out of their land.”

Let the fall of Jerusalem warn us.

Do not despise God’s word.
Do not trust religious symbols while resisting the Lord.
Do not ignore the messengers God sends.
Do not mistake delay for permission.
Do not wait until the city is broken to humble yourself.
Do not treat sin as small when God calls it rebellion.
Do not assume sacred history can protect an unrepentant heart.

But also, let the captivity teach us hope.

God still spoke in Babylon.
God preserved Daniel.
God called Ezekiel by the river Chebar.
God wrote to the exiles through Jeremiah.
God appointed seventy years.
God promised an expected end.
God said, “Ye shall seek me, and find me.”
God promised to be a little sanctuary.
God preserved a remnant.
God promised gathering.

The city burned, but God was not finished.
The people were scattered, but God knew where they were.
The temple was destroyed, but God could still be found.
The captives wept, but God still promised mercy to those who sought Him with all their heart.

So hear the warning and receive the hope.

If God is warning, humble yourself.
If God is correcting, return.
If you are in a far place, seek Him.
If you are living with consequences, pray.
If the walls are broken, confess and rebuild.
If you have despised His word, tremble and turn back.
If you are in Babylon, remember that God still speaks there.

Jeremiah 29:13 says:

Jeremiah 29:13

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”

That is the call.

Seek Him now.
Seek Him truly.
Seek Him with all your heart.

The God who judged Jerusalem is holy.
The God who sent Judah to Babylon is righteous.
The God who preserved a remnant is merciful.
The God who promised return is faithful.

And the God who speaks in captivity still calls His people to return.

Closing Prayer

Lord God, You are righteous in all Your ways and holy in all Your works. You warned Judah by Your prophets, yet they despised Your words and misused Your messengers. You gave Jerusalem into the hand of Babylon, and Judah was carried away out of their land. Teach us to fear Your word, to humble ourselves under Your correction, and to turn from sin before judgment comes. Keep us from empty religion, false confidence, and hardened hearts. But Lord, we thank You that even in captivity You speak, preserve, hear, and restore. Be a sanctuary to those in far places. Gather what has been scattered. Give us hearts to know You. And teach us to seek You with all our heart. Amen.