

6/15/25

Sermon Title: Judah's Tragic End for Rejecting God's Word

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Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 39:1-18

(Jeremiah 39:1) In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army and laid siege to it.

(Jeremiah 39:2) And on the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah's eleventh year, the city wall was broken through.

(Jeremiah 39:3) Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and took seats in the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sharezer of Samgar, Nebo-Sarsekim a chief officer, Nergal-Sharezer a high official and all the other officials of the king of Babylon.

(Jeremiah 39:4) When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled; they left the city at night by way of the king's garden, through the gate between the two walls, and headed toward the Arabah.

(Jeremiah 39:5) But the Babylonian army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They captured him and took him to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced sentence on him.

(Jeremiah 39:6) There at Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and also killed all the nobles of Judah.

(Jeremiah 39:7) Then he put out Zedekiah's eyes and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon.

(Jeremiah 39:8) The Babylonians set fire to the royal palace and the houses of the people and broke down the walls of Jerusalem.

(Jeremiah 39:9) Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard carried into exile to Babylon the people who remained in the city, along with those who had gone over to him, and the rest of the people.

(Jeremiah 39:10) But Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard left behind in the land of Judah some of the poor people, who owned nothing; and at that time he gave them vineyards and fields.

(Jeremiah 39:11) Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given these orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard:

(Jeremiah 39:12) “Take him and look after him; don’t harm him but do for him whatever he asks.”

(Jeremiah 39:13) So Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard, Nebushazban a chief officer, Nergal-Sharezer a high official and all the other officers of the king of Babylon

(Jeremiah 39:14) sent and had Jeremiah taken out of the courtyard of the guard. They turned him over to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to take him back to his home. So he remained among his own people.

(Jeremiah 39:15) While Jeremiah had been confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD came to him:

(Jeremiah 39:16) “Go and tell Ebed-Melek the Cushite, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I am about to fulfill my words against this city—words concerning disaster, not prosperity. At that time they will be fulfilled before your eyes.

(Jeremiah 39:17) But I will rescue you on that day, declares the LORD; you will not be given into the hands of those you fear.

(Jeremiah 39:18) I will save you; you will not fall by the sword but will escape with your life, because you trust in me, declares the LORD.”

The Day Has Finally Come.

It is “the day of the Lord” that the prophets had warned about since the time of Amos.

The final day of Judah has arrived.

God’s prophecy was fulfilled just as He had declared.

Now it is clear that the prophecies of the false prophets were wrong, and that Jeremiah's prophecy was true.

God appointed Jeremiah as a prophet and, through him, warned the kings and people of Judah for over 40 years.

Yet the kings and people of Judah refused to listen to the word of God spoken through the prophet Jeremiah.

They did not turn back to God and continued in their evil deeds.

Therefore, just as He warned, God has brought judgment upon Judah.

In 588 B.C., Jerusalem was besieged by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Finally, in the ninth month of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah, in 586 B.C., Jerusalem fell.

(Jeremiah 39:1) In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army and laid siege to it.

(Jeremiah 39:2) And on the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah's eleventh year, the city wall was broken through.

(Jeremiah 39:3) Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and took seats in the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sharezer of Samgar, Nebo-Sarsekim a chief officer, Nergal-Sharezer a high official and all the other officials of the king of Babylon.

Due to the siege of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the city eventually ran out of food.

As a result, all the inhabitants of the city suffered greatly, and the soldiers lost their strength to resist.

Even Jerusalem, once considered an impregnable fortress, finally fell.

The officials of the king of Babylon came and sat at the Middle Gate of the city. The Middle Gate was the place where the king and his officials would gather to govern the nation.

For the Babylonian officials to sit there meant that the nation had fallen into their hands.

At this point, King Zedekiah of Judah fled the city and headed toward the Arabah. He escaped southward, avoiding the concentrated Babylonian assault from the north.

(Jeremiah 39:4) When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled; they left the city at night by way of the king's garden, through the gate between the two walls, and headed toward the Arabah.

The Arabah refers broadly to the Jordan Valley, but in this context, it specifically means the region of Jericho within the valley.

King Zedekiah likely intended to cross the Jordan River and flee to Egypt.

There are two main routes from Jerusalem to Jericho: one goes over the Mount of Olives, and the other passes through the wilderness area known as the Arabah. Zedekiah chose the latter path through the Arabah.

However, his attempt failed.

The pursuing Chaldean army captured him and brought him to King Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah in the land of Hamath.

(Jeremiah 39:5) But the Babylonian army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They captured him and took him to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced sentence on him.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had Zedekiah's sons and the nobles of Judah killed before his eyes.

Then he gouged out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him with chains, and took him to Babylon.

(Jeremiah 39:6) There at Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and also killed all the nobles of Judah.

(Jeremiah 39:7) Then he put out Zedekiah's eyes and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon.

The Chaldeans, who had captured the city, set fire to the royal palace and the houses of the people, and they tore down the walls of Jerusalem.

(Jeremiah 39:8) The Babylonians set fire to the royal palace and the houses of the people and broke down the walls of Jerusalem.

Since the city walls that protected against external invasion had been torn down, Jerusalem was no longer habitable.

Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, took into exile the ruling class of Jerusalem and Judah to Babylon.

Only the poor—those of lower political, economic, and social status—were left in the land of Judah, and he gave them vineyards and fields.

(Jeremiah 39:9) Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard carried into exile to Babylon the people who remained in the city, along with those who had gone over to him, and the rest of the people.

(Jeremiah 39:10) But Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard left behind in the land of Judah some of the poor people, who owned nothing; and at that time he gave them vineyards and fields.

The Babylonian army took away the influential people and skilled craftsmen living in Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, as part of a conciliatory policy, they distributed vineyards and fields to the poor who were left behind.

In contrast, during this time, God showed favor to those who trusted in Him.

King Zedekiah, who only listened to the word of the Lord but did not obey it, failed to escape and met a tragic end.

On the other hand, the prophet Jeremiah, who faithfully proclaimed God's word to the end—even at the risk of death—was released and treated well by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

(Jeremiah 39:11) Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given these orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard:

(Jeremiah 39:12) “Take him and look after him; don’t harm him but do for him whatever he asks.”

Before the fall of Jerusalem, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon likely heard from the Jews who had surrendered to Babylon that the prophet Jeremiah had prophesied the fall of the city and urged the people to surrender.

For that reason, King Nebuchadnezzar gave orders to his commander, Nebuzaradan, to release Jeremiah, treat him well, and grant whatever requests he might have.

In accordance with the king’s orders, Nebuzaradan the commander, along with Nebushasban the chief officer, Nergal-sharezer the high official, and all the officials of the king of Babylon, sent men to take Jeremiah out of the courtyard of the guard.

They entrusted him to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan, and allowed him to return home.

(Jeremiah 39:13) So Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard, Nebushazban a chief officer, Nergal-Sharezer a high official and all the other officers of the king of Babylon

(Jeremiah 39:14) sent and had Jeremiah taken out of the courtyard of the guard. They turned him over to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to take him back to his home. So he remained among his own people.

It stands in stark contrast to the tragic end of King Zedekiah and his officials.

Even so, Jeremiah's release was only a temporary form of deliverance.

He too could not escape the catastrophic judgment—the fall of Judah and the collapse of the Davidic dynasty.

The suffering of Jeremiah did not end with the fulfillment of his prophetic warnings; he bore the heavy burden of destruction alongside the people of Judah to the very end.

Gedaliah, to whom Jeremiah was entrusted, would later be appointed governor over the remnant of Judah by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

His father, Ahikam, was a high-ranking official in Jerusalem and had once protected Jeremiah when King Jehoiakim sought to kill him.

The once-glorious temple and palace, the houses of the people, and the walls of Jerusalem all lay in ruins.

The nation had fallen.

This was the price of despising the word of the Lord.

Yet, there was another man whom God chose to honor—Ebed-Melech, the Cushite eunuch from the royal palace.

When Jeremiah had been cast into a muddy cistern and was left to die, Ebed-Melech did not fear death.

He courageously approached King Zedekiah and pleaded for the prophet's life, ultimately rescuing him.

God told Ebed-Melech that Jerusalem would certainly fall,

but on that day, He would rescue him from the hands of those he feared.

(Jeremiah 39:15) While Jeremiah had been confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD came to him:

(Jeremiah 39:16) "Go and tell Ebed-Melek the Cushite, 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I am about to fulfill my words against

this city—words concerning disaster, not prosperity. At that time they will be fulfilled before your eyes.

(Jeremiah 39:17) But I will rescue you on that day, declares the LORD; you will not be given into the hands of those you fear.

(Jeremiah 39:18) I will save you; you will not fall by the sword but will escape with your life, because you trust in me, declares the LORD.”

The ones Ebed-Melech feared were the officials of Judah.

Because he had appealed to King Zedekiah to save Jeremiah from the cistern—against the will of the officials—he had put himself at risk.

This promise from God came *before* the judgment fell on Judah.

Logically, in terms of time and narrative flow, it would seem that this story should be recorded right after Jeremiah is rescued from the cistern in chapter 38.

Yet Jeremiah records this promise *after* the fall of Jerusalem.

Why?

We find the answer in God’s closing words to Ebed-Melech:

“I will surely save you... because you have put your trust in Me.”

By placing this story *after* the destruction of Judah, Jeremiah contrasts the end of those who rejected God’s Word with the end of those who believed.

The destiny of those who *despised* God’s Word is *destruction*.

The destiny of those who *trusted* in God is *salvation*.

Ebed-Melech’s boldness was born out of reverent faith in the LORD.

That unwavering faith gave him the courage to stand with the prophet of God, even at great personal risk.

Beloved members of Church of God Dreams,

The message God gives us through today’s passage is clear:

The Day of Judgment will come.

On that day, those who have not believed will perish, but those who have believed will be saved.

Many people scoff, saying the Day of Judgment will never come.

They reject God's Word because it's been over two thousand years since the warning was given.

Like in Jeremiah's day, false prophets still proclaim peace and security.

But that day will surely come.

Do not be like Zedekiah and the people of Judah who thought Jerusalem could never fall.

They refused to believe Jeremiah's message and were destroyed.

On that day, those who have rejected the truth will weep bitterly and gnash their teeth.

Jesus is the way to Heaven; Unbelief lead to Hell.

Never forget this.