



Lesson 5: Demise of the Kingdom of Judah

Theme: Abandoning God leads to destruction.

Golden Text:

"But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

— **2 Chronicles 36:16 (KJV)**

Study at a Glance: The 5 W's

KEY AREA	DETAILS AND SUMMARY
WHO (Author & Audience)	King Zedekiah (Judah's last king), King Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan (captain of the guard), Jeremiah the prophet, the people of Judah, the remaining remnant, and the LORD God.
WHAT (Core Message)	The fall of the southern kingdom of Judah: how Zedekiah's rebellion led to the Babylonian siege, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and a 70-year exile.

WHEN (Timing)	Roughly 597 B.C. (Zedekiah's accession) through 586 B.C. (the fall of Jerusalem) and the subsequent 70-year exile.
WHERE (Location)	The southern kingdom of Judah (Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple) and Babylon.
WHY (Rationale)	Judah abandoned God, returned to idolatry, and ignored warnings until judgment became inevitable.

Introduction

Imagine a ship anchored in a harbor. The anchor holds it steady through wind and wave. But what if the crew, tired of the anchor's restriction, cuts the chain? At first, nothing happens; the water seems calm. Yet the underlying currents gradually pull the ship toward the rocks. By the time the crew realizes the danger, it is too late. The ship is wrecked not because the anchor failed, but because it was abandoned. The southern kingdom of Judah was that ship, and God was their anchor. For centuries, God sent prophets—including Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk—to warn them that their connection to Him was fraying. Instead of listening, Judah mocked the messengers, despised the words, and refused to humble themselves. This lesson examines Judah's final days and prompts us to consider whether we have cut our own anchor line.

Key Terms Defined & The Word Search Technique

Before opening the biblical text, we can use a five-step "word study" method to better understand key terms:

1. **Select the Word:** Identify a key term in the passage (e.g., "*rebelled*" in 2 Kings 24:20).
2. **Find the Original Word:** Locate the Hebrew or Greek word and its definition (e.g., Hebrew *marad* [Strong's H4775], meaning to revolt or transgress against authority).
3. **Read the Immediate Context:** Examine what is happening in the narrative.
4. **Trace the Word Through Scripture:** See how the same word is used elsewhere in the Bible.
5. **Compare and Apply:** Contrast the contexts to extract practical application.

The Method: Select → Find the original → Read the context → Trace it through Scripture → Apply. We will use this tool in each section.

Transition into Section 1: Every nation's fall has a last chapter — and Judah's last chapter was written by a king named Zedekiah. He was not the worst king Judah ever had, but he was the last. In Section 1 we see how Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon became the final act in a centuries-long drama of abandonment — and how a nation that mocked its prophets finally ran out of remedy.

Section 1: Zedekiah — Judah's Last King

- **Scripture:** 2 Kings 24:18–25:7
- **Word Search Focus:** "*Rebelled*" (*marad*, H4775) — A deliberate refusal to submit or a breaking of allegiance.

Zedekiah was the final king of Judah. Although King Hezekiah previously "rebelled" (*marad*) against Assyria in an act of faith (2 Kings 18:7), Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon was an act of foolishness and disobedience. God had explicitly commanded submission to Babylon through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 27:12–13), but Zedekiah chose political schemes and pride over God's clear instruction.

Discussion Questions

- **(Text/Exegesis)** How do the events of 2 Kings 24:18–25:7 and cross-references like Ezekiel 17:13–19 demonstrate the severe spiritual and physical consequences of Zedekiah's rebellion against God's commanded submission?
- **(Application)** In what ways are we tempted to mask self-willed rebellion as acts of courage or faith in our everyday lives?

Transition to Section 2: Transition to Section 2: Zedekiah's rebellion was the trigger, but the consequences were far worse

than one king's capture. In Section 2 the full weight of God's judgment falls: the Temple that Solomon built, the city that David established, and the people God had chosen — all are given to the flames.

SECTION 2: The Temple and Jerusalem Destroyed

- **Scripture:** 2 Kings 25:8–21
- **Word Search Focus:** "*Burned*" (*saraph*, H8313) — To consume completely with fire, leaving only ashes.

Following Zedekiah's capture, the full measure of judgment fell upon Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, burned Solomon's Temple, tore down the city walls, and carried away the remaining valuables and population. The word *saraph* was previously used for burning idols (Exodus 32:20, 2 Kings 23:4). Here, the same fire that once consumed false idols was turned upon God's own Temple because the people had turned the building itself into an idol.

Discussion Questions

- (Text/Exegesis) How does the complete destruction of Solomon's Temple in 2 Kings 25:8–21 fulfill earlier biblical warnings regarding false security?

Question 2 (Application)

How does this passage correct the misconception that God's presence is tied to physical buildings or religious traditions?

Transition to Section 3: Transition to Section 3: The Temple was burned, the walls were broken, and the people were carried away. But the story does not end in ashes. In Section 3 the chronicle steps back to explain why Judah fell — and to reveal that even in exile, even in judgment, God was at work, giving the land its long-denied rest and preserving the seed of David.

Section 3: Why Judah Fell

- **Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 36:14–21
- **Word Search Focus:** "*Sabbath*" (*shabbat*, H7676) — Rest, cessation from labor, or a forced stop.

The chronicle concludes by detailing the underlying spiritual reasons for Judah's exile. For 490 years, Judah had repeatedly violated the law of the Sabbath year (Leviticus 25:4), denying the land its land-rest. Because the people refused to observe seventy Sabbath years voluntarily, God enforced the rest through a seventy-year exile.

Discussion Questions

1. **(Text/Exegesis)** How does 2 Chronicles 36:14–21 connect the 70-year duration of the Babylonian exile directly to Judah's past disobedience?
2. **(Application)** What warning does the land's forced Sabbath offer us regarding the principles of rest and obedience in our own lives?

Closing: Bringing It All Together

Judah's demise did not occur overnight; it was the result of gradual, persistent departure from God. The entire account is summarized by three primary themes:

1. **A King Who Rebelled (*marad*):** Choosing human pride over obedience to God's word.
2. **A Temple That Burned (*saraph*):** Demonstrating that outward religious forms cannot substitute for genuine faith.
3. **A Land That Rested (*shabbat*):** Showing that God's design and commands will ultimately be honored.

Even in judgment, God preserved a remnant and maintained the lineage of David. The overarching message of this historical account is an invitation to turn back to God before line-crossing consequences occur.