

Lesson 7 – Judah’s Last Kings

In an act of loyalty to Babylon— Judah’s ally at the time— Josiah tried to stop Pharaoh from reaching Carchemish to help Assyria retake Harran from the Babylonians. Josiah was killed in 609 BC. Pharaoh continued north, and Judah made Josiah’s son, Jehoahaz (Shallum), king. The remaining Assyrians and their Egyptian allies failed to retake Harran. Three months later, Pharaoh deposed Jehoahaz and replaced him with his brother, Eliakim (Jehoiakim), making Judah a vassal to Egypt. Jehoahaz died in exile in Egypt. In 605 BC, Egypt made one final attempt to salvage the Assyrian Empire but was decisively defeated at Carchemish. Babylon immediately began its campaign for control of the Levant. Nebuchadnezzar, the new king of Babylon, invaded Judah. He besieged Jerusalem, plundered the temple, and took some captives from the royal family and nobility, including Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah. Jehoiakim surrendered, and Judah became a vassal to Babylon. Jehoiakim paid tribute to Babylon for three more years. Babylon fought with Egypt and prevailed but suffered heavy losses, so Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon to recover. Jehoiakim stopped paying tribute. Beginning in 601 BC, Judah was assaulted by raiding bands of various peoples. Jehoiakim’s fate is unclear. Jeremiah prophesied that his body would be dragged and dumped outside of Jerusalem’s gates like an animal (Jer. 22:18-19; 36:30). Kings records that he slept with his fathers (2 Kings 24:6). Chronicles records that Nebuchadnezzar bound him to take him to Babylon, though it does not say whether he was actually taken (2 Chron. 36:6). He died c. 598 BC. He was succeeded by his son, Jehoiachin (Jeconiah or Coniah). In 597 BC, Babylon attacked Jerusalem again, plundering the temple and exiling many, including Ezekiel the prophet and King Jehoiachin, who had only reigned three months. Babylon made Mattaniah (Zedekiah), Jehoiachin’s uncle, king. Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon, despite Jeremiah’s warnings to surrender.

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Jeremiah was the last prophet sent to turn Judah back. His primary work began during Josiah’s reign and lasted until the fall of Jerusalem. The inspired text follows that event for many years, during which Jeremiah continued to deliver instructions from God to the survivors. During his long career, he was frequently persecuted. Though he tried to save his countrymen by preaching the truth, they trusted their false prophets who promised peace. The Jewish political and religious leaders labeled Jeremiah as a traitor for warning of Judah’s fall and encouraging surrender to Babylon. Eventually, he was imprisoned in Jerusalem. We will explore more about this prophet in the next lesson.

Invasions and exiles

605 BC – Dan. 1:1-7; 2 Kings 24:1

597 BC – 2 Kings 24:10-17; 2 Chron. 36:7; Jer. 52:28

586 BC – 2 Kings 25:1-21; 2 Chron. 36:17-21; Jer. 39:1-10; Jer. 52:4-27, 29;
Eze. 24:1-2; 33:21

581 BC – Jer. 52:30

2 Kings 23-25; 2 Chron. 36

1. What was Jeremiah’s concern when God called him to be a prophet? How did God answer his concerns? (Jer. 1:6-8)
2. How would the government and people of Judah react to Jeremiah’s messages? (Jer. 1:18-19)

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3. How long did each king reign:

- a) Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:31)
- b) Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:36)
- c) Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:8)
- d) Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:18)

4. What did Jeremiah prophesy concerning the fate of these kings?

- a) Shallum (Jehoahaz) (Jer. 22:11-12)
- b) Jehoiakim (Jer. 22:18-19)
- c) Coniah (Jehoiachin) (Jer. 22:24-27)

5. Who deposed and replaced Jehoahaz? Where did Jehoahaz die?
(2 Kings 23:33-34)

6. What did Jeremiah prophesy concerning Judah, its neighbors, and Babylon in Jehoiakim’s fourth year, c. 605 BC? (Jer. 25:1-14)

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7. Why couldn’t Jeremiah go to the temple himself? What did he send Baruch there to do? What did Jehoiakim do with the scroll? (Jer. 36)
8. What punishment did God use against Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:2)
9. Which major power won the territory war? (2 Kings 24:7)
10. What did Nebuchadnezzar take in the siege of 597? (2 Kings 24:10-16)
11. What prompted Nebuchadnezzar to begin a siege of Jerusalem in Zedekiah’s ninth year, c. 588? (2 Kings 24:20-25:2)
12. What curious command did God give to Jeremiah in the middle of the siege? What was the purpose of this? (Jer. 32)
13. What happened to Zedekiah when he tried to escape Jerusalem? (2 Kings 25:6-7)
14. How had God shown compassion on his people? How is Judah’s reaction to the prophets described? (2 Chron. 36:15-16)