

The Story Adult Study Guide

February 2, 2020

Chapter 17: “The Kingdom’s Fall”



Key Events: the reign of the last kings of Judah, the fall of Judah and Jerusalem, the ministries of the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah

Key Characters: Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah, Ezekiel (see page 491 for descriptions)

Bible Reference for this Chapter: 2 Kings 21, 23-25; 2 Chronicles 33, 36; Jeremiah 1-2, 4-5, 13, 21; Lamentations 1-3, 5; Ezekiel 1-2, 6-7, 36-37

“They did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.” 2 Kings 21:9

GOD CONTROL’S WORLD AFFAIRS OUT OF LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE

1. King Hezekiah’s son, Manasseh, ruled Judah for 55 years and was notorious for great wickedness (pages 231-232). What similarities do you notice between Manasseh’s reign and our world today?
2. King Josiah was the last God-fearing king of Judah. First, he went contrary to his father’s and grandfather’s wickedness. Second, he accomplished much while still a very young man. What does this teach us today?
3. Ezekiel served as God’s prophet while exiled in Babylon before and after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Identify his strong words of judgment on pages 236-237 (Ezekiel 2, 6-7). How is this language relevant for people (and us) today?
4. Jeremiah was prophet over 40 years leading up to the end of Judah, and he witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem. Read Jeremiah’s call into service on the bottom of page 237 to the top of page 238 (Jeremiah 1). What did God say to Jeremiah then and what does he say to Christians as his messengers today?
5. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, put out the eyes of King Zedekiah and killed his sons, burned down the temple, palace and houses in the city, and deported all but the poorest Israelites. In the midst of all the misery that resulted from evil and unfaithfulness, what message still rang out at the bottom of page 244 (Lamentations 3)? What response did God desire at the top of page 245 (Lam. 5)?
6. God’s message through Ezekiel turned from judgment to hope. On pages 245-247, what were God’s reasons for granting them grace and mercy (Ezekiel 36-37)?
7. In the DVD Randy Frazee said: “Success is faithfulness to God, not results. Comment.

ANSWERS – SESSION 17

1. A common theme between Manasseh and our world today is the general acceptance of all sorts of pagan beliefs and practices. Spiritual complacency, religious pluralism and immorality was and is not only tolerated, it's often encouraged. Manasseh indulged in cult activities (Baal and Asherah worship) and occult activities (divination, omens, mediums and spiritists) which still have their followings today. Manasseh also persecuted/killed God-fearing people and prophets (*shed so much innocent blood*; from Jewish tradition it is held that Isaiah was sawed in two during Manasseh's reign). Christians today may not face physical persecution everywhere, but persecution in the form of hostile feelings, attitudes and words is commonplace.
2. We learn a great respect for Josiah for his faithfulness to God even though his family was opposed to his position. It can also be realized that his mother and others played an important role in his faithfulness to God. Also we respect him for teaching us that young people can also play a significant role in God's story.
3. Ezekiel was exiled with King Jehoiachin (page 234) in 597 B.C., and served 22 years in Babylon. God's language of rebuke before the fall of Jerusalem was severe: *I am about to bring a sword against you . . . your altars will be demolished . . . I will slay your people in front of your idols . . . I will scatter your bones . . . what you have made wiped out . . . those who escape will remember me – how I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts . . . they will loathe themselves for the evil they have done . . . Disaster! Unheard-of disaster! . . . Doom has come upon you.* We live by God's law and gospel today. Separation from God by unbelief and impenitence has disastrous and eternal consequences. Rebuking others may be difficult and unpopular, but it is necessary to prepare rejecting hearts for the gospel message of love and forgiveness in Jesus.
4. God's call included a number of truths relevant to Jeremiah then and to God's messengers today: 1) God knew and appointed us as his messengers before we were born; 2) *we must go to everyone* he sends us to with God's Word; 3) we shouldn't be afraid, God is always with us and will put his words in our mouths; 4) *to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow* = we go with the law to confront sin and rebuke disobedience; 5) *to build and to plant* = we go with the gospel to point people to restoration in Christ; 6) we may be persecuted (and Jeremiah certainly was), but we have God's presence and strength to overcome the abuse.
5. On page 244 (Lam. 3), God's love and compassion resonate. He is faithful to all his promises. Those who hope in the Lord will experience his salvation and will be restored to God's favor. On page 245 (Lam. 5), God wanted his people to turn to him in their misery and disgrace. He called them to heartfelt repentance, to cry out to the Lord and ask to be restored.
6. God would shower blessings on the people again because they didn't deserve it. This sounds backward, but by doing so God's name will be glorified, he will be proved holy, and all nations will know him as the God of grace. Granting mercy will cleanse them of their impurities, and transform their hearts by the Spirit to faithfully follow his will. God will have them to return to their homeland and rebuild their towns, so that the nations around them will know that the Lord replanted them. Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones on pages 246-7 (Ez. 37) symbolized Israel's national restoration from exile and spiritual restoration through the Holy Spirit.
7. Answers will vary.