

Judah After Israel's Fall (725-585 BCE)

First Deportation from Judah

Readings: *2 Kings 24:1, 7; 2 Chronicles 36:6-7; Jeremiah 25:1-38; 35:1-19*

Reflections:

- The first deportation from Judah coincides with a showdown between Nebuchadnezzar II and Pharaoh Neco, a battle prophesied by Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar II wins the battle in the process of claiming victory also takes Judah as a tributary. Many of Judah's young people are taken captive including a young man we will meet later in the Biblical account, Daniel. This group of captives is only a small portion of the many that will be taken over the years. Israel's hope in Egypt as prophesied was futile. Although Jehoiakim is taken captive at first, he will return as a puppet king under Nebuchadnezzar's control.
- Jeremiah now makes it clear how long Israel will be in captivity. God's judgment through this captivity will last seventy years, a number symbolic of a complete divine work. All sense of joy and productivity is being swept away. "The sound of joy and gladness, voice of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and light of the lamp" will be banished from their community. Yet, just as Babylon is being used to bring God's judgment on Israel, it too will be judged. This returns us to the message of Habakkuk and God's clear statement: He as sovereign God can use an evil nation to complete his will while at the same time holding that nation accountable for its own evil.
- The picture here in Jeremiah is horrifying. It is like a horror movie and no doubt the judgment and bloodshed was as bad as Jeremiah depicts. We see here how fierce is God's judgment against those who ruthlessly murder children and systematically abuse the poor and vulnerable in society.
- This section ends with God using a devote family as an example of being committed to God. Jonadab four generations earlier had commanded his family to be devoted in living a holy life, even to the point of not drinking any wine. Over the years the family had remained true to their forefather's command. Jeremiah points them out as an example of faithfulness. If they obeyed their forefather's command, how much more should everyone obey God's commands? Their faithfulness was rewarded with ongoing relationship. One of Jonadab's descendents would always serve before God. This means they would be included in the priesthood and have a place of privilege. This is an excellent reminder: Our faithfulness to

God (not our legalism) will always be met and exceeded by God's faithfulness to us. God rewards our friendships with him by responding with equal love and delight in being in intimate friendship with us. In a sense, as we draw near and serve God, he draws near and serves us. A young woman named Mary would one day discover this lesson as she sits silently at the feet of the Messiah and discovers that being his friend is more important than simply working for him.