



Writing Life Faith



Life of a King: Zedekiah's End

The Twenty-Third King.

You can read King Zedekiah's story in 2 Kings 24:18-25:21 and 2 Chronicles 36:11-21.

When I, Zedekiah (formerly Mattaniah), was appointed king of Judah by King Nebuchadnezzar, I didn't know what was coming. I thought I had a pretty crafty plan. We would feign loyalty to Babylon, all the while worshipping our own pagan gods.

I thought that way until two years ago, when the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem. I will not surrender. I will not be a coward. We may have no food, but we will survive. We will survive.

Zedekiah, son of Josiah & Hamutal and brother to Jehoiakim and uncle to Jehoiachin, becomes king at age twenty-one. He's actually given eleven years to rule, but he butchers it. This ushers in Judah's ultimate downfall.

Let's watch it unfold...

Zedekiah: The Beginning.

"But Zedekiah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and he refused to humble himself when the prophet Jeremiah spoke to him directly from the LORD."

(2 Chronicles 36:12)

Scripture records Zedekiah as being a stubborn man. Sometimes stubbornness can be good, but the Bible usually doesn't think so. Like Pharaoh during the days of Moses, Zedekiah's stubbornness leads to his demise. He also loses his firstborn son, just like Pharaoh.

Zedekiah makes an oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, in God's name. He does not keep it. He breaks his word and rebels against God. With this man as their example, the people and the priests grow more unfaithful. They ignore the prophets' warnings and live in sin.

Zedekiah: The Middle.

"So on January 15, during the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his entire army against Jerusalem. They surrounded the city and built siege ramps against its walls. Jerusalem was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah's reign." (2 Kings 25:1-2)

God cannot allow His people to belittle Him and set a poor example for the nations. So He sends Nebuchadnezzar back. In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, Nebuchadnezzar's entire army comes to Jerusalem and builds siege ramps against its walls.

For two years, Jerusalem is besieged. At this point, they've run out of food. The famine is severe. All the food is gone. It gets worse when a section of the city wall breaks down. As a very brave and patriotic king, Zedekiah makes the noble decision to take a bunch of his soldiers and flee the city through the gate by the king's garden.

They attempt an escape towards the Jordan Valley. As if Zedekiah could escape God's judgment. The Babylonians catch up to him, and Judah's soldiers scatter. Zedekiah is led to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar pronounces judgment upon him.

Before his eyes, the Babylonians slaughter Zedekiah's sons. With this memory seared into his eyeballs, the Babylonians gouge out his eyes. They bind him in the now-stereotypical bronze chains, and Zedekiah is taken to Babylon.

Zedekiah: The End.

"Nebuzaradan burned down the Temple of the LORD, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. He destroyed all the important buildings in the city. Then he supervised the entire Babylonian army as they tore down the walls of Jerusalem on every side." (2 Kings 25:9-10)

Now the end has arrived. The Babylonians decimate Jerusalem. They tear down the Temple of the LORD, the royal palace, and all the houses. Then they bulldoze the walls of Jerusalem on every side and exile the people.

Nebuzaradan, captain of Nebuchadnezzar's guard, takes the high priest, second-rank priest, chief gatekeepers, five of the king's advisers, the army secretary, and sixty other citizens to Riblah. There, everyone is put to death.

Nebuchadnezzar appoints Gedaliah son of Ahikam as governor (not king) over the land. Less than a year later, Ishmael son of Nethaniah assassinates him, killing all the Babylonians present in Jerusalem. At this point, the peasants who remained in Judah flee to Egypt.

And so, Israel ends up where they began. Broke, homeless, and abandoned, back in Egypt. Twenty-three kings, a dozen or so judges, countless prophets, all for nothing. The Israelites are back where they started.

What Defined Zedekiah?

I'll focus on one character trait that I found noteworthy: his (dis)honesty. Zedekiah made a vow before God, and he broke it, reminding me to...

Keep Your Word

"He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken an oath of loyalty in God's name. Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man, refusing to turn to the LORD, the God of Israel." (2 Chronicles 36:13)

When we say we'll do something, we should do it. Christians should be people of their word. Proverbs repeatedly separates the trustworthy from the untrustworthy, promising rewards or consequences based on our actions. Zedekiah pledged loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar (which was already a mistake). Then he broke his oath. Worse, he had made the oath in God's name. He took the LORD's name in vain.

To the greatest extent possible - assuming we're glorifying God and not breaking the law - we need to be trustworthy. We need to be honest and responsible. Be a man or woman of your Word. If I say I'll do something, I will do it. No matter what.

Good/Bad.

After twenty-three kings, it's become pretty clear which side of the spectrum most fall under. I almost ran out of space on the 'BAD' side. To think positively, we can praise the LORD that Judah's final king will blow the bad kings to oblivion. Kings, such as today's.

Which is why we need to put Zedekiah in his place on the Kings Chart. He is our fourteenth king on the 'BAD' side.

Now the story could end here, and God would be more than justified. Israel and Judah deserved everything that came their way. Scripture *could* end here, and nobody would dream of saying, "That's unfair."

Except that isn't where this story ends. We'll have to wait four hundred years (or at least until next week), because there is...one more king. The fulfillment of every murdered prophet's prophecies.

Each time the kings of Judah ignored the prophets, they ignored a message about a King who would be the true heir of David. Notice that we never saw a king who reached the 'David Tier', despite many good kings. Wait for it, because David is about to get one-upped big time.

As the final King will say in Luke 4:18... *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for He has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free."*



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