

LESSON 5

CHAPTER 1

Daniel 1:1

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

Who are these two kings and how did we get here?

To answer those questions, we need to start with two other rulers: King Josiah of Judah and Pharaoh Neco of Egypt.

Neco is first mentioned in 2 Kings 23:29. A statue of Neco is shown on the handout for Lesson 5 (available at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com).

Josiah is first mentioned by name in 1 Kings 13:2 (in a remarkable prophecy against Jeroboam given three centuries before Josiah's birth!) and then in 2 Kings 21:24, when Josiah becomes king after his father, King Amon. 2 Kings 22 tells us how Josiah repaired the temple and found the book of the Law.

Soon after coming to power in Egypt, Pharaoh Neco began trying to gain control of Syria-Palestine. In 609, he captured Gaza and Ashkelon. He then led his army northward to help the Assyrians in their battles with the Chaldeans, who had already captured the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612.

Neco sent envoys to King Josiah, assuring him that his purpose was not to fight with Judah but rather with the Chaldeans of Babylon.

2 Chronicles 35:21 — *But he sent envoys to him, saying, What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you.*

Josiah, realizing that the independence of Judah was being threatened, tried to stop the Egyptians at the pass of Megiddo (the world's most famous battlefield!), but he was defeated and mortally wounded.

2 Kings 23:29 — *In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him, and Pharaoh Neco killed him at Megiddo, as soon as he saw him.*

Neco proceeded to gain control of Syria as far as the Euphrates.

When Neco heard that the people of Judah had crowned Jehoahaz, an anti-Egyptian son of Josiah, he summoned Jehoahaz to Syria, deposed him, and took him to Egypt as a prisoner for the rest of his life.

In his place Neco put Jehoahaz's brother and Josiah's other son, Eliakim, and changed his name to Jehoiakim to show that he was an Egyptian vassal. Neco placed Judah under heavy tribute — 100 talents of silver and one talent (about 75 pounds) of gold.

2 Kings 23:33-34 — *And Pharaoh Neco put him [Jehoahaz] in bonds at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and laid on the land a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josi-*

ah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away, and he came to Egypt and died there.

In 605, King Nabopolassar of Babylon sent his son Nebuchadnezzar against Neco's army at Carchemish on the Euphrates. The Babylonians defeated the Egyptians and drove them out of Syria. Jeremiah describes this defeat of Egypt.

Jeremiah 46:1-2 — *The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations. About Egypt. Concerning the army of Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates at Carchemish and which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah.*

Jeremiah gave Pharaoh Neco one of the greatest nicknames in history. In Jeremiah 46:17 we read, "Call the name of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, 'Noisy one who lets the hour go by'" (RSV) (or "The Man with No Power but with Plenty of Noise") (TLB).

Jehoiakim went from being a vassal of Egypt to being a vassal of Babylon.

2 Kings 24:1a — *In his days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years.*

In 601, Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Egypt itself, but Neco withstood him in a bloody battle at Egypt's border. This battle may have encouraged Jehoiakim to revolt against Babylon in 601 despite Jeremiah's warnings.

2 Kings 24:1 — *In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him.*

Jeremiah 27:8-10 — *And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their*

neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. 9 Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: 10 For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish.

Nebuchadnezzar decided to move against rebellious Judah.

2 Chronicles 36:6-7 — *Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. 7 Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.*

Here is where we catch up with Daniel 1:1. Although the siege began with Jehoiakim on the throne, Jehoiakim was soon taken captive and died. (This was the first of the three sieges that we mentioned in our introduction.)

2 Kings 24:6 — *So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.*

As that verse tells us, Jehoiachin came to the throne next during the siege of Jerusalem, and Nebuchadnezzar took the city in 597 BC.

2 Kings 24:11-12 — *And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. 12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.*

At some point during these events, *Crown Prince* Nebuchadnezzar became *King* Nebuchadnezzar with the death of his father, Nabopolassar. Nebuchadnezzar chronicled that event in his seventh year, the month of Kislev:

The Babylonian king mustered his troops and marched to the Hattiland. He encamped against the city of Judah [Jerusalem] and on the second day of the month of Adar he seized the city and captured the king [Jehoiachin]. He appointed there a king of his own choice, received its heavy tribute and sent it to Babylon.

This text gives the exact date for this capture of Jerusalem and for the beginning of the exile as 16 March 597 — in “the spring of the year” (2 Chronicles 36:10). (This was the second of the three sieges that we mentioned in our introduction.)

Jehoiachin and his family were carried off to Babylon.

2 Kings 24:15 — *And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king’s mother, and the king’s wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.*

2 Kings 25:27-30 tells us that Jehoiachin was later released from prison by the next king, Amel-Marduk.

2 Kings 25:28-30 — *And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon; 29 And changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. 30 And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.*

The handout shows a clay tablet on which the rations provided to the king and his family were recorded by the Babylonians.

The king that replaced Jehoiachin was his uncle, Mattaniah, whom Nebuchadnezzar renamed Zedekiah. Zedekiah also ignored Jeremiah and rebelled against Babylon, hoping for help from Egypt.

2 Kings 24:17 — *And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.*

2 Kings 24:20 — *For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.*

In 586 BC, Jerusalem fell, the walls were torn down, and the temple was demolished. Some of the Jewish leaders were executed and others were deported. Zedekiah tried to escape, but was captured, blinded, and taken to Babylon. Only the poor were left to till the soil. (This was the third of the three sieges that we mentioned in our introduction.)

2 Kings 25:7-12 — *And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. 8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: 9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. 10 And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about. 11 Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan*

the captain of the guard carry away. 12 But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.

The Babylonians appointed a Jew, Gedaliah, to govern Judah, but he was soon murdered. (The Middle East hasn't changed much!)

2 Kings 25:22 — *And as for the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler.*

A stone seal used by Gedaliah during this time is shown on the handout for Lesson 5 (available at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com).

2 Kings 25:25 — *But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah.*

Fearing a reprisal, some of the Jews fled to Egypt.

2 Kings 25:26 — *And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees*

Jeremiah 43:5-7 tells us that they took Jeremiah with them when they fled to Egypt.

And that is how we arrived at Daniel 1:1!

In the introduction, I mentioned that of the two kings in verse 1, one of them is one of the most detestable figures in the Bible — and it is not Nebuchadnezzar! Remember what Jehoiakim did:

Jeremiah 36:2-3 — *Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against*

Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even into this day. 3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

Jeremiah 36:23-24 — *And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. 24 Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.*

Yes, King Jehoiakim actually took a knife to the word of God, cut it in pieces, and threw it in the fire.

He certainly had no regard for the word of God, but before we are too harsh on Jehoiakim, are we ever guilty of the same thing? Do we ever pick and choose parts of the Bible the way he did? What difference is there if instead of cutting out something from our Bible, we simply choose to ignore it?

There are a lot of Jehoiakim's in the religious world today. They may not literally cut out and burn parts of the word of God — but they effectively do that when they reject or ignore the parts of the word with which they disagree.

Why had all of this occurred? Why were the people taken captive?

One reason was their failure to trust in God. Judah had made alliances with Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt and in doing so had involved themselves in their power struggles — an involvement that eventually led to their destruction. These alliances were NOT according to God's will.

A second reason was their idolatry. God had tried everything to get them to give up their idols, but they refused. When he sent them to Babylon, he sent them to the world capital of idolatry!

We should be careful what we attach ourselves to. God may give us our fill of it! The phrase “God gave them up” appears three times in Romans 1. In Revelation the Romans wanted blood so God gave them a river of blood 200 miles long! And remember what happened in the wilderness:

Numbers 11:18-20 — *And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. 19 Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; 20 But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?*

Interestingly, idolatry was never quite the problem for Israel after their captivity in Babylon as it was before. God’s plan worked!

Daniel 1:2

2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to

**the house of his god; and he brought the vessels
into the treasure house of his god.**

As we mentioned in our introductory comments, the first few verses of Chapter 1 do not seem to be speaking of a single incident, but instead appear to be a summary of the events we just reviewed that led to Daniel's deportation.

Also, recall our introductory comments about "Shinar" in verse 2. It was the site of the Tower of Babel and was a very early term for Babylon. It points toward an early date for the book.

The Babylonians had many different false gods (Marduk, Nebo, Ishtar). The singular word "god" in verse 2 likely refers to Marduk.

In this verse we meet a third king — the Lord in verse 2 is the true king! Nebuchadnezzar thought he was in charge, but God was in charge. He allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take Judah captive, and when the time was right he removed Nebuchadnezzar from power.

Just about all that is left today of the mighty Nebuchadnezzar is a pile of bricks. When Nebuchadnezzar built the city, he had his name and picture imprinted on every brick that was used. One in the British museum shows the clear imprint of dog's foot over the name of the mighty king!

Nebuchadnezzar thought he was building an empire for himself, but he was really building a school for the Jews. God sent them there for a 70 year lesson they would never forget. When the 70 years were over, God removed the Chaldeans through Cyrus the Persian.

"And the Lord gave" in verse 2 is the first indication of a major theme of this book: the absolute sovereignty of God. God is in charge.

Babylon was victorious only because God allowed it to be. Later we will see the other side of the coin. Babylon will be defeated when it has finished serving God's purposes. Jeremiah 50-51 record the prophetic judgments against Babylon.

Was Jehoiakim (not Jehoiachin) taken back to Babylon? We can't tell just from verse 2. The phrase "which he carried" in verse 2 may just refer to the vessels from the temple, which we know went back to Babylon.

But what about 2 Chronicles 36:6-7?

Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.

Again, this does not actually say that Jehoiakim returned to Babylon, only that Nebuchadnezzar planned to take him there.

Why does it matter? Jeremiah seems to suggest that Jehoiakim would die in Judah.

Jeremiah 22:18-19 — *Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! 19 He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.*

It seems most likely that Nebuchadnezzar planned to take Jehoiakim back but that after being captured, Jehoiakim died and his body was simply thrown down outside the city, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy.

Removing the vessels from the temple was a terrible insult to the Jews. They were taken back to Babylon and placed in the treasury of the Babylonian gods.

The mention of these vessels in verse 2 is an example of the unity of this book. They will play an important role later. Belshazzar is going to live to regret this theft in Chapter 5!

There is a very interesting back story about the temple vessels. Hezekiah had displayed the temple articles one century earlier to Babylonian emissaries.

2 Kings 20:12-13 — *At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13 And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.*

Before we read further, does this seem like a smart thing for Hezekiah to have done? No, and Isaiah is quick to tell him so.

2 Kings 20:14-19 — *Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. 15 And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. 16 And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. 17 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away;*

and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 19 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?

That last verse is a classic! Who cares if I have brought calamity to the land if that calamity occurs long after I'm gone! Hezekiah should run for Congress!