

GOD'S NATION FELL

CORE PASSAGE: 2 CHRONICLES 36:11-21

CONTEXT

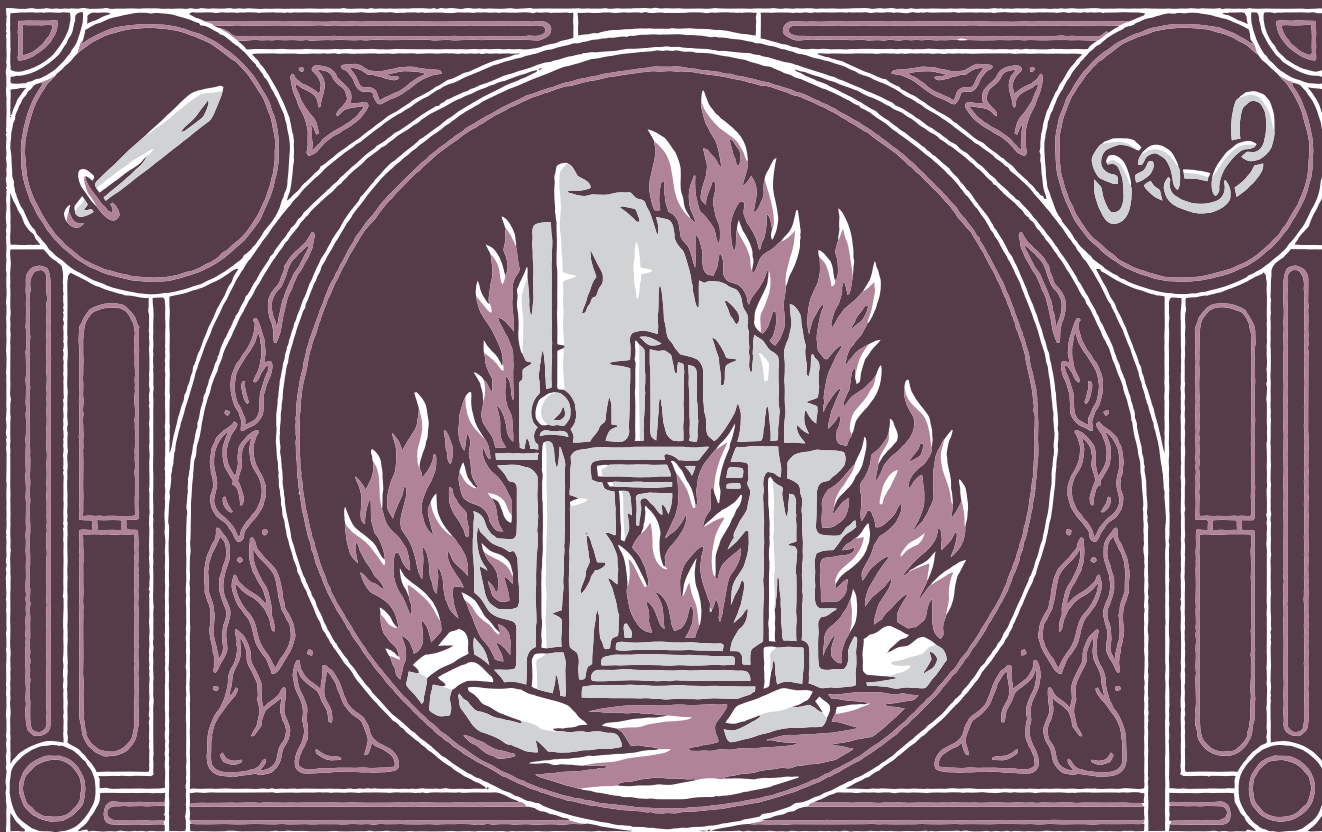
Josiah was a good king over Judah who followed in the ways of his ancestor David, and he obeyed the Lord in almost all that he did. Josiah's faithfulness brought restoration to God's people. But after Josiah's death, his successors—three sons and a grandson—did not follow in his faithful footsteps. Each one did what was evil in the Lord's eyes. They did not obey God but pursued wickedness and rebelled against His ways and His punishments. Their continual disobedience brought about God's judgment that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and exile from the promised land for God's people.

KEY CONCEPT

God warns people with compassion but will also judge evil.

As you examine 2 Chronicles 36:11-21:

- Recognize the compassion of God in sending messengers to warn and call His people to repentance.
- Understand that apart from Christ, everyone will reach a point of no remedy from the just wrath of God against sin.



TIMELINE

Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Judah's Remaining Kings Return to What Is Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 23–24)

SESSION STUDY: Babylon Besieges and Conquers Judah, Deporting the People (2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36)

Hezekiah and Josiah Restore the Worship of the Lord (2 Kings 18–20; 22–23)

Jeremiah Prophesies Judgment on Judah and a New Covenant (Jeremiah 1–38)

Ezekiel Prophesies to the Exiles (Ezekiel 1–48)

Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** 2 Kings 23:31–25:26

☐ **Day 2:** 2 Chronicles 36:1–21

☐ **Day 3:** Jeremiah 39:1–44:30

☐ **Day 4:** Jeremiah 45:1–52:30

☐ **Day 5:** Lamentations 1:1–5:22

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 79



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

Notes



SCAN ME

Bonus Content

Scan this QR code to review God's message through the prophets concerning the Babylonian exile.

**THOUGH GOD WAITS PATIENTLY FOR REPENTANCE,
HE WILL JUDGE EVIL (2 CHRONICLES 36:11-16).**

Underline all the words that indicate Zedekiah's rebellion. Circle the result.

11 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. **12** He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah at the LORD's command. **13** He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear allegiance by God. He became obstinate and hardened his heart against returning to the LORD, the God of Israel. **14** All the leaders of the priests and the people multiplied their unfaithful deeds, imitating all the detestable practices of the nations, and they defiled the LORD's temple that he had consecrated in Jerusalem. **15** But the LORD, the God of their ancestors sent word against them by the hand of his messengers, sending them time and time again, for he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. **16** But they kept ridiculing God's messengers, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the LORD's wrath was so stirred up against his people that there was no remedy.

Zedekiah was the last of Josiah's three sons to reign and the last king of Judah. He did not learn from his father's obedience and faithfulness but instead did what was evil in God's eyes. Even though the prophet Jeremiah shared God's warnings and declarations, Zedekiah pridefully ignored Jeremiah and relied on the feel-good messages of false prophets who promised God would never allow His people to be driven from the land (Jer. 28:1-4).

In the aftermath of a previous, smaller-scale exile (29:1-2), Zedekiah had been appointed as king by Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful king of Babylon whom God had appointed to bring punishment on Judah for their disobedience. But Zedekiah disobeyed God and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, also leading the people and even the priests toward evil behavior. A reckoning was coming as the Lord had foretold (Deut. 29:16-29).

LEADER NOTE: Being prideful and unwilling to receive correction is a dangerous and deadly path. If our actions are in direct contradiction to God's Word and the Lord has confronted us in our sin through His Spirit and possibly through a brother or sister in Christ, then we ought to respond with a humble heart in repentance and faith in the God of patient grace who forgives.

What are some ways we can grow in humility to listen to and accept godly rebuke and correction?

Despite the people's rebellion, the Lord was patient. He repeatedly sent messengers and prophets, such as Jeremiah, to call them to repentance. He even sent a message to the people who had been carried away to Babylon to encourage them that God would bring them back to the land of Judah after seventy years (Jer. 29:1-28). The Lord did this because He wanted His people to repent of their wicked ways and follow Him.

But God's patience and compassion were not met with gratefulness or humility. Instead, God's messengers weren't just ignored but ridiculed and abused, and by extension, so too was God Himself. Having reached a tipping point, the Lord would no longer allow their evil to persist, and His wrath, His appropriate and just response to their rebellion, became unstoppable.

LEADER NOTE: The Lord is perfect in all His attributes and all His ways. Therefore, the Lord's patience is infinite, just as He is. The Lord is also perfectly just, so His wrath against sin and sinners is always the appropriate and necessary consequence of evil. Being that God's patience is infinite, it can never run out, as we might speak of a parent's patience toward a child. Yet God can set a point at which He operates in patience toward sinners and then transitions to just judgment against them with "no remedy," which typically corresponds to death. The Lord is patient and desires all to repent and be saved, but we must not overlook God's warnings that the day of His judgment is certain (2 Pet. 3:8-13).

How have you been treated as you have shared the gospel with others?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS JUST: God establishes standards for His moral creatures that are in accordance with His righteousness, and His moral creatures will be judged according to those standards (Lev. 11:44-45; Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10). It would be unjust if God did not uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character. Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both just and the justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (Rom. 3:25-26).

NO ONE CAN ESCAPE GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT APART FROM REPENTANCE (2 CHRONICLES 36:17-21).

Circle each “he” that refers to the Lord, and underline each “he” that refers to Nebuchadnezzar.

17 So he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their fit young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary. He had no pity on young men or young women, elderly or aged; he handed them all over to him. **18** He took everything to Babylon—all the articles of God's temple, large and small, the treasures of the LORD's temple, and the treasures of the king and his officials. **19** Then the Chaldeans burned God's temple. They tore down Jerusalem's wall, burned all its palaces, and destroyed all its valuable articles. **20** He deported those who escaped from the sword to Babylon, and they became servants to him and his sons until the rise of the Persian kingdom. **21** This fulfilled the word of the LORD through Jeremiah, and the land enjoyed its Sabbath rest all the days of the desolation until seventy years were fulfilled.

Here we see the final result of Judah's rebellion against God. After multiple attempts to extend compassion to His people, God determined to judge their evil. Like many before him, Zedekiah had failed as a leader, but the people failed in their willingness to follow the Lord, ignoring the warnings of the prophets. Now the Lord would use King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, or Chaldeans, to tear it all down and take His people away. The description of God's judgment for Judah is stark and shocking, a reminder of the seriousness of sin and the just punishment for disobedience from which no one is exempt.

LEADER NOTE: The Babylonians' actions against Judah were their own, yet at the same time, God sent them to fulfill His judgment against His rebellious people. In Habakkuk 1:5-11, the Lord foretold His use of the Chaldeans to punish Judah and also condemned them as guilty in their attack because they did not act for God's glory but for their own. In this we see that God is sovereign, holy, and just.

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil.”¹

—J. I. Packer (1926–2020)

Key Concept: God warns people with compassion but will also judge evil.

For those who reject the gospel, both out of willful rebellion and sin-veiled ignorance, there will come a day when there is no remedy. God must punish sin, but in His mercy He has provided the means of salvation through His Son, Jesus. We have been given this gospel message to share with the world.

How might you communicate with others the remedy for God's wrath that God has provided in Jesus Christ?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Because of God's compassion, Jesus came to make a way of salvation for those who will believe in Him and repent of their sins. But there will come a time when all who harden their hearts against the Lord will be judged.

The exile, though a form of judgment, was not the final word for Israel. Verses 20-21 allude to the fulfillment of God's words spoken by Jeremiah, who foretold the length of their exile as seventy years (Jer. 29:10). Jeremiah also had a message of hope for those who would be taken to Babylon: "This city will bear on my behalf a name of joy, praise, and glory before all the nations of the earth, who will hear of all the prosperity I will give them. They will tremble with awe because of all the good and all the peace I will bring about for them" (33:9). God promised to restore His people and bring them back to the land. While there must be judgment for sin, there is also hope for salvation and restoration. And just as God kept his word regarding His wrath against Judah, He also keeps His word for the ultimate blessing of His people.

LEADER NOTE: Leviticus 25 provides God's laws regarding a Sabbath rest for the land every seven years and a Year of Jubilee every fifty years. On these special years, the land was not to be worked but left to produce on its own, and similar to how the Lord provided for the people's needs on the weekly Sabbaths, so too would the Lord provide for them on these Sabbath years. It would seem the people of Israel and Judah largely failed to obey the Lord in this matter, a symptom of their rebellion against God, and this determined the length of their exile.

How does this passage challenge your perspective on the seriousness of sin in your own life?

Notes

ARRIVAL

INTERACT: Before the group arrives, write the following on the board: “I want to get healthier, but . . .”; “I need to save more money, but . . .”; and “The check engine light in my car is on, but . . .” Feel free to add any other such statements. Upon arrival, ask your group if they currently are going through a situation that requires action and yet they find themselves using similar “but” statements.

TRANSITION: The word “but” is small and seemingly insignificant, but it can change the course of a narrative. In the midst of idolatry and oppression, we know that a statement like “But the Lord” can turn the outcome immediately. The problem comes, though, when God’s people continue to harden their hearts and minds against Him. That’s what happened in this week’s passage.

CONTEXT

OVERVIEW: We’ve been walking through the Bible from God’s creation of Adam to the creation of His chosen nation and now to its fall. We’ve seen the Israelites wander in the desert, build a temple, and we’ve seen them completely disregard God’s lordship. Though the prophets had been speaking God’s word to them, the people chose rebellion. Today’s passage contains a conclusion within the story: the last king over the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the sad, destructive exile of God’s chosen people.

RECAP

ASK: In your personal preparation study this week, how do you recall King Zedekiah being described? What about the prophet Jeremiah? The people of Judah? King Nebuchadnezzar? The Lord?

TRANSITION: As you studied 2 Chronicles 36:11-21 this week, you watched the last bit of God’s nation fall to their enemy. Over and over, God had called for His people to return to Him in repentance and faith, but they refused. Therefore, they reached a point of no return and “no remedy,” and God fulfilled His promises to curse, punish, kill, and exile His people from His promised land. In our activity, we will consider what leads to a point of “no remedy” with God and how to avoid reaching that place.



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Key Concept: God warns people with compassion but will also judge evil.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 118 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find an activity titled “No Remedy.” Recreate this on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with the Scripture text.

No Remedy
Read the Scripture passages and briefly summarize the actions of the key figure(s) in the space provided.

2 CHRONICLES 36:11-14: “ZEDEKIAH . . .”

2 CHRONICLES 36:15: “BUT THE LORD . . .”

2 CHRONICLES 36:16: “BUT THEY . . .”

2 CHRONICLES 36:17-21: "SO HE . . ."

ENGAGE: Display and call attention to **Pack Item 2: The Kings**, and slowly read through the list of the kings of Judah. Invite the group to interrupt and summarize a narrative or lesson learned from a king previously studied. Reemphasize our focus today on Zedekiah as the last king on the list.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 2 Chronicles 36:11-16 aloud.

SUMMARIZE: As a group, consider how the text from verses 11-14 could be summarized succinctly. Write that summary on the chart. Point out that Zedekiah had hardened his heart to the prophet Jeremiah, to King Nebuchadnezzar of the Chaldeans, and even to God. Direct your group to carefully consider verse 15, summarizing it as a group and recording that summary as well. Ask: “How many times have we seen God’s people rebel against Him? How many times have we seen Him call them back through His love and faithfulness?” Continue the activity by summarizing verse 16 and writing it on the chart.

Notes

THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN

NAME	DATE	PERMISSION
NAME		
DATE		
PERMISSION		

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF SWEDEN

NAME	DATE	PERMISSION
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THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF SWEDEN

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THE KINGS

THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN

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THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF SWEDEN

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THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF SWEDEN

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READ: Invite a volunteer to read 2 Chronicles 36:17-21 aloud.

DISCUSS: Conclude the activity by considering as a group how to summarize verses 17-21 and writing that on the board. Note that verse 17 begins with the words “So he,” meaning “So God.” Ask: “Do you think God’s people were shocked that He brought about their defeat at the hands of the Chaldeans? How was this act a reflection of God’s good and faithful character?”

DEBRIEF

(PSG p. 118) How can we avoid reaching a point of “no remedy” with the Lord? How can we help others trust in God’s remedy in Jesus Christ?

Why should we praise God for being just? What does God’s justice reveal about His character and our responsibility?

SUMMARIZE

When a parent doesn’t parent, we might call that negligence. When a leader doesn’t lead, we might call that incompetence. If Almighty God were to give His standards for right and wrong but never punish disobedience, we might question His status as God. But the Lord is judge and jury because He is holy, yet He is merciful too. For the totality of who God is—just and merciful, holy and gracious—we can praise Him even in the judgments He pronounces. The final story of Zedekiah (and Judah) point to the future judgment in which all who harden their hearts against Jesus will be judged, but all who humble themselves and turn to Him in repentance and faith will be saved.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 119). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: Zedekiah heard the words of the prophets over and over again, yet he never heeded what they said. The prophets’ warnings were ignored, and their prophecies fulfilled. When we hear God’s Word, we must not ignore it.

What would God have us believe and do in response to Judah’s destruction?



HEART: God is unbelievably patient with His people. He provided many opportunities for them to return to Him. And even when He poured out His wrath, He still promised to restore the people. This is undeserved grace, the same kind of grace God shows to anyone who repents and turns to Him.

How has God shown love and mercy toward you? How have you extended that love and mercy to others?

Key Concept: God warns people with compassion but will also judge evil.



HANDS: The people of Judah failed to encourage one another toward obedience and the love of God. Zedekiah led wickedly and directed them toward other gods, but the people also led one another poorly by following this evil king and not challenging his poor example. We, on the other hand, should “consider one another in order to provoke love and good works” (Heb. 10:24).

How will you encourage others to stay accountable and obedient to God’s Word even when it’s difficult?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week’s session.

- In your prayer journal this week, confess areas in which you’ve allowed your own heart to become hardened. Invite the Spirit to renew your heart as you yield to Him.
- Reflect on 2 Chronicles 36:15-16 each day this week, and use that as the starting point for your private worship time.
- Pray for the people you know who have hardened their hearts against the Lord. If the opportunity arises, share the truth of His grace and mercy with them.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 119 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray with your group through Psalm 79:9-13, thanking God that He has atoned for the sins of His people in Jesus Christ for the glory of His name.

References

1. J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 136.

Notes

