**Jeremiah 39 (Lesson 21a)**

**I. Text Of Chapter 39 – Jerusalem Falls (2.5 min. to read)**

*A. Jerusalem Falls; Zedekiah Imprisoned (39:1-10)* – condensed; v. 9 a month after!

1. Nebuchadnezzar was in Riblah, 200 miles north while his officials finished the job of sacking Jerusalem. There is some struggle to make sense of the names & roles of these men, but it is generally accepted that Nergal-sar-ezer is the later King Neriglissar (*CANE* 972; 560-556 B.C.), son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar who killed Evil-Merodach/Amel- Marduk in a rebellion. Samgar-nebo, Rab-saris, & Rabmag are generally taken to be official titles, rather than names.

2. Once they got through, they conferenced at the central gate (cf. Prov. 31:23; Ruth 4:1f) fulfilling Jeremiah’s prophecy 40 years prior (1:15).

3. Once the wall was broken through, Zedekiah and the princes fled to the Arabah through the king’s garden, possibly via the fountain gate (Neh. 2:14; 12:37) which would have been near the pool of Siloam. They are caught, the princes are executed, Zedekiah is rebuked for violating his vow, his sons are killed, & eyes gouged out (4:31; Dt. 28:34; Ju. 16:21).

4. The king’s house, people’s houses, and the walls are all burned (v. 8; cf. 7:20; 21:10-14; 22:13f; 2Chron. 36:19; Hab. 2:13).

5. Nebuzaradan entrusts fields and vineyards to the poorest of the land, probably to secure continuing tribute, food supplies in the event their army needs to march against Egypt, & provide a buffer w/ Egypt.

*B. Jeremiah Released By Babylonians (39:11-14)*

1. The Babylonians are well aware of Jeremiah’s preaching. This could’ve been & Daniel & Ezekiel told them, Jeremiah had communicated w/ them, spies, or even by extracting information from defectors, POWs (cf. 2Kgs. 18:22, 33-35; Is. 36:4-6; Jer. 40:2f). Jeremiah didn’t consider himself a spy (cf. 51:24) or any enemy of his people (cf. 4:19-21), but his preaching & advice did benefit the Babylonians (34:1-3).

2. Jeremiah is taken out of the court of prison & (eventually) entrusted to Gedaliah, whose family was pro-Jeremiah (26:24; 2Chron. 34:20f).

*C. Ebed-Melech’s Reward (39:15-18)* – cf. Ps. 146:5; Mt. 8:10; contrast to Zedekiah

**II. Thought Questions For Chapter 39**

A. Comparing this chapter with Jeremiah 52 & 2 Kings 25, give a brief timeline of major events at the fall of Jerusalem (the beginning of the siege, the burning of the king’s house, the burning of the walls, etc.).

B. Look up the names in verse 3 and briefly discuss the difficulties in identifying these people & roles. Also, note the general consensus that Nergal-sar-ezer is King Neriglissar who succeeded Evil-Merodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar.

C. What benefits did Babylon bank on in leaving the poorest to cultivate the land?

D. How might the Babylonian officials have known about Jeremiah?

E. Make your own application from this chapter and be ready to present it in class.

**III. Applications For Chapter 39**

A. *Captain of the guard* (v. 9) = Heb. *“the chief butcher”;* if you’re going to have a nickname, make it really intense, with a mild note of humor ☺

B. *“God had honoured His promise to deliver Jeremiah (cf. 1:8), saving him when others were being destroyed. Christians have a firm assurance of God’s loving concern & care for His faithful children (cf. Mt 10:30f; 1 Pet 5:7; etc.).”* (Harrison, 158)

**Jeremiah 40 (Lesson 21b)**

**I. Text Of Chapter 40 – The Aftermath (2.5 min. to read)**

*A. Jeremiah’s Release At Ramah (40:1-6)*

1. In the confusion of the siege and aftermath, Jeremiah is taken to Ramah. Once the embarrassing mistake is uncovered, Nebuzaradan gives Jeremiah the option of going to Babylon or staying in the land. The offer sounds like the decision Abraham and Lot faced. Rather than choose Sodom though, Jeremiah remains in the land. God still had work for Jeremiah to do (42:2, 4, 7, 18f; 43:8; 44:1-3, 30).

2. Ramah was where *“Rachel wept for her children” (*31:15).

3. Nebuzaradan knew the reasons for the judgment of YHWH on His people. He would’ve likely been polytheistic but as a high official of Babylon, it was his responsibility to gain this information (cf. Dan. 2:46f; 3:28f; 4:34-37; 6:25-27; Ezra 1:1-4; 7:23). As a polytheist, he would’ve viewed YHWH as a god, but as a lesser god in his pantheon (cf. Judg. 11:24; 1Kgs. 20:23, 28; Hab. 1:11; Dan. 5:3f).

4. Nebuzaradan’s kindness, although perhaps with ulterior motives, sharply contrasts with the prophet’s own people (cf. Mk. 6:4).

*B. Gedaliah, The Politician & Return Of Fugitives (40:7-12)­ –* cf. 27:11; 1Kgs. 10:8

1. Gedaliah begins well by promoting allegiance to Babylon and unites at least most of the people. He centers his work in Mizpah, eight miles north of Jerusalem, and many of those who had fled during the Babylonian invasion return. Mizpah = watchtower; Tell en-Nasbeh

2. This benefits Babylon w/ tribute, control of strategic territory, & supplies.

*C. Johanan Warns Gedaliah Of Mutiny (40:13-16)* – he is killed around 582 B.C.

1. Baalis, likely seeking to control the territory unites w/ Ishmael, a son of the house of David (41:1), in a conspiracy against Gedaliah. Ammonites were descended from the incestuous relationship of Lot & daughters. They were hostile to Israel (Dt. 23:3-6) & worthy of judgment (25:21; 49:1; Ezek. 21:28; 25:1; Amos 1:13).

2. Gedaliah may have feared that the slaying of Ishmael would only lead to further bloodshed or perhaps wool was simply pulled over his eyes.

**II. Thought Questions For Chapter 40**

A. How did Nebuzaradan know about the God of Judah & about the spiritual reasons for their downfall? What does this say about us and our influence on pagans?

B. Was Gedaliah a good ruler? What were his strengths and weaknesses?

C. What were the motivations of Baalis and Ishmael in the mutiny of Gedaliah?

D. Make your own application from this chapter and be ready to present it in class.

**III. Applications For Chapter 40**

A. *“When God’s judgments fall, some will learn righteousness (cf. Ps. 119:67, 71; Isa. 26:9), while others will not (cf. Rev. 9:20, 21; 16:9-11, 16).”* (Humphries, 415)

B. Jeremiah’s staying w/ the people despite great privileges that going to Babylon could offer shows that one should not seek great things for oneself (45:5). We must seek to do what we can, where we can, when we can, while we can.

C. *“It is not unknown for Christians to be treated with greater respect by the world than by the fellowship of believers.”* (Harrison, 160) Should never be the case!

D. Some aren’t as sincere as others; we need to be shrewd as serpents! (cf. Jn. 2:24f)