

Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Session 23, Jeremiah 38-39, Zedekiah, Fall of Jerusalem Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Yates, Jeremiah, Session 23, Jeremiah 38-39, Zedekiah, Fall of Jerusalem, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Gary Yates **analyzes** Jeremiah chapters 37-39, focusing on **King Zedekiah's disobedience** and the resulting **destruction of Jerusalem**. The lecture **contrasts** Zedekiah's inaction with the active hostility of Jehoiakim, both resulting in divine judgment. Yates highlights the **prophetic conflict** between Jeremiah and false prophets promising peace, and **examines the narrative structure** of the chapters to illustrate recurring themes of disobedience and its consequences. Finally, the lecture **identifies examples of faithful individuals**, such as Baruch and Ebed-Melech, amidst the widespread unfaithfulness.

**2. 11 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Yates, Jeremiah, Session 23 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Major Prophets → Jeremiah).**



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3. Yates, Jeremiah, Session 23, Jeremiah 38-39, Zedekiah, Fall of Jerusalem

Jeremiah 37-39: Zedekiah's Disobedience and the Fall of Jerusalem Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What was the main theological message of Jeremiah regarding the fall of Jerusalem?
2. How did the false prophets in Jeremiah's time differ from the true prophets?
3. How did King Jehoiakim respond to the word of the Lord, and how does this compare to Zedekiah?
4. What specific request did King Zedekiah make of Jeremiah, and what was Jeremiah's response?
5. What did the military officials accuse Jeremiah of, and how did they treat him as a result?
6. What was the significance of the parallel between the story of Jeremiah and Zedekiah and the story of Isaiah and Hezekiah?
7. What was the significance of Jeremiah's imprisonment in a cistern and how does it connect to Zedekiah's fate?
8. What reasons did Zedekiah give for not surrendering to the Babylonians?
9. What was the fate of Zedekiah after the fall of Jerusalem, and how is it related to his disobedience?
10. Name three figures in Jeremiah 26-45 that are highlighted as examples of obedience.

Answer Key

1. The main theological message of Jeremiah was that the fall of Jerusalem was a direct result of the king, officials, and people of Judah not listening to or obeying the word of the Lord. It was not God abandoning his covenant; it was Israel failing in the covenant.

2. False prophets proclaimed messages of peace and prosperity, often for personal gain, and they told the people what they wanted to hear rather than proclaiming God's warnings of judgment. True prophets like Jeremiah and Micah declared the word of the Lord, including messages of judgment and calls to repentance.
3. Jehoiakim angrily rejected the word of the Lord, destroyed the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies, and even killed the prophet Uriah; by contrast, Zedekiah engaged with Jeremiah, seeking his counsel repeatedly, but ultimately failed to obey the word of the Lord.
4. Zedekiah asked Jeremiah to pray that the Lord would cause Nebuchadnezzar to withdraw from attacking Jerusalem and give them deliverance. Jeremiah did not pray for this. Instead, he told Zedekiah that the city would be handed over to the Babylonians.
5. The military officials accused Jeremiah of deserting to the Chaldeans because he was advocating for surrender. They beat him and imprisoned him in a dungeon because they saw his messages as undermining the war effort.
6. The parallel between Jeremiah/Zedekiah and Isaiah/Hezekiah highlighted that despite Jeremiah's similar warnings as the Assyrian Rabshakeh from Isaiah's time, Zedekiah lacked the repentance of Hezekiah. Thus, unlike the miraculous deliverance of Hezekiah's time, there would be no deliverance for Zedekiah due to his lack of response to the word of the Lord.
7. Jeremiah's imprisonment in a cistern filled with mud symbolized the hopelessness and suffering he experienced for speaking God's message. Ironically, Zedekiah, who allowed Jeremiah to be thrown in the mud, ultimately suffered a similar fate as a prisoner himself, sinking into a different kind of "mud" without any hope of deliverance.
8. Zedekiah confessed he was afraid of being mistreated by the Judeans who had already defected to the Chaldeans; he feared their potential for retribution more than he feared the judgment of God.
9. After the fall of Jerusalem, Zedekiah was captured, forced to watch his sons executed, and then blinded before being imprisoned in Babylon. This was a direct consequence of his disobedience, serving as a warning about ignoring God's word.
10. Baruch, Ahikam, and Ebed-Melech were highlighted in the text as examples of people who displayed obedience during a time of national apostasy.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the character of King Zedekiah, focusing on his interactions with Jeremiah. How does his response to the word of the Lord demonstrate both fear of men and a lack of true faith?
2. Discuss the role of false prophecy in Jeremiah's time. How did their messages contribute to the downfall of Judah? In what ways were these false prophets similar to false prophets today?
3. Compare and contrast the responses of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah to the prophetic word. How do these responses illustrate different facets of disobedience, and what is the main point of this parallel?
4. Explore the significance of the intertextual comparison between Jeremiah and the Rabshakeh. How does this comparison illuminate the challenges Jeremiah faced, and what does it teach us about the nature of prophetic ministry?
5. Examine the theme of remnant theology in Jeremiah 26-45, referencing figures such as the Rechabites, Baruch, Ebed-Melech, and the family of Shaphan. In what ways do they demonstrate that true obedience is not always found in the majority?

Glossary

- **Babylonians/Chaldeans:** The people of the Babylonian empire who conquered Judah and Jerusalem.
- **Covenant:** A formal agreement or pact, especially between God and his people. In this context, the Mosaic covenant God made with the Israelites at Sinai.
- **False Prophets:** Individuals who claimed to speak for God but delivered messages that were not in accordance with God's will. These prophets often told people what they wanted to hear (messages of peace and prosperity).
- **Intertextuality:** The relationship between texts, where one text may reference, draw from, or comment on another. In this context, the comparison between the stories of Isaiah and Hezekiah and Jeremiah and Zedekiah.
- **Jehoiakim:** King of Judah from 609-597 BC, known for his violent opposition to God's word.
- **Jeremiah:** A prophet of God who warned Judah of the impending judgment due to their disobedience.
- **Prophetic Conflict:** The tension between true prophets who deliver God's message of judgment and false prophets who deliver messages that are contrary to God's word.
- **Rabshakeh:** The commander of the Assyrian army in the time of Hezekiah, used as a comparison to Jeremiah to illustrate Jeremiah's unpopular message of judgment.
- **Remnant:** A small group of people who remain faithful to God during a time of widespread rebellion or apostasy.
- **Zedekiah:** The last king of Judah who reigned from 597-586 BC. He was indecisive and ultimately disobedient to God's word.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture on Jeremiah 37-39:

Briefing Document: Jeremiah 37-39 - Zedekiah's Disobedience and the Fall of Jerusalem

Overview: This lecture focuses on Jeremiah chapters 37-39, which detail King Zedekiah's disobedience and the subsequent fall of Jerusalem. Dr. Yates emphasizes that this catastrophic event was a direct consequence of the people's, particularly the leadership's, failure to heed God's word delivered through Jeremiah. The lecture highlights the theological implications of the exile and analyzes the narrative structure and key characters within these chapters, contrasting them with previous figures and events.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Disobedience as the Root Cause of Jerusalem's Fall:

- The lecture asserts that the destruction of Jerusalem was not due to God abandoning his covenant but rather a direct result of Judah's disobedience, specifically their failure to listen to the Lord's message through Jeremiah.
- Quote: "The theological message of Jeremiah is that it is directly connected to the failure of the people to respond. It is not God abandoning his people. It is not God failing on his covenant promises. It is Israel who has failed in the covenant by not listening to or obeying the Lord."
- This disobedience was present among the king, officials, and the general populace.
- This echoes the message found throughout Jeremiah's ministry (and throughout the Old Testament as a whole) of the importance of responding to God's word.

1. Prophetic Conflict and False Prophets:

- The lecture highlights the tension between true prophets (like Jeremiah) and false prophets who preached messages of peace and prosperity, contradicting God's warnings of judgment. This tension isn't unique to Jeremiah's time, as Micah faced similar opposition a century earlier.

- False prophets offered "empty promises of peace", and were often motivated by personal gain, telling people what they wanted to hear, rather than the hard truth (Micah 3:5-6)
- Quote: "Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry, Peace. So, he's dealing with the same kind of prophets that Jeremiah had, who were saying, Peace, Peace."

1. **Zedekiah's Disobedience Compared to Jehoiakim's:**

- While Zedekiah appeared less overtly hostile than Jehoiakim (who actively persecuted Jeremiah), Dr. Yates argues that they were equally disobedient.
- Jehoiakim was angry and violent, whereas Zedekiah sought counsel from Jeremiah, yet ultimately failed to act.
- Quote: "Whether someone angrily rejects the gospel and says, I don't want to hear that, get away from me, or someone politely hears it and then ignores what it says, they both stand under God's condemnation."
- Zedekiah's fear of man and the potential consequences kept him from heeding God's word.

1. **The Futile Hope for a "Hezekiah Deliverance":**

- The people, and likely Zedekiah, hoped for a repeat of the miraculous deliverance Jerusalem experienced under Hezekiah during the Assyrian siege in 701 BC, but it was not to be.
- The crucial difference was the absence of a repentant response from Zedekiah.
- The lecture highlights the fact that this was not merely a repeat scenario: circumstances were different, as was the response of the leadership of Judah.

1. **Intertextual Connections and Jeremiah's Role:**

- Dr. Yates highlights the intertextual connections between the stories of Isaiah and Hezekiah, and Jeremiah and Zedekiah.
- Jeremiah's message, like that of the Rabshakeh (the Assyrian commander in Isaiah), emphasized the hopelessness of resisting the Babylonians, contrasting with Isaiah's message of deliverance.

- The point is not that Jeremiah was a lesser prophet, but rather that Zedekiah lacked the faith and repentance demonstrated by Hezekiah. It was not the prophet's fault, but the people's.
- Quote: "The problem is not that Jeremiah is a lesser prophet than Isaiah. The problem is not that, you know, Jeremiah shares the theology of a pagan commander. The problem is that there is not going to be a response in the life of Zedekiah comparable to the response of Hezekiah."

1. **Narrative Structure and Key Episodes:**

- The chapters 37-39 have an ABABA pattern alternating between Zedekiah's interactions with Jeremiah and the military officials' response to the prophet, highlighting the different reactions to God's word.
- Zedekiah's inquiries to Jeremiah were not genuine desires for obedience, but rather attempts to avoid the consequences.
- The military officials reacted with hostility, accusing Jeremiah of treason because of his message of surrender.
- Zedekiah's lack of strong leadership is emphasized as he vacillated in the face of pressure from his officers.

1. **The Consequences of Disobedience:**

- The lecture highlights that disobedience to God has serious consequences.
- The fate of Zedekiah (his sons being executed before him, his eyes being gouged out, and his imprisonment in Babylon), is directly tied to his refusal to heed God's word.
- This is presented as a form of justice. Zedekiah's spiritual blindness has a physical manifestation.
- Those who imprisoned Jeremiah now face their own imprisonment.

1. **The Presence of a Faithful Remnant:**

- Despite the widespread disobedience, the lecture emphasizes that a faithful remnant existed, including:
- The family of Shaphan (Ahikam, Gemariah, Micaiah) who supported Jeremiah.
- Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe.

- Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian eunuch who rescued Jeremiah.
- The Rechabites, who remained faithful to their family traditions, as shown in an earlier chapter.
- Quote: "In the midst of national apostasy, there is always a remnant. And that remnant throughout history, in the history of God's people, in the history of salvation, the remnant is always going to be marked by faithfulness and obedience to God's word and to the message of God's servants."
- These individuals serve as positive examples during a time of national apostasy.

Conclusion:

This lecture effectively argues that the fall of Jerusalem was a direct result of Judah's rejection of God's word. It contrasts the disobedience of Zedekiah with the faith of Hezekiah, highlighting that true deliverance requires not just hearing but also heeding God's word. The lecture also shows that amidst national apostasy, a faithful remnant always exists.

Implications:

- This study of Jeremiah 37-39 serves as a warning against the dangers of disobedience and the importance of responding to God's word.
- The lecture also highlights the need to discern between true and false prophets.
- The focus on both the negative example of Zedekiah, and the positive examples of Baruch, Ebed-Melech, and others emphasizes that each person must choose to obey the Lord.

This briefing document provides a concise summary of Dr. Yates' key points and theological insights from the provided lecture excerpts.

5. FAQs on Yates, Jeremiah, Session 23, Jeremiah 38-39. Zedekiah, Fall of Jerusalem, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Jeremiah's Prophecies, Zedekiah's Disobedience, and the Fall of Jerusalem

- Why is the fall of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 37-39 considered a pivotal event in the Old Testament?** The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple are central to the book of Jeremiah because they represent a major theological crisis. These events directly resulted from the disobedience of King Zedekiah, his officials, and the people of Judah, who consistently refused to heed the word of the Lord delivered by Jeremiah. It is seen as a direct consequence of their covenantal failure and not a failure of God's promises, raising questions about the future of God's people.
- What was the primary message that Jeremiah was consistently conveying to the people of Judah, particularly to King Zedekiah?** Jeremiah's message, particularly in the context of the impending Babylonian invasion, was consistently that Judah needed to submit to the authority of Babylon and accept the exile as a form of divine judgment. He stressed that God was using the Babylonians as an instrument of judgment due to Judah's covenantal disobedience. He warned against listening to the false prophets who preached messages of peace and deliverance.
- How did King Zedekiah respond to Jeremiah's message, and how did his response differ from that of Jehoiakim?** Unlike Jehoiakim, who was openly hostile and violent towards Jeremiah and the word of the Lord, Zedekiah was more indecisive and fearful. He frequently consulted with Jeremiah, asking for a word from the Lord, but consistently failed to act upon it. While he didn't directly harm Jeremiah, his inaction and fear of his own officials and the Judeans who had defected prevented him from embracing the message of submission, making him just as disobedient as Jehoiakim.

- **How does the text draw a parallel between Jeremiah and the Assyrian Rabshakeh in Isaiah, and what is the significance of this comparison?** The text draws a comparison between Jeremiah and the Rabshakeh, the Assyrian commander in Isaiah, because both were delivering messages of unavoidable defeat and judgment. The Rabshakeh warned against trusting in alliances with Egypt and the Lord, just as Jeremiah warned against resistance. This intertextual connection initially makes Jeremiah appear to be a lesser prophet with a pessimistic message. However, the point is that the problem wasn't Jeremiah, but the absence of repentance in Zedekiah, unlike Hezekiah, which meant there would be no deliverance.
- **What are some of the key instances where Zedekiah's lack of faith and obedience are highlighted?** Zedekiah's lack of faith and obedience are evident in several instances. First, his requests for Jeremiah to pray are often aimed at seeking an escape from the consequences of his actions, not seeking the courage to obey God. Second, despite repeated warnings, he refuses to surrender to the Babylonians due to fear of the Judean defectors, prioritizing his personal safety over obedience to God. His vacillation between listening to the prophet and fearing his officials also underscores his weakness.
- **What role did false prophets play in the events leading up to Jerusalem's fall, and how does their message contrast with Jeremiah's?** False prophets offered messages of peace, prosperity, and divine protection, assuring the people that God would not allow harm to befall Jerusalem and its king. These messages contradicted Jeremiah's warnings of imminent destruction and the need for surrender, creating a conflict between true and false prophecy. They presented a defective view of the covenant, believing that God would protect Israel unconditionally, while Jeremiah argued that the covenant required obedience.
- **Despite the overall theme of disobedience and judgment, are there any examples of positive responses to the word of the Lord in Jeremiah 26-45?** Yes, despite the widespread disobedience, there are examples of positive responses. The family of Shaphan, including Ahikam and Gemariah, supported and protected Jeremiah. Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, faithfully carried out his task of writing down the prophecies. Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian eunuch, intervened to save Jeremiah from a cistern. And the Rechabites upheld their ancestral traditions, symbolizing fidelity to God's word. These figures illustrate that even in times of national apostasy, there is a faithful remnant.

- **What are the consequences of Zedekiah's disobedience, and how do they relate to his actions towards Jeremiah?** Zedekiah's disobedience led to the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and his own personal humiliation. He witnessed the execution of his sons, was blinded, and was taken as a prisoner to Babylon. This fate is depicted as divine justice, as he had figuratively sunk into the mud by choosing to listen to his own fears and not to the word of the Lord, mirroring how he allowed Jeremiah to be thrown into a muddy cistern.