

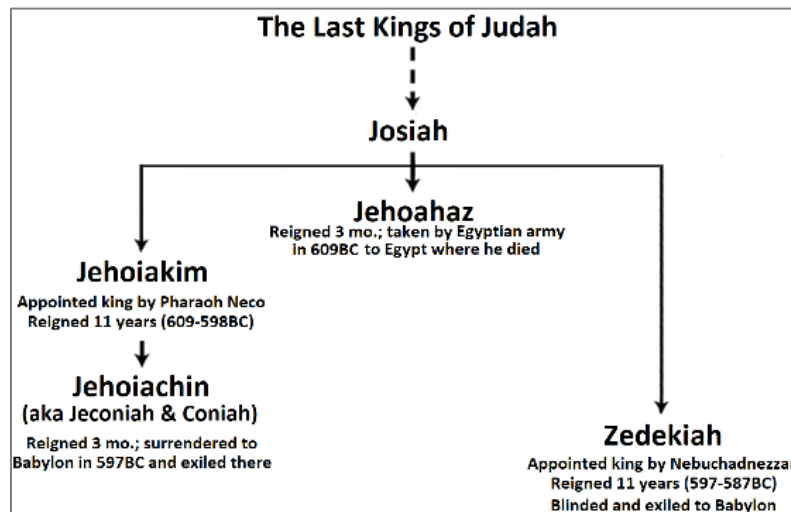
December 19 Su (Optional) — Isaiah 50:10 — Trusting and Obeying

We read recently about how well King Hezekiah trusted and how well King Josiah obeyed. The English words “trust” and “obey” appear together in the same verse in the ESV Bible only one time:

*Who among you fears the LORD
and obeys the voice of his servant?
Let him who walks in darkness
and has no light
trust in the name of the LORD
and rely on his God.*

(Isaiah 50:10)

There is both a question and a challenge in this verse. The question is aimed at a faithful believer, one who “*fears the LORD.*” This fear involves both an awesome respect of who God is and a cautious awareness of His justice in punishing sin. This fear is coupled with obedience: “... *and obeys the voice of his servant.*” God spoke to bring His message through prophets and teachers in both the Old and New Testaments. So, what is your answer to Isaiah’s question? How are you doing in fearing the Lord and obeying the commands of His Word? The second part of this verse is aimed at the unbeliever or the disobedient believer, one “*who walks in darkness and has no light.*” The challenge to this kind of person is to “*trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.*” To “*trust*” and to “*rely*” speak of dependence on God. What are His promises? Trust them! Where does your strength come from? Rely on His power! We are not to rely on our own wisdom and strength. Trust and obey! Rely and fear!



2 Kings 23

^{30b} *And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.*

³¹ *Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem.*

His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ³² *And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.*

³³ *And Pharaoh Neco*

put him 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^[fn] of silver and a talent of gold.

³⁴ *And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away, and he came to Egypt and died there.*

ESV Footnote

(23:33) A *talent* was about 75 pounds or 34 kilograms

2 Chronicles 36

¹ *The people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and made him king in his father's place in Jerusalem.*

² *Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem.*

³ *Then the king of Egypt deposed him in Jerusalem*

and laid on the land a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and a talent^[fn] of gold.

⁴ *And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But Neco took Jehoahaz his brother and carried him to Egypt.*

ESV Footnote

(36:3) A *talent* was about 75 pounds or 34 kilograms

Shifted Allegiance — Like his father, Josiah, Jehoahaz was born when his father was only 16 years old. By the time he became king at age 23, he should have been sufficiently influenced by the dedication of his father to Yahweh. When he became king, however, Jehoahaz reverted to the evil ways of “*his fathers*” (2 Kings 23:32), like Manasseh, who worshipped other gods. It didn’t take God long to punish King Jehoahaz for his shifted allegiance because, after ruling for only three months, he was removed by Pharaoh Neco and deported to Egypt. His brother, Eliakim, was set up as Neco’s puppet king, probably changing his name in order to emphasize his authority over him. While Jehoahaz *voluntarily* shifted his allegiance away from God, his brother was *forced* to serve a foreign king. Will we choose to serve God wholeheartedly? Even godly people may sometimes have to live under the authority of an evil human national leader, but it should not be in punishment for shifting allegiance away from God. How will you demonstrate your allegiance to God today?

2 Kings 23

³⁵ *And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land to give the money according to the command of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, from everyone according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Neco.*

³⁶ *Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiiah of Rumah.*

³⁷ *And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.*

2 Kings 24

¹ *In his days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.*

² *And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans and bands of the Syrians and bands of the Moabites and bands of the Ammonites, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets.* ³ *Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done,* ⁴ *and also for the innocent blood that he had shed. For he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD would not pardon.*

⁵ *Now the rest of the deeds of Jehoiakim and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?* ⁶ *So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.*

⁷ *And the king of Egypt did not come again out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates.*

2 Chronicles 36

⁵ *Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.*

He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God.

⁶ *Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon*

and bound him in chains to take him to Babylon. ⁷ *Nebuchadnezzar also carried part of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon and put them in his palace in Babylon.*

⁸ *Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and the abominations that he did, and what was found against him, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. And Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.*

Jehovah Destroys — The bottom of Judah's box had collapsed and the contents were spilled out. God had predicted this disaster because of the sins of Manasseh (2 Kings 24:3). Jehoiakim was a puppet king of two empires, first, strong Egypt and then stronger Babylon. It is ironic that while the name Jehoiakim means "Jehovah raises up," God was really tearing down both him and Judah: "*And the LORD sent against him bands ... and sent them against Judah to destroy it*" (v. 2). After his death, his son, Jehoiachin, became king; his name means "Jehovah establishes." God was neither raising up nor establishing these two kings but was acting more like "Jehovah destroys." God is in such control of history that "*there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God*" (Rom. 13:1). God arranged and moved these opposing empires to conquer and punish Judah for her sins in the past. This would begin the deportation of Hebrews to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, which included Daniel and his three friends (Dan. 1:1-2) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:2). So, in the midst of God's predicted judgment, He was also in the process of saving a remnant of His people to return to the Promised Land following their 70-year exile in Babylon. Thankfully, we are part of God's people who are being protected, nourished, and prepared by Him for future blessings, rather than being disciplined because of stubborn unfaithfulness.

2 Kings 24

⁸ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.

⁹ And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.

¹⁰ At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. ¹¹ And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city while his servants were besieging it, ¹² and Jehoiachin the king of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon, himself and his mother and his servants and his officials and his palace officials.

The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign ¹³ and carried off all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the LORD, which Solomon king of Israel had made, as the LORD had foretold. ¹⁴ He carried away all Jerusalem and all the officials and all the mighty men of valor, 10,000 captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained, except the poorest people of the land. ¹⁵ And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officials, and the chief men of the land he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. ¹⁶ And the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon all the men of valor, 7,000, and the craftsmen and the metal workers, 1,000, all of them strong and fit for war.

¹⁷ And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

2 Chronicles 36

⁹ Jehoiachin was eighteen^[fn] years old when he became king, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem.

He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

¹⁰ In the spring of the year King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, with the precious vessels of the house of the LORD,

and made his brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem.

ESV Footnote

(36:9) Septuagint (compare 2 Kings 24:8); most Hebrew manuscripts *eight*

Clarifications — Many questions came to my mind as I read this parallel passage. The first was actually connected to our previous reading. How did Jehoiakim die? We read that Nebuchadnezzar “bound him in chains to take him to Babylon” (2 Chron. 36:6). Nebuchadnezzar apparently planned to take him to Babylon but that journey may not have been carried out because, according to Jeremiah’s prophecy, Jehoiakim’s “dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by

night" (Jer. 36:30). Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar released him and he later died when God sent "*bands of the Syrians ... Moabites ...and bands of Ammonites ... against Judah*" (2 Kings 24:2). The second question came from my superficial reading of this statement about Jehoiachin: "*The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign*" (v. 12). I thought that "*his*" referred to Jehoiachin but I had just read that he reigned for only three months (v. 8); actually, it was referring to Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year of reign. We need to be careful in our reading so we won't jump to false conclusions. Another question came from the two statements that Nebuchadnezzar "*carried away ... all the mighty men of valor, 10,000 captives...*" (v. 14) and that the captives included "*all the men of valor, 7,000...*" (v. 16). I found a number of possible explanations in several commentaries and it seems likely that the 7,000 is some kind of subset of the 10,000. They *are* designated a bit differently: "*mighty men of valor*" vs. "*men of valor.*" The last question I had, which you likely noticed as well, is that 2 Kings 24:17 calls Zedekiah the "*uncle*" of Jehoiachin, whereas, 2 Chron. 36:10 calls him a "*brother.*" He was actually his uncle; Jehoahaz and Zedekiah had the same mother (2 Kings 23:31; 24:18). The word "*brother*" is used here in the broader sense of a "relative," as translated in the NASB and NET versions. The NIV translates it as "*uncle.*" When you come to a question about a text that puzzles you, I recommend that you go to www.biblehub.com and type in the verse reference, which will bring up multiple translations from different versions of the Bible. Then, click on "Comments," which will bring you to quite a few older commentary discussions on that text for you to compare. You can get many of your questions answered there.

2 Kings 24

¹⁸ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

¹⁹ And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

²⁰ For because of the anger of the LORD it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence.

And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

2 Chronicles 36

¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

¹² He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God.

He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD.

¹³ He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God.

Jeremiah 52

¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

² And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

³ For because of the anger of the LORD it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence.

And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁴ All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the LORD that he had made holy in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.

¹⁷ Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. ¹⁸ And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. ¹⁹ And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. ²⁰ He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, ²¹ to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

No Humility ... No Remedy ... No Compassion — The end of Judah's kingdom era came in a display of God's judgment. It was deserved because Judah had no humility in recognizing and admitting their sin against God. Their king "*did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD*" (2 Chron. 36:12). Other expressions of the sinful attitude of him and the people showed that they were "*stiffened... hardened... unfaithful... polluted... mocking... despising... scoffing.*" God's response was that there was "*no remedy*" (v. 16) for them. They had passed the opportunity for repentance and were given over to judgment through the hand of Babylon, which showed no compassion (2 Chron. 36:17). They killed many people, burned the temple, broke down Jerusalem's wall, and carried many people into exile. God judged His people's persistent sin. On a smaller scale, God disciplines His followers today when they drift into neglect, pride, and defiance of God's will. If we concentrate on the humility part, there will be no danger of overstepping the line of remedy with its painful, uncompassionate punishment.

Meditation: There are three men named Jeremiah mentioned in the Bible. We see two of them in our passage for today. Zedekiah's mother was "*the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah*" (2 Kings 24:18). Libnah was a city near the border of Judah and Philistia, about 20 miles (32 km) SW of Jerusalem. The second Jeremiah is the well-known prophet who lived during the final years of the Judean kingdom. He was "*the son of Hilkiah ... in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin*" (Jer. 1:1) north of Jerusalem. The third Jeremiah was mentioned in the book of Jeremiah; he was the father of one of the people used to test the descendants of Rechab about their tradition of not drinking wine (Jer. 35:1-3). So, now you can keep your Jeremiahs straight and not think that Zedekiah's father-in-law was a prophet. ☺

2 Kings 25

¹ *And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. And they built siege works all around it.* ² *So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.* ³ *On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.* ⁴ *Then a breach was made in the city,*

and all the men of war fled

by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah.

Jeremiah 39

¹ *In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and besieged it.*

² *In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month,*

a breach was made in the city.

³ *Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and sat in the middle gate: Nergal-sar-ezer of Samgar, Nebu-sar-sekim the Rab-saris, Nergal-sar-ezer the Rab-mag, with all the rest of the officers of the king of Babylon.* ⁴ *When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled, going out of the city at night by way of the king's garden through the gate between the two walls;*

and they went toward the Arabah.

Jeremiah 52

⁴ *And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it. And they built siegeworks all around it.* ⁵ *So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.* ⁶ *On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.* ⁷ *Then a breach was made in the city,*

and all the men of war fled and went out from the city by night by the way of a gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah.

2 Kings 25 (cont.)

⁵ *But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him.*

⁶ *Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they passed sentence on him.*

⁷ *They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes,*

and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains and took him to Babylon.

Jeremiah 39 (cont.)

⁵ *But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho.*

And when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, at Riblah, in the land of Hamath; and he passed sentence on him.

⁶ *The king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah at Riblah before his eyes, and the king of Babylon slaughtered all the nobles of Judah.*

⁷ *He put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains to take him to Babylon.*

Jeremiah 52 (cont.)

⁸ *But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him.*

⁹ *Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he passed sentence on him.*

¹⁰ *The king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and also slaughtered all the officials of Judah at Riblah.*

¹¹ *He put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and the king of Babylon took him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.*

Tragic End — The end of Zedekiah's reign was one of the most tragic pictures in the Bible. His sin of disregarding God, rebelling against Babylon, and ignoring Jeremiah's instructions resulted in the whole city of Jerusalem having to endure a year and a half of slow starvation. The timing at the end was significant: just when "*there was no food ... Then a breach was made in the city*" (2 Kings 25:3-4). Just when the food ran out, the enemy ran in. Quite a crowd of people accompanied King Zedekiah in his attempted escape: "*...all the men of war fled by night*" (v. 4). We find out later that Zedekiah's sons were also likely with him (v. 7) as well as "*all the nobles of Judah*" (Jer. 39:6). The last thing Judah's final king saw was the slaying of his own sons "*before his eyes*" just before they "*put out the eyes of Zedekiah*" (2 Kings 25:7). He lived years after that in Babylon with the lingering memory of the death of his sons. It is hard to imagine a worse punishment. It was a tragic end to the kingdom of Judah and its king. It is always wise to fear the Lord by obeying Him in order to escape the fear of the Lord's judgment.

Meditation: Our reading for today reveals the lack of chronological order in the book of Jeremiah. Essentially the same story is related far apart in chapters 39 and 52. Very little information in those two passages is in addition to what is presented in the account of 2 Kings 25. The purpose of the book of Jeremiah is much more related to theme than to chronology.

December 25 Sa (Optional) — Jer. 26:1-6; 27:1, 12-15 — Jeremiah's Warnings

Merry Christmas! Today, we go back in time by reading other places in Jeremiah's writings about the state of affairs and God's warnings at the beginning of the reigns of Jehoiakim and his brother, Zedekiah, about 11 years apart.

Jeremiah 26

¹ *In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD:* ² *“Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word. ³ It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds. ⁴ You shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, ⁵ and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, ⁶ then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.’”*

Jeremiah 27

¹ *In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD...*

¹² *To Zedekiah king of Judah I spoke in like manner: “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people and live. ¹³ Why will you and your people die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, as the LORD has spoken concerning any nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? ¹⁴ Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon,’ for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you. ¹⁵ I have not sent them, declares the LORD, but they are prophesying falsely in my name, with the result that I will drive you out and you will perish, you and the prophets who are prophesying to you.”*

These passages are filled with God’s merciful plea to His people. He had predicted disaster for Judah because of the sins of Manasseh (2 Kings 24:3) but here, He pleads with them in order to postpone judgment. God told Jeremiah, *“It may be they will listen, and ... turn ... that I may relent of the disaster”* (Jer. 26:3). He didn’t want to punish them. Later, God pleaded with Zedekiah, saying, *“Why will you and your people die by the sword...?”* (27:13). All God was asking at this point was for them to submit to Babylon. Yes, they would have to go to Babylon for 70 years in judgment but why add tragedy to exile? Perhaps the temple would have been spared by the Chaldean army if Judea would have submitted to them. But what God was asking didn’t seem logical to Zedekiah and his people. Why would God want them to submit to a foreign nation when He could wipe them out overnight without a battle like He did with the Assyrian army? (2 Kings 19:35). Judah’s false prophets, also speaking in Yahweh’s name (Jer. 27:15), sounded more reasonable with their message of not submitting to Babylon. Sometimes today, the false messages we hear from our culture, schools, government, etc., sound reasonable to us, but we have a great advantage over the Jews in Jeremiah’s day—we have the whole Bible. We know it is from God, that it is truth, and that it contains God’s will for us. We choose to listen and obey.