Community Group Discussion Guide

November 2, 2025

2 Chronicles 36:11-21 | God's Nation Fell

MOTIVATE

⇒ *Starter Question: Discuss the fall of some of the great nations in world history. Does there seem to be a common theme? How involved is God in the fall of each nation?*

DISCUSS

The last chapter of the book of 2 Chronicles is a rapid overview of the last four kings of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. These four did not follow in the footsteps of King Josiah whose faithfulness brought restoration to God's people. None were obedient to God.

Judah was caught between Egypt and Babylon. The key to these last events is that God had chosen Babylon as His tool of divine punishment for His people. These kings had an obligation not to fight the Babylonians but to submit to them. But these kings did not accept their fate and repeatedly rebelled against Babylon by making alliances with Egypt. As a result, things went from bad to worse, and three times Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, each time inflicting greater damage and taking more people into exile. More details are found in 2 Kings 23-25 as well as throughout the book of Jeremiah.

Over and over, God had called for His people to return to Him in repentance and faith, but they refused. In 2 Chronicles 36:11-21, 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.

⇒ *As we consider the fall of the nation of Israel, why is it important to remember that God gave His people numerous opportunities to return to Him in repentance?*

⇒ *Does God owe us opportunities to repent? What does God's patience in bringing His discipline reveal about His compassion?*

1. Though God waits patiently for repentance, He will judge evil.

2 Chronicles 36:11-14: ***11*** *Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years.* ***12*** *He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD.* ***13*** *He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God's name. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the LORD, the God of Israel.* ***14*** *Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.*

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, also leading all the people and even the priests toward evil behavior. Zedekiah was unwilling to humble himself and heed Jeremiah's warnings and declarations from God. Not only did Zedekiah refuse to follow God, but he also did not uphold his promise to King Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful king of Babylon whom God had appointed to bring punishment on Judah for their disobedience.

⇒ *How is it that God can use anything or anyone to bring His judgment?*

Nebuchadnezzar had made Zedekiah swear allegiance in God's name. To make a promise in God's name and uphold it would have signified that Zedekiah revered God's name and would submit to His authority, which is certainly not what Zedekiah's life demonstrated. He was not submissive to God nor to Nebuchadnezzar, God's chosen instrument of judgment. God's evaluation was severe: Zedekiah was obstinate and hardened his heart so he would not repent and return to the Lord. A reckoning was coming as the Lord had foretold (Deuteronomy 29:16-29).

⇒ *Why is being prideful and unwilling to receive correction a dangerous path?*
⇒ *What are some ways you can grow in humility to listen to and accept godly rebuke and correction?*

Zedekiah was doomed, but the issue was not just him. "All the leaders of the priests and the people" followed Zedekiah into sin. This reality likely went two ways. The people saw the waywardness of their king and modeled their lives off of those in leadership. Also, Zedekiah likely saw the sin of the people and placated them by indulging in their folly. The king, the leaders, and the people sinned in three ways:

- They multiplied their wicked deeds.
- They copied the pagan worship of the nations around them.
- They defiled God's holy temple.

The people's third offense—the desecration of the temple—was the lowest of lows. When the Babylonians invaded and ransacked Jerusalem, King Nebuchadnezzar took the temple's treasures and burned down the temple. But the people of Judah already had perpetrated a much greater offense—they worshiped idols and sinned to their heart's content without any thought for the Lord who dwelled in their midst in His temple.

Though He had called them to be holy in His presence, the people offered their sacrifices without any concern for holiness or even a hint of shame for their sin. Therefore, the very temple where God had chosen to put His name forever (1 Kings 9:3) would now become a picture of His wrath against the sin of His people.

⇒ *Discuss this statement: It would be unjust if God did not uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character.*

This did not have to happen, at least from a human perspective. The writer of Chronicles made it clear that God provided plenty of opportunities for repentance. Not only did He send messengers to warn them, but He did this time and time again. Over and over, messengers such as Jeremiah came to warn the people and the king of what would happen if they continued to follow pagan gods and reject the true God. The Lord's motive was clear—He had compassion on the people and on His temple. He wanted them to turn from sin and avoid the coming judgment. God's kindness in sending prophets and giving them time was meant to stir repentance.

⇒ *What are some ways God has stirred you to repentance?*

⇒ *Second Chronicles 36:12 gives insight into what shows whether a person has a hard heart or a soft heart—humility or pride. Pride is a mark of a hard heart, humility of a soft heart. Today, how do you categorize your heart?*

2 Chronicles 36:15-16: ***15*** *The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place.* ***16*** *But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.*

Despite the people's rebellion, God 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 (Jeremiah 29). 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, God would no longer allow their evil to persist, and His wrath, His appropriate and just response to their rebellion, became unstoppable.

⇒ *Why must we remember that God warns people with compassion but will also judge evil?*
⇒ *Do God's messengers still suffer today for delivering the truth of His Word and the gospel? Why must we not allow this suffering to stop us?*

God is perfect in all His attributes and all His ways. Therefore, His 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.

⇒ *"There was no remedy." Why is this such a sad description of the state of God's people? How can we avoid reaching a point of "no remedy" with the Lord?*
⇒ *God is patient and desires all to repent and be saved, but why must we not overlook His warnings that the day of His judgment is certain?*

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 should this chapter in 2 Chronicles and the theme of the Babylonian exile guide our sharing of the gospel today?*
⇒ *How might you communicate with others the remedy for God's wrath that He has provided in Jesus?*

2. No one can escape God's righteous judgment apart from repentance.
2 Chronicles 36:17-19: ***17*** *He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the*

*elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. **18** He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. **19** They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.*

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 also failed in their willingness to follow the Lord, ignoring the warnings of the prophets. As a result, God used King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, or Chaldeans, to tear it all down and take His people away. The Babylonians' actions against Judah were their own, yet at the same time, God sent them to fulfill His judgment against His rebellious people

- ⇒ *How is the description of God's judgment for Judah a reminder of the seriousness of sin and the just punishment for disobedience from which no one is exempt?*
- ⇒ *In this narrative, how do we see that God is sovereign, holy, and just?*
- ⇒ *Why should we praise God for being just? What does God's justice reveal about His character and our responsibility?*

2 Chronicles 36:20-21: ***20*** *He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors until the kingdom of Persia came to power.* ***21*** *The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.*

In the immediate context, it is clear that Judah did not think they could be destroyed in this way. Surely if Zedekiah and the people had genuinely believed that God meant what He said, then they would have repented.
Yet, because of Judah's incessant sin, God handed His people over to the Babylonians. In other words, the entire exile was judgment from God for the rebellion of the people. He had given them time. He had sent them messengers. He had pursued them in love. Now all of the people, from young to old, experienced His wrath.

- ⇒ *Discuss this statement: God doesn't always judge our sin through the invasion of foreign armies or by exiling us off of land as He did at the time of Zedekiah. But He does allow us to face the outcome of our sinful choices. Often people describe this as "hitting rock bottom." They get so low in their rebellion that they have to face their need for a way out.*
- ⇒ *Why do the wise take advantage of the time God gives us to come to our senses and repent?*
- ⇒ *How does this passage challenge your perspective on the seriousness of sin in your own life?*

The exile, though a form of judgment, was not the final word for God's people. Verses 20-21 allude to the fulfillment of God's words spoken by Jeremiah, who foretold the length of their exile as seventy years (Jeremiah 25:9-12; 27:-8; 29:10). The law of God specified that every seventh year should be a sabbath year for the land (Leviticus 25). During the seventh year the Israelites were to abstain from all agricultural activity and trust God's provision. But the Israelites had not observed the land's sabbath year in a long time, and so the seventy-year period of exile would be its enforced implementation—and the people would have to trust God for His provision.

Verse 21 confirms that these circumstances were not happenstance. It was no accident that the Babylonians exiled the people and destroyed the temple. God made it clear that He orchestrated everything, down to the number of years they'd be away. All of it fulfilled God's purposes.

⇒ *Discuss this statement: God is meticulously active in the events of human history to accomplish His foreordained will.*

In Jeremiah 33:9, Jeremiah also had a message of hope for those who would be taken to Babylon. 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. Just as God kept His word regarding His wrath against Judah, He also keeps His word for the ultimate blessing of His people.

⇒ *How does the fall of Judah show the need for a greater solution: the coming of the Messiah?*

God did end the exile and bring His people back. Under leaders such as Nehemiah and Ezra, the people returned and began work to rebuild the temple. But it would not be until the time of Jesus when the nation of Israel would truly be gathered together once again. 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.

TRANSFORM

The Israelites reached a point of no return and "no remedy," and God fulfilled His promises to curse, punish, and exile His people from His promised land. If 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.

1. 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?*

2. 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?*

3. 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" (Hebrews 10:24).

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