

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Doug Mason

The Decay and Fall of Judah

This Study builds on my time-based outline of the “70 years” of Babylonian supremacy and the captivity experienced by the Jews that is available at

http://au.geocities.com/doug_mason1940/70_years_of_servitude.pdf

This current Study provides detailed information, showing the context of the Captivity.

Adjust your PDF Reader to provide a full screen image of each page.

Please forward your comments to me at doug_mason1940@yahoo.com.au

Doug

The Decay and Fall of Judah

How to read the Study

Comments

Scripture

“Tabs” are provided at the top

Always note the heading

The text is in this lighter color when there is related information on the adjacent page

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The importance of this Study

Page 1

Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) are taught that the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of Judah provide absolute authority to the Governing Body (GB) of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTS).

JWs are told that when Jerusalem was destroyed, Jehovah removed the earthly representative of his kingdom, which was reinstated when that authority was vested in the GB during the period of 1914-1919 CE.

The GB dates the destruction of Jerusalem by subtracting 70 from the date it assigns to the end of the 70 years.

This Study shows that the calculation of the "70 years" is not related to the destruction of Jerusalem or to the desolation of Judah. The LORD's people and his city were destined for destruction regardless of Jeremiah's prophecy that the nations had to serve Babylon for 70 years.

This means that the method used by the GB to calculate the date of Jerusalem's destruction and the desolation of Judea is based on a false premise.

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The importance of this Study

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Of far greater importance is the revelation of the LORD's standards, which are the highest, and of his determination to forgive the sinner who repents of their sin.

All that the LORD asks is for the sinner to call on him, and he will be their righteousness. The Gospel is in these Hebrew Scriptures.

This story shows that being called by the LORD brings responsibility, not privilege. When the LORD's chosen people steadfastly refused to heed the LORD, the land of Judah was made desolate, the city was laid waste, and its temple was destroyed. All unnecessary.

This is a powerfully strong and confronting story of a people who, despite being chosen by the LORD, resolutely defied him, bringing unnecessary misery upon themselves and becoming captives to a heathen kingdom. This is a story that Jews have never forgotten.

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What you will discover

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The dates of the neo-Babylonian era and the associated destruction of Jerusalem are critical for the existence and authority of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTS).

When making its calculations, the WTS starts at the events associated with the conclusion of the 70 years of Babylonian dominance. They then move back in time along the “70 years”, looking for the destruction of Jerusalem as its starting point.

This Study shows, however, that the WTS is moving along the wrong path of time. The destruction of Jerusalem and associated desolation of Judah were associated with the condemnation of Judah and her kings, long before the LORD commanded several nations to serve Babylon for 70 years.

Judah was included in this list of nations and it was her continued ongoing disobedience which included her refusal to willingly serve Babylon, that led to the LORD carrying out the sentence he had declared long before.

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What you will discover

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The true understanding of the “70 years” comes only by commencing at the start of the events, not at their conclusion. When the period is studied from the start, in particular with Judah’s king Manassah, everything falls into place.

The “70 years” could have been fulfilled without Jerusalem’s destruction or the desolation of Judah. The WTS’s calculations to arrive at its date thus calls into question the significance that the WTS places on Jerusalem’s destruction and the desolation of Judah.

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Outline of this Study

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- ▶ Because of her idolatrous, evil ways, the LORD destroyed the northern nation of Israel.
- ▶ Because of the idolatrous, evil reign of Judah's king Manassah, the LORD declared that Judah would suffer the same fate.
- ▶ Apart from Josiah, every king followed the evil path of Manassah.
- ▶ Even Josiah's reforms were not sufficient to prevent Judah being condemned to destruction. His reforms only delayed the inevitable.
- ▶ The LORD repeatedly pleaded with Judah to mend her ways, saying that if they did, the threatened destruction of Judah and Jerusalem would not be carried out. And if Judah did mend her ways, the LORD would forgive and make her flourish.

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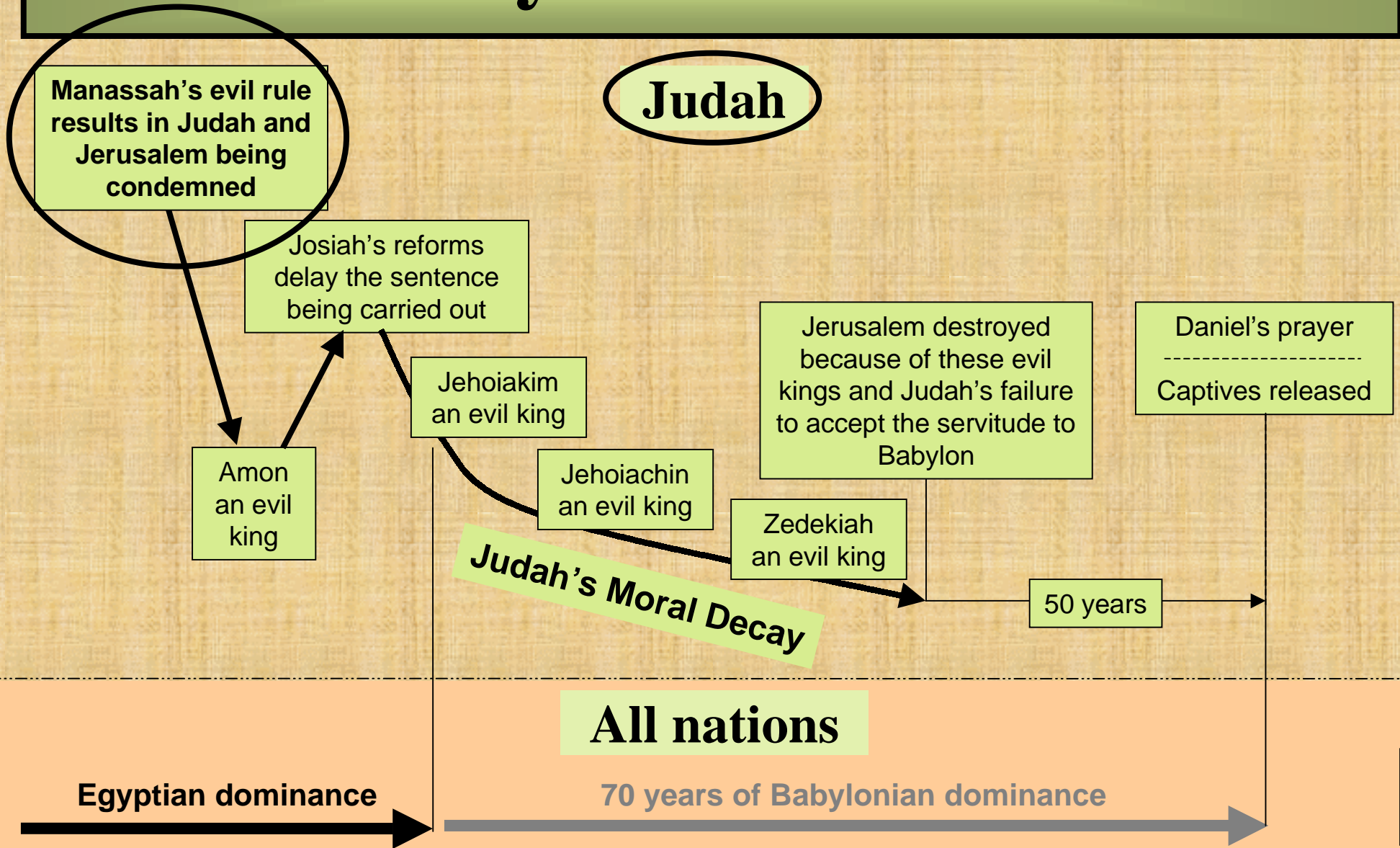
Outline of this Study

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- ▶ Jeremiah warned the nations that the LORD would punish all nations who aligned themselves with Egypt.
- ▶ Following Babylon's defeat of Egypt, the LORD declared that all nations who had aligned themselves with Egypt, including Judah, would serve Babylon for 70 years.
- ▶ Despite the LORD's continual pleading with Judah, they continued in their ways, including rebellion against the 70 years of servitude to Babylon.
- ▶ Finally, the LORD had Babylon carry out the judgment that he had declared when Manassah sat on the throne of Judah. They were condemned to destruction, and Judah's rebellion against the servitude to Babylon finally caused their demise.
- ▶ The nations continued their assigned 70 year servitude to Babylon, until the city was taken by the Medes and Persians.
- ▶ After Daniel uttered his heart-felt prayer, the LORD permitted captives held at Babylon to return to their homelands.

The Decay and Fall of Judah



The Decay and Fall of Judah

Totally Corrupt King Manassah

Comments

2 Kings 21:1-9

The region's super powers were Assyria, Babylon and Egypt. Assyria had conquered the Syro-Palestinian area and had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel.

To survive, the lesser powers formed an allegiance with one of the major powers. Gradually, Assyria crumbled under the blows from Babylon.

When Babylon combined with the Medes to take the Assyrian capital Ninevah, this reduced the major powers to two: Egypt and Babylon.

Manassah ruled the southern kingdom of Judah for 55 years. The kingdom became thoroughly corrupt during his evil reign.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Totally Corrupt King Manassah

Comments

2 Kings 21:1-9

- Manasseh followed the detestable practices of the nations.
- He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed.
- Erected altars to Baal.
- Made an Asherah pole and put it in the temple.
- Bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them.
- Built altars in the temple of the LORD.
- Built altars to all the starry hosts in both courts of the temple of the LORD.
- Sacrificed his own son in the fire.
- Practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists.
- Did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger.
- Manasseh led the people astray, and the people did not listen.
- They did more evil than the nations did before the LORD had destroyed the Israelites.



Inside the Iron Age fortress, archaeologists found remains of a temple used for several centuries during the time of the Divided Monarchy. Though worship centers outside of Jerusalem were forbidden by Moses (Deut 12), high places flourished throughout the land according to the Bible. The sacrificial altar is visible in the outer courtyard.
(<http://www.bibleplaces.com/arad.htm>)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

God responds to the evil King Manassah

Comments

2 Kings 21:10-16

As a result of Manassah's evil ways, God decreed that Jerusalem and Judah would suffer the same fate as had befallen Israel. God would wipe out Jerusalem and Judah, and forsake the people.



Baal

The Decay and Fall of Judah

God responds to the evil King Manassah

Comments

2 Kings 21:10-16

The LORD said through his servants the prophets: “Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols.”

Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: “**I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah** that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab. **I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish**, wiping it and turning it upside down.

I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and hand them over to their enemies. They will be looted and plundered by all their foes, because they have done evil in my eyes and have provoked me to anger from the day their forefathers came out of Egypt until this day.”

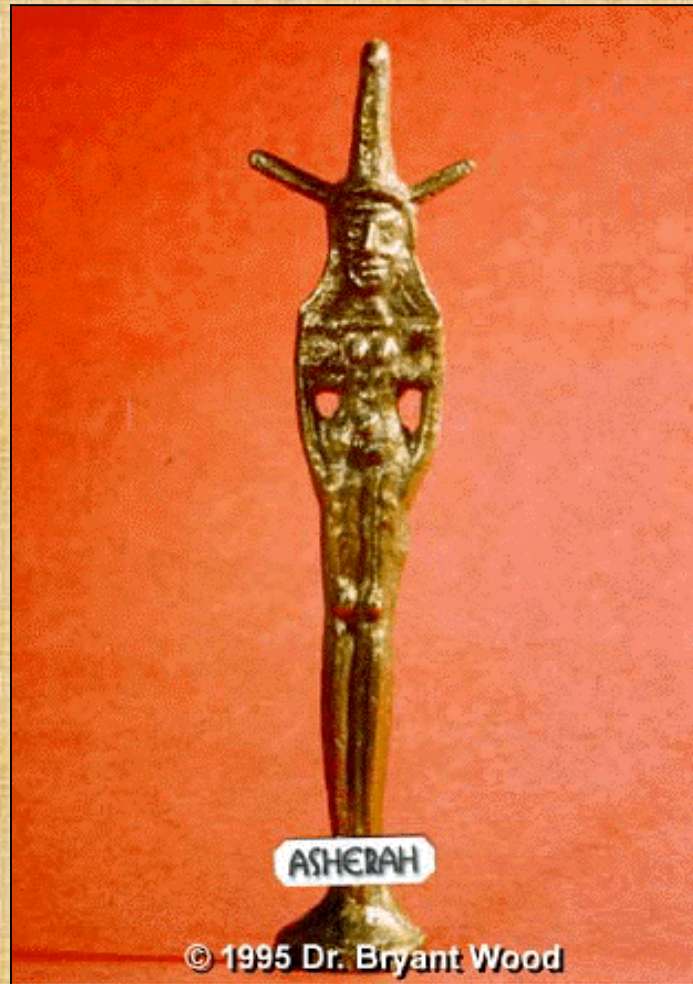
Moreover, Manasseh also shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end—besides the sin that he had caused Judah to commit, so that they did evil in the eyes of the LORD.



Holy of Holies

No ancient documents describe the worship practices of this temple, but the existence of two standing stones and two incense altars points to the worship of two deities at this site. Most probably, the Israelites here worshipped "Yahweh and his Asherah," a corruption of true biblical religion that is attested in other archaeological finds.

(<http://www.bibleplaces.com/arad.htm>)



Asherah figurine, made from a mold discovered at Nahariyeh, Israel. The goddess of the Sea and consort of El. The mother of Baal. King Mannasseh introduced her into Judah's worship. (2 Kings 21) The Hebrew word is often translated "groves" in the KJV.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Outcome was in the people's hands

Comments

Jeremiah 18:7-17

These warnings to obey the LORD were not prophecies, neither conditional nor unconditional. Rather, they were a series of warnings.

The people's response determined the consequences, whether to receive support from the LORD or being destined for destruction.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Outcome was in the people's hands

Comments

Jeremiah 18:7-17

If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.

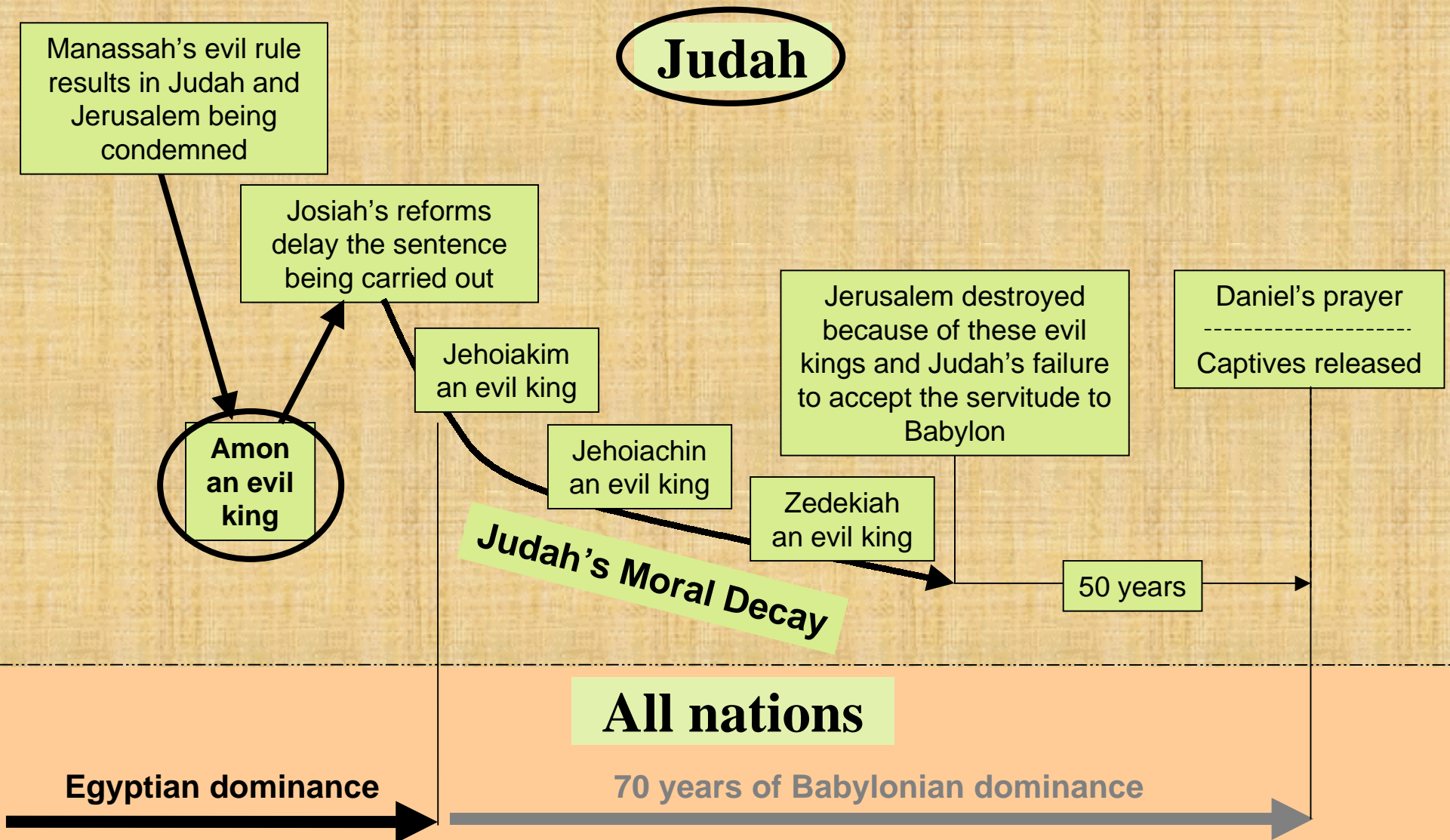
And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, "This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions."

But they will reply, "It's no use. We will continue with our own plans; each of us will follow the stubbornness of his evil heart." ... My people have forgotten me; they burn incense to worthless idols, which made them stumble in their ways and in the ancient paths. ...

Their land will be laid waste, an object of lasting scorn; all who pass by will be appalled and will shake their heads. Like a wind from the east, I will scatter them before their enemies; I will show them my back and not my face in the day of their disaster.

The Decay and Fall of Judah



The Decay and Fall of Judah

Manassah's equally corrupt son, Amon

Comments

Amon, who succeeded his father Manassah, was equally as evil.

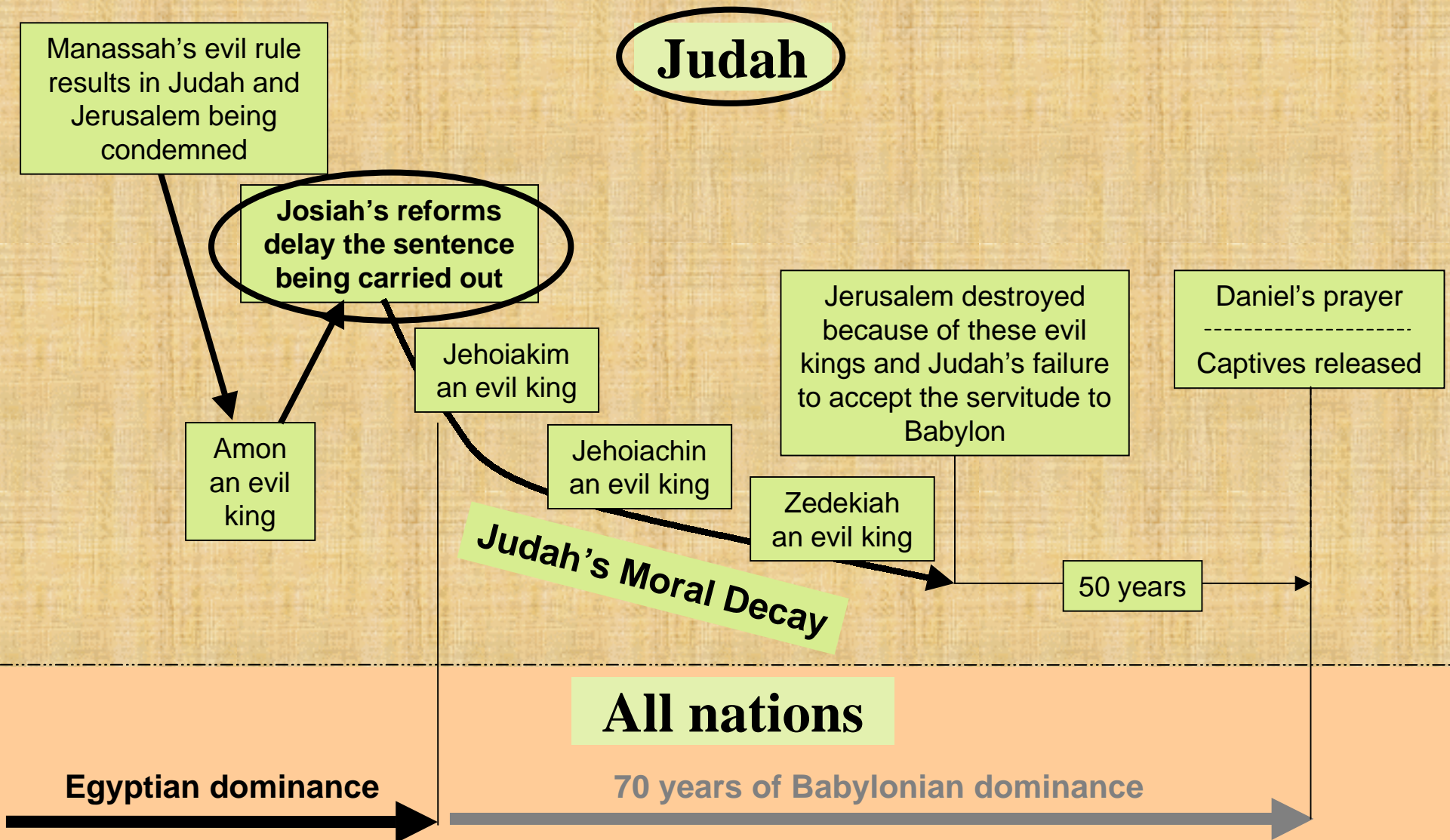


Asherah, God's wife

2 Kings 21:19-22

- Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for two years.
- He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done.
- He walked in all the ways of his father.
- He worshiped the idols his father had worshiped, and bowed down to them.
- He forsook the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD.

The Decay and Fall of Judah



The Decay and Fall of Judah

King Josiah, Judah's great reformist King

Comments

Josiah, who succeeded Amon, was the great reformist king.



2 Kings; 2 Chr; Jer.

- Josiah did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. (2 Kings 22:1-2; 2 Chronicles 34:2-3)
- The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD. ... Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant. (2 Kings 32:3)
- As long as Josiah lived, the people did not fail to follow the LORD, the God of their fathers. (2 Chronicles 34:33)
- [Josiah] defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the LORD. (Jer 22:16)



Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king [Josiah], “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes.

He gave these orders ... “Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD’S anger that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.” (2 Kings 22:10-13)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The good works of King Josiah

Comments

2 Kings 23:4-24

Jeremiah received his call from the LORD in the 13th year of Josiah (Jeremiah 1:2)

This was a time of religious opportunism, with the Yahwists making the most of Josiah's religious conviction.

Jeremiah supported Josiah's reforms but demanded even more, with emphasis on the inner spiritual character that true religion demands. (See Jeremiah 31:31-34)



The Decay and Fall of Judah

The good works of King Josiah

Comments

2 Kings 23:4-24

- Removed from the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts.
- Did away with the pagan priests appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the starry hosts.
- Took the Asherah pole from the temple of the LORD.
- Tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes, where women did weaving for Asherah.
- Desecrated the high places where the priests had burned incense.
- Broke down the shrines at the gates.
- Desecrated Topheth, so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech.
- Removed from the entrance to the temple of the LORD the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun.
- Pulled down the altars the kings of Judah had erected.
- Desecrated the high places that Solomon had built.
- Smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and covered the sites with human bones.
- Slaughtered all the priests of those high places on the altars and burned human bones on them.
- Got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem.



Josiah removed and defiled all the shrines at the high places that the kings of Israel had built in the towns of Samaria that had provoked the LORD to anger. Josiah slaughtered all the priests of those high places on the altars and burned human bones on them. (2 Kings 23:19-20)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Josiah spared from seeing the coming destruction

Comments

2 Kings 22:16-20

King Josiah's reformation brought the concession from God that the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem would be delayed. Josiah would not live to see that happen.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Josiah spared from seeing the coming destruction

Comments

2 Kings 22:16-20

This is what the LORD says: **"I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people,** according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read.

"Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all the idols their hands have made, **my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.**

"Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard:

"Because **your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD** when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would **become accursed and laid waste,** and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD.

"Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all **the disaster I am going to bring** on this place.' "

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD requires internal reformation

Comments

Jeremiah 31:31-34

The external reforms that Josiah brought in delayed the inevitable, but they were not sufficient to prevent the destruction of Judah.

The LORD requires total internal reformation. It is not enough to have external reforms when they are not driven by genuinely-held internal religious convictions. In our modern world, the Zionist movement is merely a political movement.

God asks each individual to experience their own internal reformation. Each has to escape from their own Babylonian influences. "Come out of Babylon, My people", is the cry to each person.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD requires internal reformation

Comments

Jeremiah 31:31-34

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make **a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.**

It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

“**This is the covenant I will make** with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD.

“I will **put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because **they will all know me,** from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD.

“**For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.**”

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD's Promises to Israel and to Judah

Comments

God is just, and he is forgiving -- provided the sinner is truly penitent and calls on him.

If Judah and Israel call, he will answer them, cleanse them from all their sin and forgive them.

That was all the people needed to do.

Jeremiah 33:2-8

“The LORD says ... **‘Call to me and I will answer you** and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.’ ”

For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says about the houses in this city and the royal palaces of Judah that have been torn down to be used against the siege ramps and the sword in the fight with the Babylonians: “They will be filled with the dead bodies of the men I will slay in my anger and wrath. I will hide my face from this city because of all its wickedness.

“Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; **I will heal my people** and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security. **I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity** and will rebuild them as they were before. **I will cleanse them** from all the sin they have committed against me and **will forgive all their sins** of rebellion against me.”

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The joys that Israel and Judah will know

Comments

Jeremiah 33:9-11,14-16

If the people want to partake in these grand and wonderful promises laid out before them, all they need do is ask.

The LORD was to be their Righteousness. This is commonly seen to be the message of the Christian books of Romans and Galatians, yet this gospel message was clearly understood by the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The joys that Israel and Judah will know

Comments

Jeremiah 33:9-11,14-16

“Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it.”

This is what the LORD says: “You say about this place, ‘It is a desolate waste, without men or animals.’

“Yet in the **towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted**, inhabited by neither men nor animals, there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, ‘Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before.’” says the LORD. ...

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

“In those days and at that time I will make a **righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.**”



***The LORD our
Righteousness***

Jeremiah 33:16

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The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD was still fiercely angry

Comments

2 Kings; Ezra

Despite Josiah's reforms, the LORD remembered what Manassah had done.

God was still determined to remove Judah, as he had done with Israel.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD was still fiercely angry

Comments

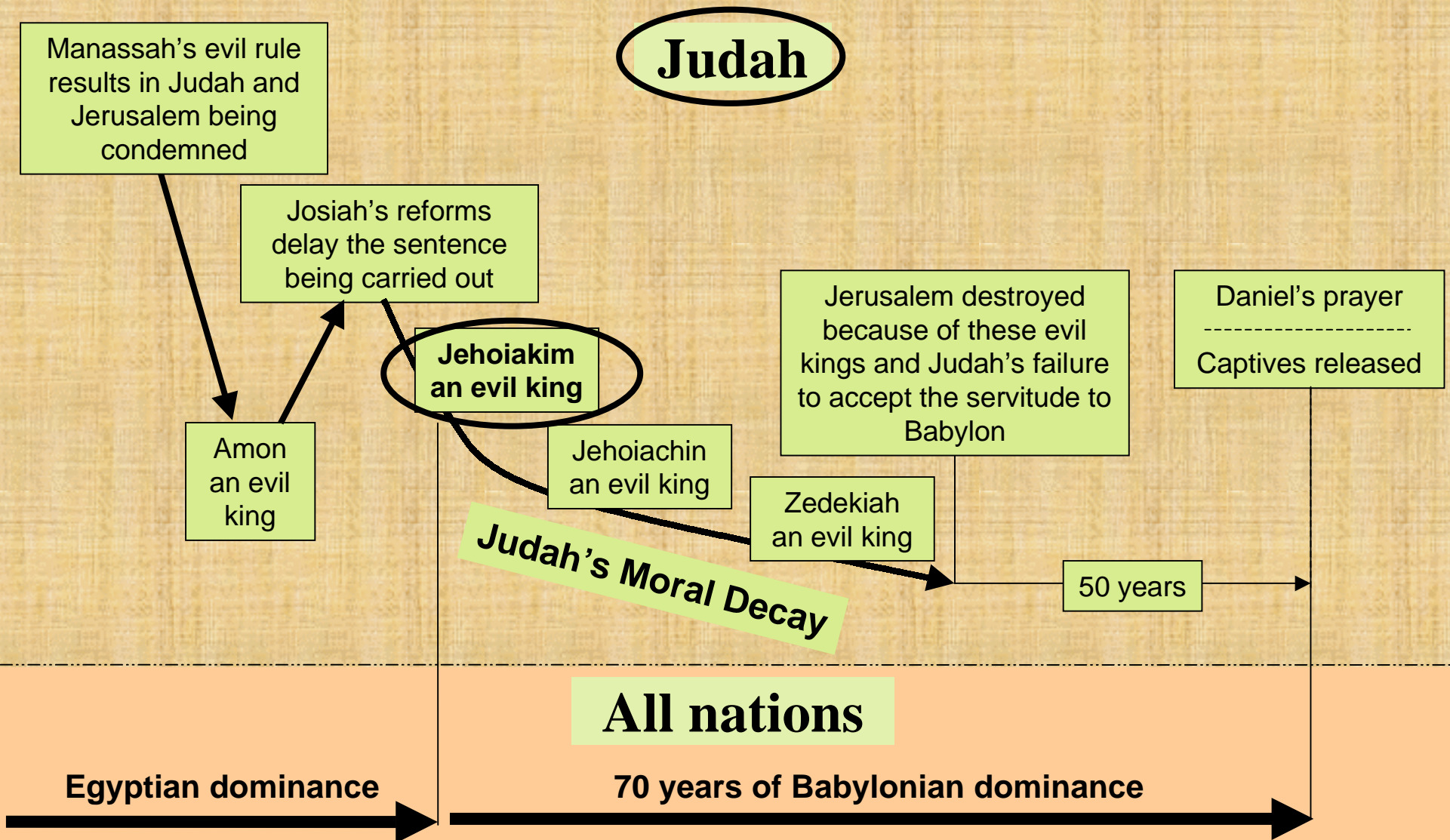
2 Kings; Ezra

The LORD did not turn away from **the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah** because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger.

So the LORD said, **“I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem**, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, ‘There shall my Name be’.” (2 Kings 23:26-27)

Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will withdraw my favor; I will not look on you with pity or spare you. (Ezra 5:11)

The Decay and Fall of Judah



The Decay and Fall of Judah

Evil king Jehoahaz replaced with Jehoiakim

Comments

2 Kings 23:31-35

Jehoahaz followed his father Josiah to the throne of Judah.

After three months, Necho, the new Pharaoh, replaced Jehoahaz with his brother Eliakim, and renamed him Jehoiakim. By doing this, Necho expected Judah's alliance to Egypt.

Because Jehoiakim had been placed on the throne by Pharaoh Necho, the allegiance by Jehoiakim was naturally towards Egypt.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Evil king Jehoahaz replaced with Jehoiakim

Comments

2 Kings 23:31-35

Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. ... He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his fathers had done.

Pharaoh Neco put him in chains at Riblah in the land of Hamath so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and he imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah and changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim.

Jehoiakim paid Pharaoh Neco the silver and gold he demanded.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jehoiakim was an evil king

Comments

2 Kings 23:36--24:4

Early during Jehoiakim's evil reign, the Egyptians under Necho were crushed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

Necho returned to Egypt, having suffered heavy losses. Babylon was now given a virtually free hand in western Asia.

Three years later, Egypt and Babylon fought an indecisive battle, causing Jehoiakim to take heart and follow his natural leaning towards Egypt.

So the LORD sent Babylon and her allies against Jehoiakim. The prophet saw this action as fulfilling the word of the prophets who said that the LORD would destroy Judah.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jehoiakim was an evil king

Comments

2 Kings 23:36--24:4

Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. ... And he did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his fathers had done.

During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he changed his mind and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar.

The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him. He sent them to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets.

Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD'S command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For [Manasseh] had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The examples of Shiloh and Israel

Comments

Jeremiah, Psalms

Following the initial conquest of Canaan, the Tabernacle had been set up at Shiloh.

Despite God's presence ("Name") at Shiloh, the Lord had it destroyed. He also had the evil northern kingdom of Israel destroyed.

Pointing to these two examples, the LORD warned that the same will happen to those who trusted in the Temple at Jerusalem which bore his name.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The examples of Shiloh and Israel

Comments

Jeremiah, Psalms

The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says ... “ ‘Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD.

“ ‘Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel. While you were doing all these things, declares the LORD, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer.

“Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears my Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your fathers. I will thrust you from my presence, just as I did all your brothers, the people of Ephraim.” (Jeremiah 7:3, 9-15)

Like their fathers they were disloyal and faithless, as unreliable as a faulty bow. They angered him with their high places; they aroused his jealousy with their idols. When God heard them, he was very angry; he rejected Israel completely. He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he had set up among men. He sent the ark of his might into captivity, his splendor into the hands of the enemy. He gave his people over to the sword; he was very angry with his inheritance. (Psalm 78:57-62)



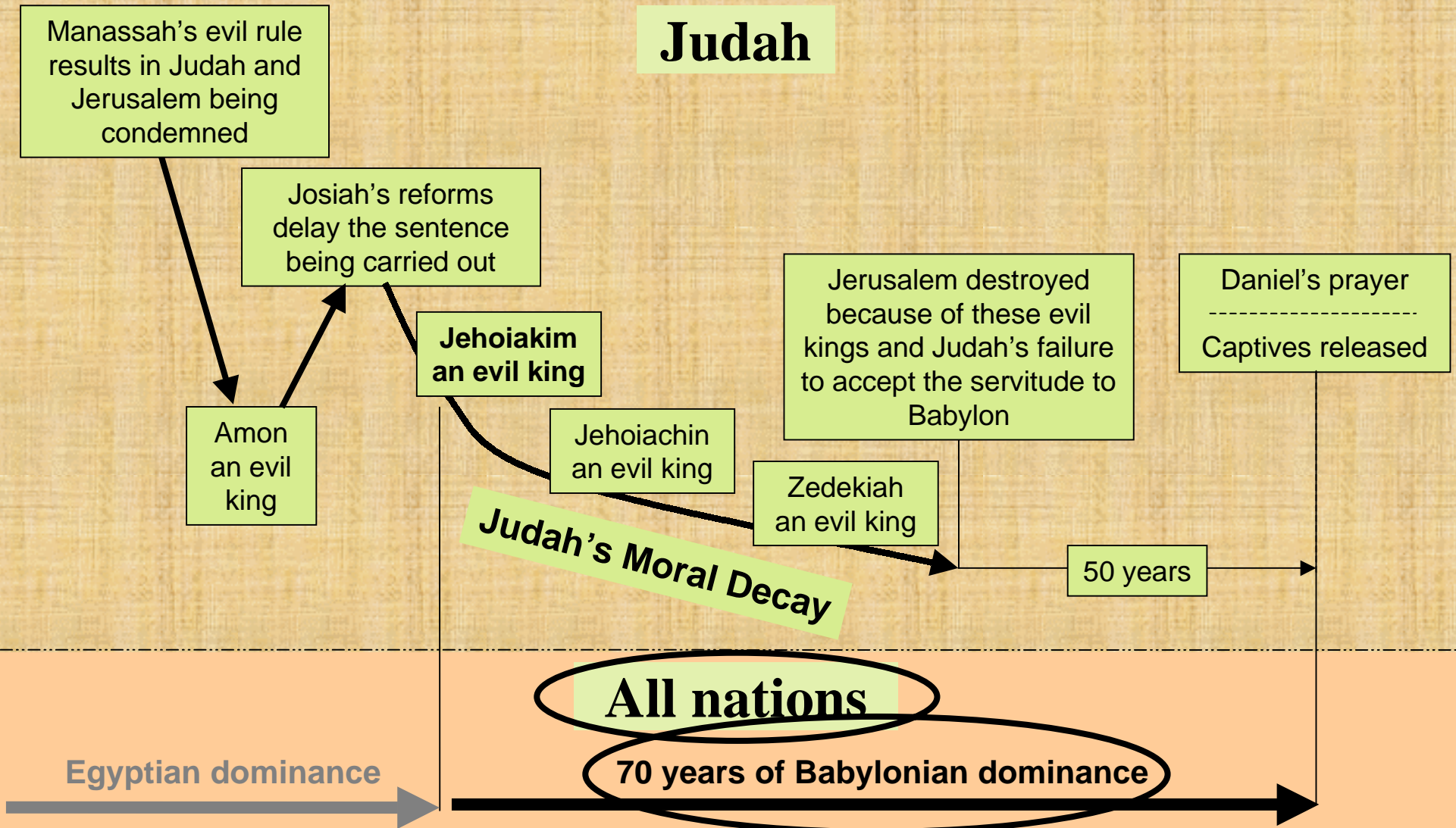
The Philistines Capture the Ark (1 Samuel 4:4-5,10-11)

So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. When the ark of the LORD'S covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. ... So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. **The ark of God was captured**, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

(Scripture citations follow the NIV)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Judah



The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD is against Egypt and its followers

Comments

Thus far, the LORD has declared that because of their sinful evil ways, he will destroy Judah and Jerusalem.

Now the LORD introduces his decision to punish Egypt and those who rely on Egypt. They will be handed over to Babylon.

Jeremiah 46:25-26

The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “I am about to bring punishment on Amon god of Thebes, on Pharaoh, **on Egypt and her gods and her kings, and on those who rely on Pharaoh.** I will hand them over to those who seek their lives, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his officers.”

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The people would not listen to the LORD

Comments

Jeremiah; Ezekiel

The people of Judah refused to listen to the LORD or obey him.

They were more unruly than the nations around them.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The people would not listen to the LORD

Comments

Jeremiah; Ezekiel

The word came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. ...

And though the LORD has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention. They said, "Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your fathers for ever and ever.

Do not follow other gods to serve and worship them; do not provoke me to anger with what your hands have made. Then I will not harm you."

"But you did not listen to me," declares the LORD, "and you have provoked me with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves." (**Jeremiah 25:1, 4-7**)

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. Yet **in her wickedness she has rebelled against my laws and decrees more than the nations and countries around her. She has rejected my laws and has not followed my decrees.**

"Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: You have been more unruly than the nations around you and have not followed my decrees or kept my laws. You have not even conformed to the standards of the nations around you." (Ezekiel 5:5-7)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jeremiah reacts to the Babylonian victory

Comments

Jeremiah 25:8-11

The LORD used Babylon as his servant, carrying out his punishment against all the nations that had allied themselves with Egypt, including Judah.

All were to be completely destroyed, scorned, and become an everlasting ruin.

Judah was to become a desolate wasteland, as the LORD had long warned, while all the nations would serve Babylon for seventy years.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jeremiah reacts to the Babylonian victory

Comments

Jeremiah 25:8-11

Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” declares the LORD, “and I will bring them **against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin.**

I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp.

This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

All nations were to serve Babylon

Comments

With the supremacy of Babylon, the LORD declared that all nations had to serve Babylon for 70 years.

Perhaps this was a recognition of their role in causing Judah to accept their ways, rather than the LORD's way.

Jeremiah 25:17-26



The Decay and Fall of Judah

All nations were to serve Babylon

Comments

Jeremiah 25:17-26

[Jeremiah] took the cup from the LORD'S hand and made **all the nations** to whom he sent me drink it:

Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, **to make them a ruin and an object of horror and scorn and cursing, as they are today;**

Pharaoh king of **Egypt**, his attendants, his officials and all his people, and all the foreign people there; all the kings of **Uz**; all the kings of the **Philistines** (those of **Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron**, and the people left at **Ashdod**); **Edom, Moab** and **Ammon**; all the kings of **Tyre** and **Sidon**; the kings of the coastlands across the sea; **Dedan, Tema, Buz** and all who are in distant places; all the kings of **Arabia** and all the kings of the foreign people who live in the desert; all the kings of **Zimri, Elam** and **Media**; and **all the kings of the north, near and far, one after the other—all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.**

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Proof that the nations would serve Babylon

Comments

As proof to the nations that the sentence on the nations would be carried out, they only needed to see that the LORD was already punishing his very own people.

Ever since the long and evil reign of Manassah, the LORD was committed to destroying Judah, just as he had done with Israel. Judah was already **“a ruin and an object of horror and scorn and cursing”**.

The surrounding nations could see that the LORD was prepared to punish his own people, so they knew he required them to serve Babylon for the decreed 70 years.

Jeremiah 25:27-29

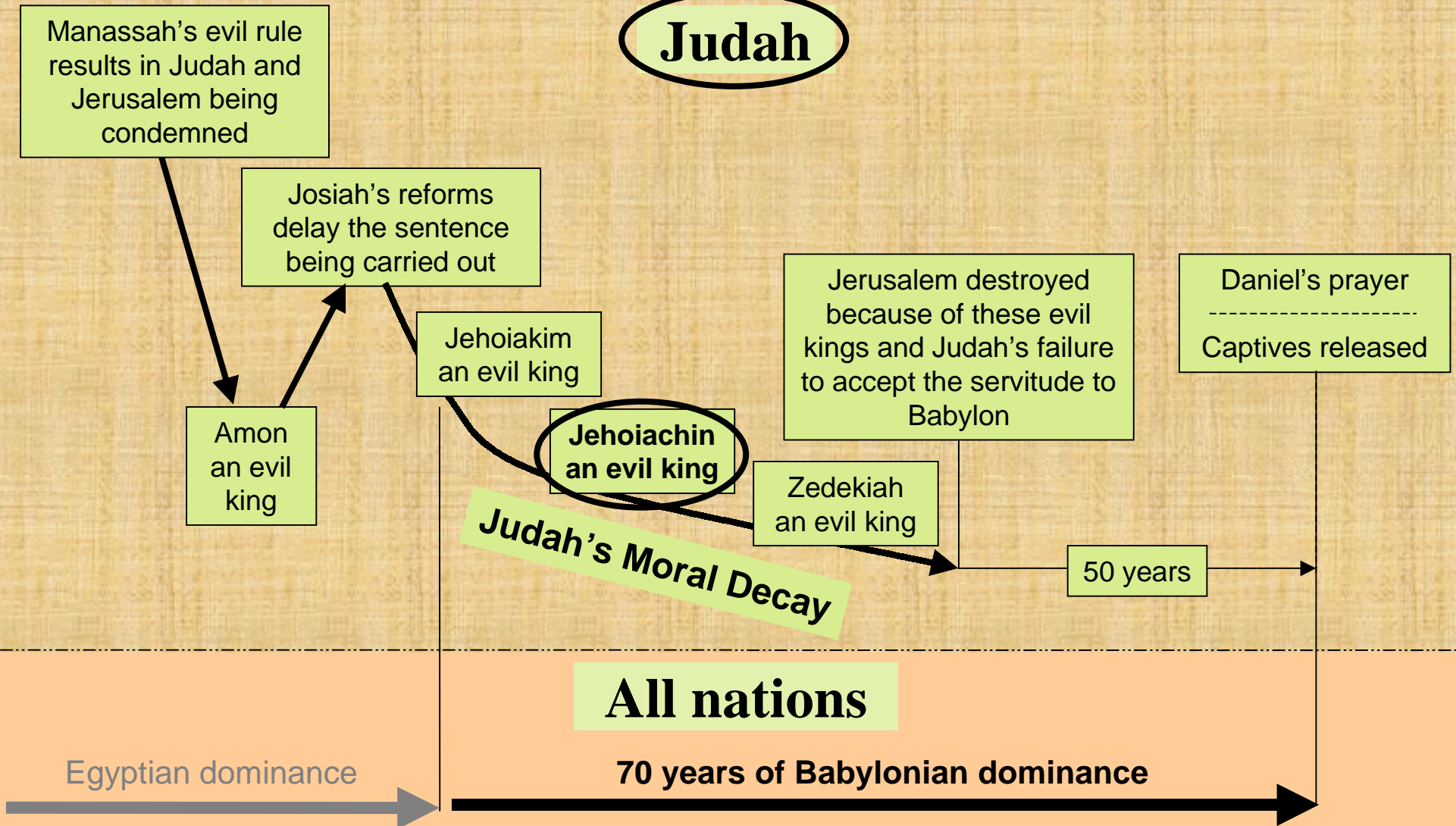
“Then tell [all these nations], ‘This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Drink, get drunk and vomit, and **fall to rise no more** because of the sword I will send among you.’

But if they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink, tell them, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: You must drink it!

See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that bears my Name, and will you indeed go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, for **I am calling down a sword upon all who live on the earth**, declares the LORD Almighty.’

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Judah



The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jehoiachin taken captive

Comments

Jeremiah, 2 Kings

When Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem, he found a new king on the throne, Jehoiachin. Nebuchadnezzar put the new king in prison in Babylon and replaced him with Zedekiah.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jehoiachin taken captive

Comments

Jeremiah, 2 Kings

“As surely as I live,” declares the LORD, “even if you, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off. I will hand you over to those who seek your life, those you fear—to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to the Babylonians.

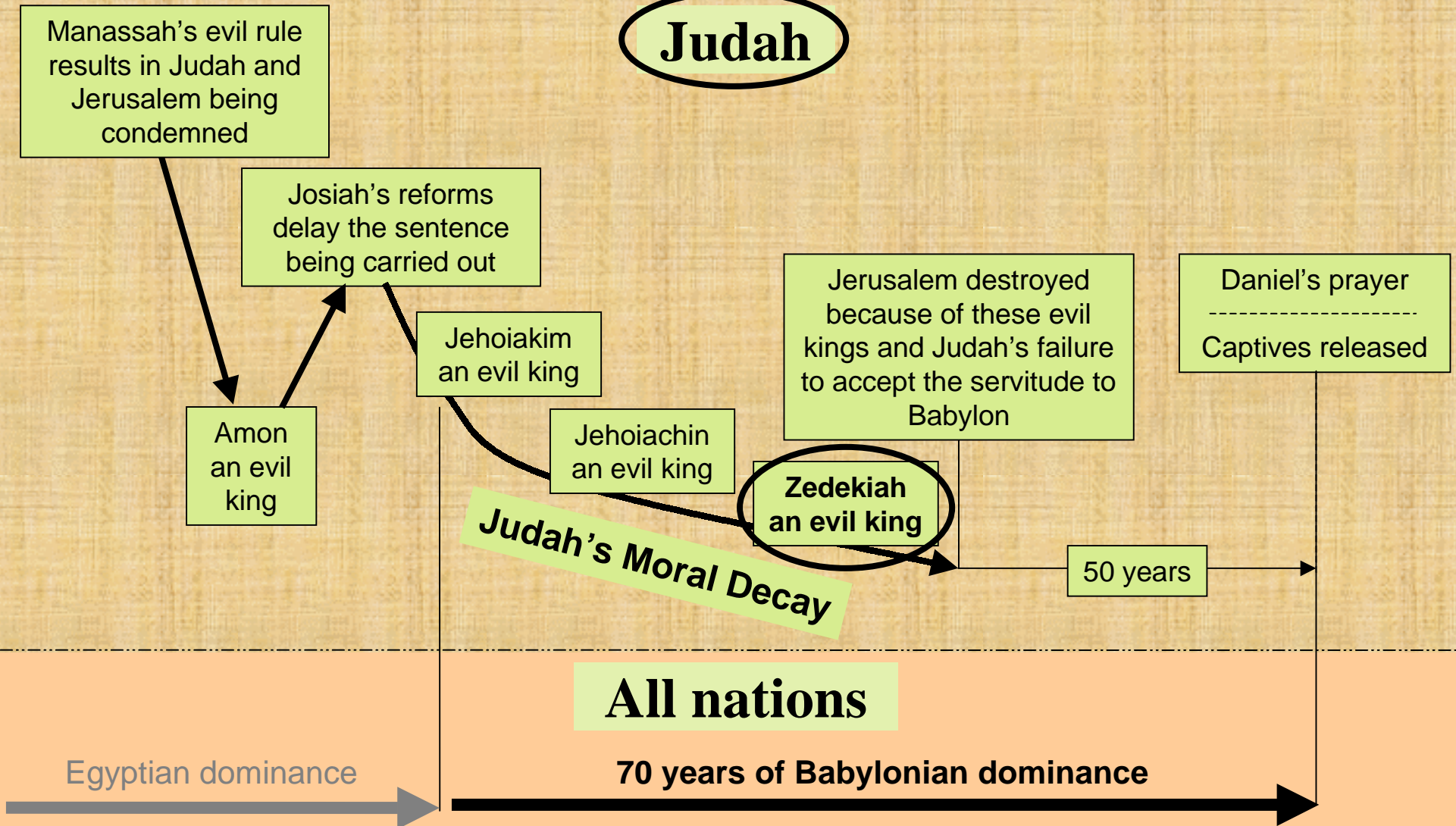
I will hurl you and the mother who gave you birth into another country, where neither of you was born, and there you both will die. You will never come back to the land you long to return to.” (Jer 22:24-27)

At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it.

Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to him. ... The king of Babylon ... made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:10-12, 16-17)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Judah



The Decay and Fall of Judah

Zedekiah was an evil, stiff-necked king

Comments

But Zedekiah was evil, like his predecessors, and he rebelled against the LORD, including God's decree that Judah was to continue their 70 year servitude to Babylon, alongside its neighbors.

Finally, Zedekiah would not even listen to the LORD.

2 Chronicles 36:11-13

Zedekiah ... did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah ...

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.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jeremiah wears a wooden yoke

Comments

Jeremiah 27:2-7

Early in the reign of Zedekiah, the LORD told Jeremiah to make a yoke out of straps and crossbars and put it on his neck. Jeremiah then told the kings of **Edom, Moab, Ammon, that all nations** were to be subject to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. If **any nation or kingdom** would not serve Nebuchadnezzar or bow its neck under his yoke, the LORD would punish that nation until it was destroyed.

They were not to heed the prophets, diviners, interpreters of dreams, their mediums or sorcerers, who were telling them that they should not serve the king of Babylon. Their false prophecies were lies that only served to remove them far from their lands, where they would perish.

Any nation that bowed its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and served him would be permitted to remain in its own land to till it and to live there.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jeremiah wears a wooden yoke

Comments

Jeremiah 27:2-7



The LORD said to [Jeremiah]: “Make a yoke out of straps and crossbars and put it on your neck. Then send word to **the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon** through the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah.

Give them a message for their masters and say, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Tell this to your masters: With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please. Now I will hand **all your countries** over to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him. **All nations will serve** him and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes.’”

The Decay and Fall of Judah

An even stronger yoke

Comments on Jeremiah 28

Later in that same year, the prophet Hananiah said that the LORD would break the yoke of the king of Babylon, bring back all the articles of the LORD'S house, their king Jehoiachin, and all the other exiles from Judah who had been sent to Babylon. Hananiah said that the LORD declared: "I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon." Jeremiah and Hananiah were thus showing that the yoke of servitude was already in place, well before Jerusalem was destroyed.

Jeremiah said that the prophet who prophesied peace would be recognized only if his prediction came true.

Hananiah took the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and broke it, declaring that the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar would be broken in the same way. Shortly afterwards, the LORD said that Hananiah had broken a wooden yoke, but in its place they would get a yoke of iron. The LORD said "I will put an iron yoke **on the necks of all these nations** to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they will serve him."

The servitude would continue. The only feature that the people could control was the severity of their servitude. If they rebelled against the LORD's decree, the yoke would be replaced with an even stronger one.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD could still relent

Comments

The LORD had pronounced his judgment that Judah and its city were to be destroyed. Even so, he still pleaded with his people to reform their ways and obey the LORD. If the people did so, the LORD said he would not bring the disaster.

There was still time for the situation to alter. If the people changed, the LORD would hold back on executing his judgment.

Jeremiah 26:1, 3, 13

Early in the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: ...

Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word. Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done. ...

Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jeremiah's message to the exiles at Babylon

Comments

Jeremiah 29:5-6, 8-10

Jeremiah saw rebellion by Judah against Babylon as another example of Judah's determination to disobey the LORD. This time they were rebelling against the LORD's decision that all nations would serve Babylon for 70 years.

Jeremiah wrote to the exiles (Ch 29) warning them not to listen to the false prophets who were declaring that the servitude would soon finish. 70 years of servitude to Babylon by the nations had been decreed by the LORD, it had commenced and the full servitude would certainly be completed.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jeremiah's message to the exiles at Babylon

Comments

Jeremiah 29:5-6, 8-10

Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters ... Increase in number there; do not decrease. "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD.

This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place."

(The Swedish and Danish NWT also say "for" Babylon at Jer 29:10.)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The city could be spared

Comments

- The LORD had decreed the Jerusalem would be destroyed and Judah would be left devastated.
- Mingled with the LORD's judgment was his desire that the people repent. If they did repent of their evil ways, the LORD would not carry out his threat.
- In this test of Zedekiah's faithfulness, the LORD demanded that Judah willingly serve Babylon for 70 years, just as their neighbors had been commanded.
- As a final call upon Zedekiah, the prophet Jeremiah pleaded with him to surrender, as this would save Jerusalem.
- The 70 years could be fulfilled without the city being destroyed or the land ravaged.

Jeremiah 38:17

"If you (Zedekiah) surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared and this city will not be burned down." (Jeremiah 38:17)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD will shoot to destroy Jerusalem

Ezekiel 5:8-12, 14-17

“Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself am against you, Jerusalem, and I will inflict punishment on you in the sight of the nations. Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again. Therefore in your midst fathers will eat their children, and children will eat their fathers. I will inflict punishment on you and will scatter all your survivors to the winds. Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will withdraw my favor; I will not look on you with pity or spare you. A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword. ...

“I will make you a ruin and a reproach among the nations around you, in the sight of all who pass by. You will be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and an object of horror to the nations around you when I inflict punishment on you in anger and in wrath and with stinging rebuke. I the LORD have spoken.

“When I shoot at you with my deadly and destructive arrows of famine, I will shoot to destroy you. I will bring more and more famine upon you and cut off your supply of food. I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I the LORD have spoken.”

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD will keep his promises

Comments

Jeremiah 32:36 - 44

The city was under siege by Nebuchadnezzar.

The people recognized that the land was already a desolate waste, without man or animals, meaning that it had been handed over to the Babylonians.

Yet at this time, when destruction was nigh, the LORD once more promised his people that he would care for them and make them prosper.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD will keep his promises

Comments

Jeremiah 32:36 - 44

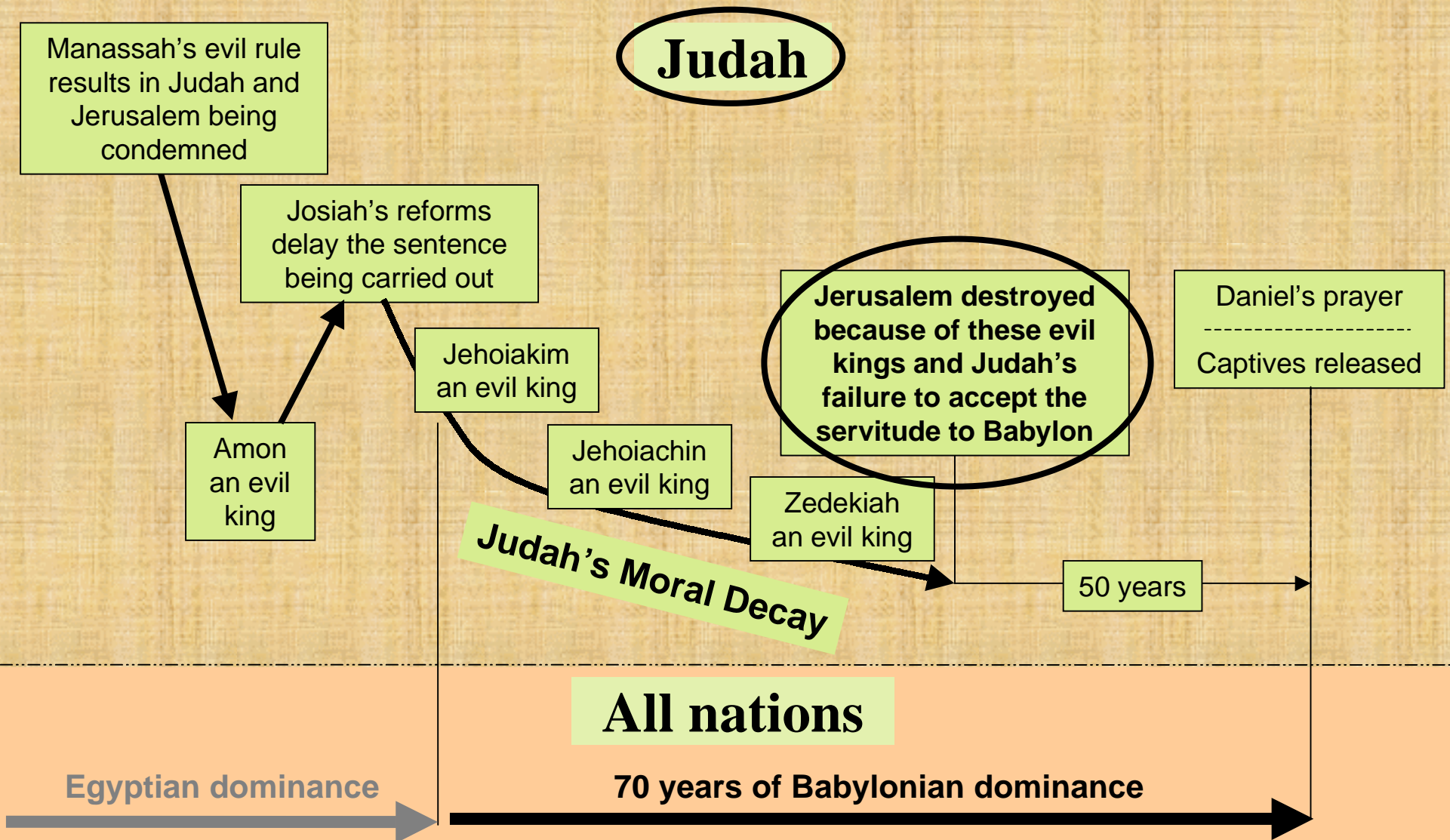
“You are saying about this city, ‘By the sword, famine and plague it will be handed over to the king of Babylon’; but this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.

“This is what the LORD says: As I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will give them all the prosperity I have promised them. Once more fields will be bought in **this land of which you say, ‘It is a desolate waste, without men or animals, for it has been handed over to the Babylonians.’**

Fields will be bought for silver, and deeds will be signed, sealed and witnessed in the territory of Benjamin, in the villages around Jerusalem, in the towns of Judah and in the towns of the hill country, of the western foothills and of the Negev, because I will restore their fortunes, declares the LORD.”

The Decay and Fall of Judah



The Decay and Fall of Judah

Jerusalem is besieged and taken

2 Chronicles 36:15-21

The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. 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.

He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar.

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. 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. He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power.

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.



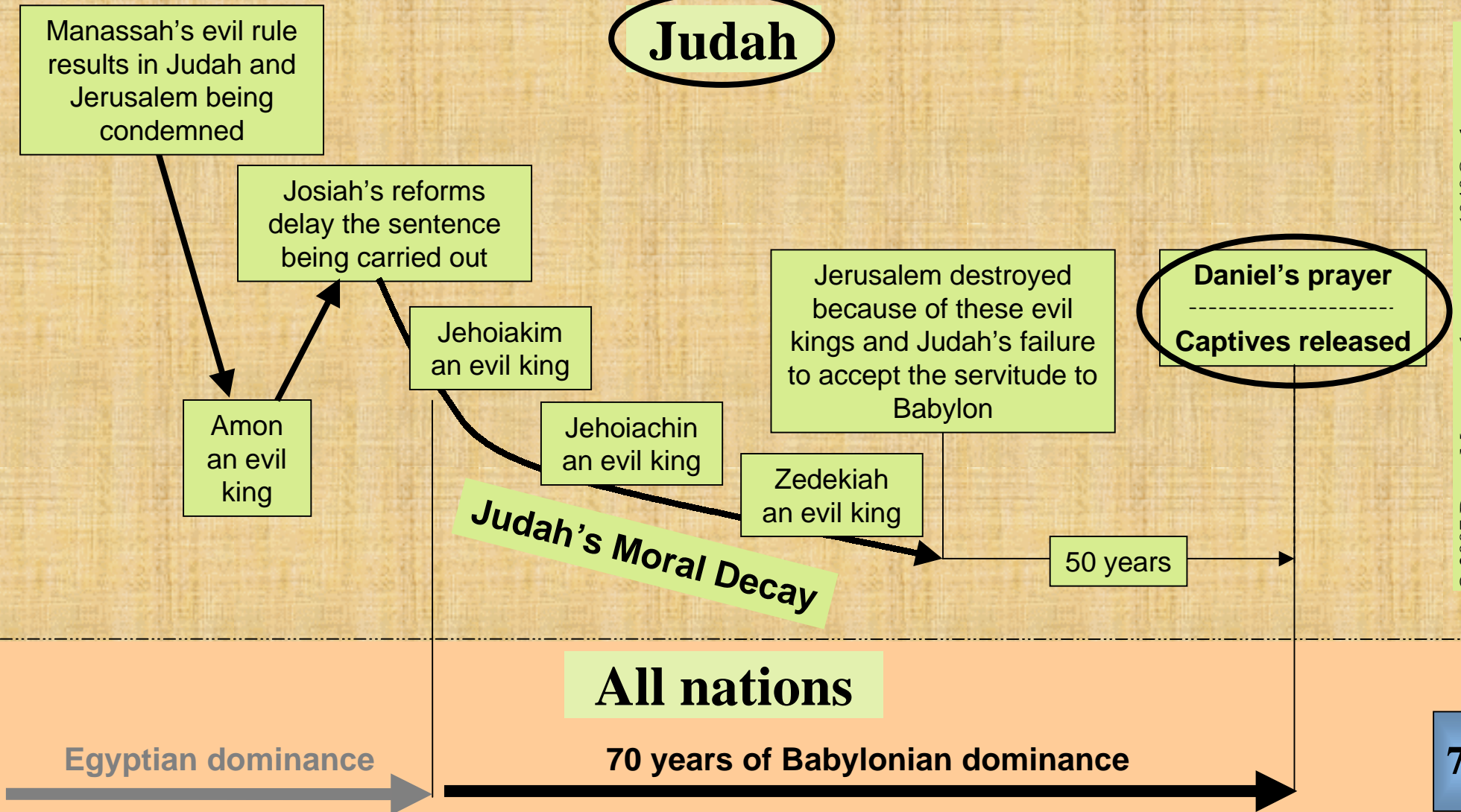
The Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook [Zedekiah] in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered, and he was captured. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him. They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. (2 Kings 25:5-7)



Nebuzaradan ... set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. The whole Babylonian army, under the commander of the imperial guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had gone over to the king of Babylon. But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields. (2 Kings 25:8-12)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Judah



The Decay and Fall of Judah

Babylon tastes defeat

Jeremiah 25:12, 27:7

Daniel 5:5-6, 25-28, 30

When the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians. (Jer 25:12)

All nations will serve (Nebuchadnezzar) and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him. (Jer 27:7)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Babylon tastes defeat

Jeremiah 25:12, 27:7

Daniel 5:5-6, 25-28, 30



Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king [Belshazzar] watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way. ...

“This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN

“This is what these words mean: *Mene*: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. *Tekel*: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. *Peres*: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Daniel understood from the Scriptures

Comments

Daniel 9:1-3

After Babylon had been defeated, Daniel read the Scriptures written by Jeremiah, From those writings, Daniel understood the seventy years of desolation experienced by Jerusalem. The full understanding thus comes from Jeremiah's writings.

In chapter 9, Daniel shows his reliance on Jeremiah, for this is the only chapter where he writes YHWH and it is the only time that Daniel uses the word CHORBAH to describe the desolations of Jerusalem. Both expressions come from Jeremiah.

In the Hebrew, there are degrees of "desolation", and CHORBAH is not the worst degree. While Daniel uses CHORBAH to describe the 70 years, he uses the much stronger word SHAMEM to describe the condition of Jerusalem and its temple:

"Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate [SHAMEM] sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation [SHAMEM] of the city that bears your Name." (Daniel 9:17-18)

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Daniel understood from the Scriptures

Comments

Daniel 9:1-3

In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom—in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation [CHORBAH] of Jerusalem would last seventy years.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

The LORD's call for prayer

Jeremiah 29:10-14

The LORD says: **“When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,”** declares the LORD, **“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.**

Then you will **call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.** You will seek me and find me when you **seek me with all your heart.**

I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, **“and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places** where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, **“and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”**

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9:3-19)

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So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

"Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.

"O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9:3-19)

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“Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

“Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9:3-19)

Page 3 (of 3)



Daniel's Prayer (1865) by Sir Edward Poynter (English neoclassical painter, 1836-1919), from illustrations for Dalziel's Bible Gallery.

“Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”

The Decay and Fall of Judah

Finally . . .

No secular dates have been presented in this Study. Instead, it has considered the lessons that were taught and the activities of the relevant participants.

The information has been provided by a straightforward reading of the Hebrew's Scriptures. Other inspired Scriptures could have been cited, but this might have resulted in an unnecessary overload of repeated information.

Any alignment of the dates these events with modern calendars (typically Julian or Gregorian) must be made to fit the Biblical account that has just been presented.

The dates followed by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTS) do not fit the Biblical account. The WTS starts at the end of the story and then walks backwards along the wrong road. Their dates must hence be rejected.

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