

Jeremiah 52:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD,
according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

Analysis

And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. This epitaph for King Zedekiah is devastating in its brevity. The phrase **did that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD** (ra' be'einei YHWH, רָע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה) is the standard formula in Kings and Chronicles for covenant unfaithfulness—not merely political failure but spiritual rebellion against God's revealed will. The comparison to **Jehoiakim** is particularly damning: Jehoiakim (Zedekiah's predecessor) was notoriously wicked, burning Jeremiah's scroll (Jeremiah 36:23), murdering the prophet Uriah (Jeremiah 26:20-23), and exploiting his own people (Jeremiah 22:13-17).

Zedekiah's specific sins included breaking his oath to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chronicles 36:13, Ezekiel 17:15-20)—violating a covenant made in God's name, which God considered treachery against Himself. He also imprisoned Jeremiah for prophesying truth (Jeremiah 37:15-21), though personally seeking Jeremiah's counsel privately (Jeremiah 37:17, 38:14-28), showing spiritual cowardice. The tragedy is that Zedekiah seems to have known the right course but lacked courage to follow it. This demonstrates that intellectual knowledge without moral courage leads to destruction.

Historical Context

Jeremiah 52 is a historical appendix nearly identical to 2 Kings 24:18-25:30, providing eyewitness details of Jerusalem's fall. Zedekiah (r. 597-586 BC) was

installed by Nebuchadnezzar after deposing Jehoiachin. His original name was Mattaniah; Nebuchadnezzar renamed him Zedekiah ("Righteousness of Yahweh"), ironically, since he proved unrighteous. Despite Jeremiah's repeated counsel to submit to Babylon (Jeremiah 27:12-15, 38:17-18), Zedekiah rebelled, forming alliances with Egypt. This rebellion triggered the Babylonian siege (588-586 BC) that ended in Jerusalem's destruction, the temple's burning, and mass deportation. Zedekiah witnessed his sons' execution, then was blinded and taken to Babylon in chains (Jeremiah 52:10-11)—a horrific end. His failure shows that political expediency and peer pressure are spiritually fatal when they contradict God's word.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does Zedekiah's comparison to Jehoiakim teach about the seriousness of covenant unfaithfulness?
2. How did Zedekiah's lack of moral courage to obey God's clear word through Jeremiah lead to catastrophic consequences?
3. In what ways might believers today similarly know the right course yet lack courage to follow it?

Interlinear Text

עָשָׂה הַ	דָּבַר ע	בְּעֵינַי י	יְהוָה הַ	כָּל ל	אֲשֶׁר
And he did	that which was evil	in the eyes	of the LORD	H3605	H834
H6213	H7451	H5869	H3068		

עָשָׂה הַ	יְהוֹיָקִים:
And he did	according to all that Jehoiakim
H6213	H3079

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 14:22 (Evil): And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.

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