

SOULMANNA

Christ's Genealogy – Covenant Faithfulness in Fulfilled Judgment

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham . . . And Josias begat **Jechonias** and his brethren, about the time they were **carried away to Babylon**: And after they were **brought to Babylon**, **Jechonias** begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;” (**Matthew 1:1, 11-12**) “As I live, saith the LORD, though **Coniah** the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.” (**Jeremiah 22:24, 30**)

Looking at the Word:

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 119:75 “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, And that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” One of the great lessons found in the genealogy of Christ is that God is ever faithful in fulfilling his covenant promises, even when judging his people.

God chose Abraham to be the clay he used in fashioning Israel. The Lord's covenant relationship with his people was unique among the nations. Throughout Israel's history, God repeatedly demonstrated his presence, provision, and protection for the nation by his miraculous power. God's care was also evidenced in the Davidic covenant. While his sons could expect chastening for sin, David was promised that his house and kingdom would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:4-17).

- ❖ **God Promised Judgment upon Jeconiah:** In spite of God's continued goodness, both nation and king turned away from following the Lord. Jeconiah, the last king listed in Matthew's genealogy grew up in a household that disdained the Word of God. In utter disregard and contempt for God and his Word, Jeconiah's father, king Jehoiakim had Jeremiah's scroll burned leaf by leaf as it was read (Jeremiah 36:20-24). Jeconiah proved to be of the same mindset as his father. It is never wise to ignore God; nor can God's Word be put aside so easily. Jeconiah's name appears twice in Matthew's genealogy, both times in connection with Judah's deportation to Babylon. It was during the reigns of Jehoiakim and his son, Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), that God's long-ignored prophetic warnings of coming judgment were fulfilled. The names of Jeconiah and Coniah are both variations of Jehoiachin, which means “Yahweh (the Lord) will uphold”. This man would learn by life experience the truth that God upholds every covenant promise, both in his blessing but also in his judging. Jeconiah would see Jeremiah 22:24-30 lived out in the Babylonian captivity.
- ❖ **God's Faithfulness in Fulfilling Promised Judgment:** While the rewards of heeding God's Word are beyond man's wildest imagination (1 Corinthians 2:9), the price for sin in our life is so horrific we should do everything in our power to keep it from us (Matthew 18:1-9). God judged Judah in a way the nation could not ignore and would never forget. Following seventy years of captivity in Babylon, the Jews were allowed to return to the land of Palestine, but from that time forward no son of David ever ruled as king in Jerusalem. The royal line continued on, but the throne sat vacant, waiting for the promised Messiah.
 - **Established by Scriptural Testimony:** By the time Jeconiah was crowned king, the nation was already in full rebellion against Babylon. The king refused to heed the counsel of Jeremiah. Whatever hope Jeconiah had of resisting the armed might of Nebuchadnezzar was short lived. Three months after ascending the throne of Judah, the armies of Babylon were camped outside the gates of Jerusalem. The last time Nebuchadnezzar visited Jerusalem (605 BC), he had taken captive young royals (Daniel 1:3-6) to serve in the Babylonian civil service. This time Nebuchadnezzar removed Jeconiah from the throne and replaced him with Zedekiah (his uncle). Jeconiah was then taken to Babylon as a prisoner along with the queen-mother, his wives, and the rest of his household (along with others in the Judean nobility). Before leaving Jerusalem, the Babylonians looted the palace and temple treasuries. They conscripted ten thousand soldiers from Judah's army to serve the military interests of Babylon elsewhere in the empire. They also stripped Jerusalem of its best craftsmen and skilled workmen (2 Kings 24: 8-17; 2 Chronicles 36:9-10).
 - **Confirmed by Ancient Archaeology:** The findings from the archaeologist's spade are in perfect harmony with the testimony of scripture. Pictured above is one of four cuneiform tablets unearthed from the ruins of Babylon which mention a provision of oil for “Jehoiachin, king of Judah” and five of his sons. These tablets are dated just five years after Jehoiachin was taken captive, making him 23 years old. It's possible all five sons were born while still in Jerusalem. However, it seems more likely that he enjoyed access to his wives and family throughout his time in Babylon. After Nebuchadnezzar died, Jehoiachin was released from “prison” (some form of restricted confinement) and given an honored position within the Babylonian court (2 Kings 25:27-30). Even though his treatment in Babylon would not have been considered overly harsh, it would have served as a daily reminder of God's judgment on the nation and on him as king. Jeremiah had prophesied, “Write ye this man childless.” A



king's son could normally look forward to one day ruling in his father's stead. Surrounded by the glory and might of Babylon, Jehoiachin knew that never again would he sit on Judah's throne—nor would any of his sons do so.

- **Illustrated by Church History:** According to church tradition as reported by Eusebius¹, the emperor Domitian commanded the descendants of David be rounded up and executed to stave off any possibility of a Jewish messiah rallying a rebellion under his banner. When two grandsons of Jude, the brother of Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:55), were brought before the emperor and asked about their financial standing, they testified that they owned 39 acres between them, from which they raised their taxes and earned their living. Their callused hands and hardened bodies proved they were simple farmers laboring in the field and not rich land owners. When pressed about Christ's kingdom, they told Domitian it was a heavenly kingdom and would not appear on earth until the end of the world, when Christ would return. After examining them, the emperor (not known for his mercy) thought so little of them that he simply let them go. David, pleading his case when being pursued by Saul, asked, "After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea" (1 Samuel 24:14). Speaking of Jeconiah, Jeremiah had prophesied in 22:30, "a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." The house of David once produced kings that shook the earth. Sin had brought them low. Domitian considered the house of David to have fallen into such disrepair that he decided it wasn't worth his trouble of ordering an execution.

Application and Meditation: Not every name in Matthew's genealogy has a note of historical importance attached to it. Most are just names in a long list of names. Why did Matthew twice list Jeconiah with mention of the Babylonian captivity? Some have mentioned that the captivity was often used as a historical marker within the Jewish genealogies of that period. While that may be the case, the Holy Spirit had something more in mind than abiding within normal literary style. The listing of Jeconiah was done in such a way as to elicit a reminder of God's judgment in the past. Moreover, because of the new covenant relationship promised to both Jew and Gentile, it is important for Gospel readers to understand the serious consequences waiting for us should we fail to accept God's offer of life in Jesus Christ.

As time passed following David's death, the kings of Israel (and later Judah) came to take God's covenant blessings for granted. They assumed because of God's promises to David that the Jerusalem throne, and the blessings that went with it, would be theirs in perpetuity because of their blood relationship to David. They presumed upon the goodness of God in fulfilling promised blessing, but they forgot the holiness of God would also be fulfilled in promised judgment. God's promise to forgive sin and to grant eternal life to those who place their trust in Jesus is both incredibly gracious and absolutely certain. What makes this promise even more precious is the fact that God's promise of eternal judgment for those who refuse Christ is equally absolute in its certainty (John 3:16, 36). Because God's judgment is sure God's invitation to receive life is made more urgent. Choose life. © 2011, SoulManna – Dr. Mike Davidson – All rights reserved

Coming Next: Christ's Genealogy – Covenant Faithfulness in Fulfilled Promise

¹ Eusebius was a church historian from the 3rd century. He quotes from an earlier report penned by Hegesippus. Schaff, P. (1997). *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series Vol. I* (148). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.