



BABYLONIAN EXILE

Week 23: God’s People Exiled in Babylon (Lamentations; Several Psalms; Ezekiel; Daniel)

After Judah was destroyed by Babylon, the Jews were scattered throughout the nations, perhaps to be testimonies of the LORD’s ways. By building synagogues to preserve their identity, Jews (who only started using that term to describe themselves) were the starting point for proclaiming the message of the promised Messiah. The biblical key for understanding this era in *God’s Story* is Daniel’s interpretation of the four-metal image in Daniel 2 and the corresponding interpretation of the four beasts in Daniel 7. Four world superpowers arose during this time: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

The “head of gold” as described in Daniel 2 is Babylon. Only a few incidents from the time of the captivity in Babylon are written about in the Bible. We are limited to 2 Kings 25; 2 Chron. 36; Jer. 40-44; and parts of Daniel and Ezekiel. The earliest exiles of Jerusalem had been sent to Babylon during the rule of Jehoiakim in 605 (including Daniel). The second group was deported at the time of Jehoiachin in 597 (including Ezekiel). The final and largest group had gone into captivity after Jerusalem was destroyed in 586.

Three Babylonian monarchs are mentioned in the Bible:

- **Nebuchadnezzar** (605-562) was the general who attacked Jerusalem three times,
- **Evil-Merodach** (562-560) released Jehoiachin from prison (Jer. 52:31),
- **Belshazzar** (552-539) who saw the writing on the wall.

The empire that Nebuchadnezzar built was destroyed just 23 years after his death.

The Babylonians practiced massive relocation of rebellious people in order to curb future rebellions. For the Jews, many assimilated to Babylonian culture, but others finally paid heed to the prophets’ message and began to follow Yahweh.

Daniel demonstrated remarkable trust in God and revealed God’s plans for the future, not only for his own day but also for the Maccabean period and on through the time that God’s kingdom being established by the Son of Man.

Ezekiel foresaw the fall of Jerusalem, emphasizing its sins. The book includes lots of unusual symbols. After Jerusalem’s fall, Ezekiel prophesied the restoration and future of God’s people. God used Ezekiel as a major factor to encourage the exiles to stay true to the “faith of their fathers.”

Timeline of the Babylonian Captivity/Exile

- 612 Babylonians and Medes conquer Assyria
- 609 Josiah killed by Egyptian army, Jehoahaz is king
Jehoiakim becomes king after 3 months
- 605 Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylon
The Babylonians invade Judah
First wave of deportation of Jews to Babylon
Daniel is taken captive and begins to prophesy
- 601 Babylonians battle Egypt, both sides suffer losses
Judah decides to realign itself with Egypt
- 597 Jehoiachin becomes king of Judah
Babylonians capture Jerusalem
Second wave of deportation to Babylon from Judah.
Ezekiel is taken captive to Babylon
Zedekiah becomes king of Judah
- 593 Ezekiel begins to prophesy
- 586 The Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple
Jerusalem’s walls and gates are burned with fire
Third wave of Jews deported to Babylon
The end of the monarchy in Judah
Babylonian Exile begins
- 539 The Fall of Babylon
Beginning of the Persian Period to 332
The Decree of Cyrus II allowing Jews to return
- 516 The Jews rebuild their Temple (70 years)

Week Twenty-Three Reading Plan

Lamentations 1:1-22; 5:1-22	Sorrow in Jerusalem; Prayer of Hope
Choose two Psalms: 44; 74; 79; 80; 85; 89; 102; 106; 123; 137	Psalms of a People in Exile
Ezekiel 36:1-38	The Hope of the New Covenant
Ezekiel 37:1-14	A Valley of Dry Bones
Daniel 4:1-37	Nebuchadnezzar’s Temporary Insanity
Daniel 5:1-31	The Writing on the Wall
Daniel 6:1-28	Daniel in the Lions’ Den

4 KINGDOMS	<i>Political Powers</i>		<i>...in Daniel's Days</i>				<i>...and Afterwards</i>					
	Babylonian Rule Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar		Medo-Persian Rule Darius Cyrus				Greek Rule Alexander the Great Four Generals		Roman Rule Last of the Gentile Powers			
TOPICS	Historical/Biographical						Prophetical					
	Daniel Interprets Others' Dreams						Angel Interprets Daniel's Dreams					
	Daniel the Prophet						The Prophecies of Daniel					
CHAPTERS	Daniel enters Captivity but is elevated to high position	Nebuchadnezzar's Vision of the Statue (4 kingdoms & God's)	Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image & a Fiery Furnace	Nebuchadnezzar's Vision of the Great Tree & His Humbling	The Handwriting on the Wall for Belshazzar & Babylon	Daniel is Thrown into the Lions' Den for praying to God	Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts (4 kingdoms & God's)	Daniel's Vision of the Ram & Goat	Daniel's Prayer for Israel & Vision of 70 Weeks (future)	Daniel is Scared by His Dream of Spiritual Warfare in Heaven	Vision of Israel Under Persia	The Promise of the Resurrection
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
TIME RULER (PLACE)	605	604	580	570	539	538	553	551	538	536	534	534
	Nebuchadnezzar (Babylon)		Belshazzar (Babylon)		Darius (Medo-Persia)		Belshazzar (Babylon)		Darius (Medo-Persia)		Cyrus (Medo-Persia)	
WRITTEN IN	Hebrew		Aramaic					Hebrew				

Judgment Near		Judgment Now		Hope Ahead	
Predicting Jerusalem's Fall		Announcing Jerusalem's Fall		Promising Restoration	
Place: Babylonia			Time: About 22 years (593-571BC)		
1-3 COMMISSION OF EZEKIEL	4-24 JUDGMENT OF JUDAH	25-32 JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS	33-48 RESTORATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE		
1 - Vision	4-6 Four symbols of coming judgment	25 - Amon, Moab, Edom, Philistia	33-36 Return to the Land, New Shepherd		
2 - Call	7-14 God's glory departs because of Idolatry	26-28 - Phoenicians–Tyre (Fall of Satan)	37-39 New Life and Unity		
3 - Commission	15-24 Parables and Pronouncements	29-32 - Egypt, Assyria, Elam, Meshech, Edom, Phoenicians–Sidon	40-43 New Temple, God's glory returns		
			44-48 New Worship		