

Old Testament Survey 10 - Exile & Kingdom Hope: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel

for the Bible Institute at Gulf Coast Baptist Church

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Introduction

The time of Israel's exile revealed some of the strongest faith of any other period in their history. As tough times often do, the struggles of exile brought the remnant to its knees and closer to God. Their attention was cast to the future when God would restore the people to the land and keep His covenant promises with them. Through this period in Israel's history we see that exile is not the end; it clarifies sin, holiness, and the promise of a new covenant/restoration.

Key texts

Jeremiah 31 (New Covenant promise)

Ezekiel 36–37 (restoration / new heart / national revival imagery)

Daniel 2; 7; 9 (kingdom program and Gentile empires)

Book of Jeremiah

Jeremiah was referenced in the last lesson as a warning to Judah of Babylon's coming judgement. He lived a life that was filled with persecution and misery. God told him not to continue to advocate for the people because they had turned their back on Him. He lived a good portion of his life in a miry pit, and was dragged out to prophesy before the king. Jeremiah is the "weeping prophet" who ministered during the final years of the southern kingdom of Judah before the Babylonian captivity. His ministry emphasized God's judgment on covenant-breaking Israel while also preserving hope for future national restoration.

- **Judgment on Judah** - Jeremiah warned that Judah's idolatry, false worship, moral corruption, and rejection of God's Word would bring divine chastening through Babylon. He repeatedly called the nation to repentance, but the people and leaders largely refused.
- **Babylon as God's Instrument** - Babylon was used by God to discipline Judah. Nebuchadnezzar's invasions fulfilled prophetic warnings and demonstrated that God governs the nations.
- **The Failure of False Religion** - Jeremiah strongly condemned false prophets who promised peace when judgment was imminent. Dispensational Baptists often emphasize this as a warning against religious systems that deny God's truth.
- **The New Covenant**
 - The New Covenant was promised specifically to Israel and Judah.
 - The New Covenant is often confused with the New Testament which God gave to the Church. The Church presently enjoys spiritual blessings related to the covenant through Christ. The Church being a mystery in the OT would preclude this covenant to be to the Body of Christ. The New Covenant with Israel will be realized during the Kingdom from the Heavens.

- The national fulfillment awaits Israel's future restoration in the Millennial Kingdom.
- **Future Restoration of Israel** - Jeremiah taught that although Judah would go into captivity for 70 years, God had not permanently cast away Israel. The nation would return to the land, and future kingdom blessings remain guaranteed.

Book of Ezekiel

Ezekiel prophesied from Babylon during the captivity. A priest-prophet, he received dramatic visions revealing God's holiness, Judah's sin, coming judgment, and Israel's future kingdom restoration.

Major Themes

- **The Glory of God** - Ezekiel repeatedly highlights the holiness and glory of God. One of the book's most striking moments is the departure of God's glory from the Temple because of Judah's sin.
- **Individual Responsibility** - Ezekiel emphasized that each person is accountable before God. While the nation suffered collectively, individuals were responsible for their own sin and response to God.
- **Judgment on Israel and the Nations** - God judged both Judah and surrounding Gentile nations. This demonstrated His sovereignty over all peoples, not just Israel.
- **The Valley of Dry Bones** - Ezekiel's famous vision symbolized Israel's future national revival:
 - Israel's national regathering
 - Spiritual renewal
 - Future restoration under Messiah's kingdom reign
- **Future Millennial Temple**
Ezekiel 40–48 describes a future Temple and kingdom order. Dispensationalists generally interpret these chapters literally:
 - A future earthly Millennial Kingdom
 - Israel restored to the land
 - Messiah reigning from Jerusalem
 - Distinct roles for Israel among the nations

Key Dispensational Emphases

- Literal interpretation of prophetic passages
- Future earthly kingdom centered in Jerusalem
- Israel's regathering and restoration
- The Millennial reign of Christ

Book of Daniel

Daniel combines historical narrative with prophetic revelation and is foundational to dispensational eschatology. Daniel lived during the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires and remained faithful to God while serving pagan rulers.

Major Themes

- **God's Sovereignty Over World Empires**
Daniel demonstrates that God raises up and removes kingdoms according to His purposes.
- **Faithfulness in a Pagan Culture**
Daniel and his companions modeled separation, obedience, prayer, and courage while living in exile.
- **The Times of the Gentiles**
Nebuchadnezzar's image represents successive Gentile empires:
 - Babylon
 - Medo-Persia
 - Greece
 - Rome
 - A future revived Roman system
- The stone that destroys the image represents Christ establishing His literal kingdom.
- **The Seventy Weeks Prophecy**
Daniel 9 is central to dispensational prophecy
 - The 70 weeks concern Israel and Jerusalem.
 - 69 weeks culminated in Messiah's first coming.
 - A prophetic gap exists between the 69th and 70th weeks (the present Church Age).
 - The future 70th week is the Tribulation period.
 - The Antichrist will make and break a covenant with Israel.
 - Christ returns at the end to establish the Millennial Kingdom.
- **Future Resurrection and Kingdom**
Daniel predicts bodily resurrection, final judgment, and everlasting kingdom blessings.

Key Dispensational Emphases

- Literal fulfillment of prophecy
- Future Tribulation period

- Distinction between Israel and the Church
- Premillennial return of Christ
- Christ's earthly kingdom reign

Andy Woods, a proponent of classical dispensationalism, argues that consistent grammatical-historical hermeneutics (LGH)—often called literal interpretation—is the "cause" and dispensational distinctives are the "effect." Woods posits that dispensationalism is not a theological system imposed upon scripture, but rather a system that naturally arises out of a consistent, literal interpretation of the entire Bible.

Theology Derived from Text, Not Grid: Woods emphasizes that dispensationalism does not start with a pre-existing idea of the Israel/Church distinction. Rather, it starts with a commitment to literal interpretation, which subsequently reveals that distinction.

Consistent Application: Woods defines dispensationalism as "more to do with commitment to a particular hermeneutic than it does to adherence to a theological model". This means applying the same literal, historical-grammatical method to prophecy that one would apply to historical narratives.

Theological Implications (The "Why"): Israel and the Church: Consistent literal interpretation leads an interpreter to see that God has separate plans for Israel and the church. Future Prophecy: This approach requires taking prophetic, millennial, and apocalyptic passages in their ordinary sense, rejecting allegorical interpretations that often blur these distinctions.

Avoiding "Suspended" Hermeneutics: Woods argues against using "genre" (e.g., in apocalyptic literature) as an excuse to suspend literal interpretation, as he believes this allows for reading foreign ideas into the text.

Woods argues that when one interprets Scripture literally in a consistent manner (using grammatical-historical, or "literal," interpretation), it inevitably produces a system that distinguishes between Israel and the church and anticipates a future millennial kingdom.