

The Exile

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The exile was the greatest crisis for the people of God during the Old Testament period. In the years before the exile multiple reformations and periods of spiritual renewal occurred in Judah followed by spiritual collapse and backsliding. Prophet after prophet came to the people warning them of the destruction to come, but consistent repentance in Judah was absent. As God withdrew His hand of protection from His people, the mighty empires of the ancient Near East trimmed down the land and people of Judah until complete destruction came in 586 BC. The exile seemed to be the end of the kingdom of God and the failure of God's covenant with the patriarchs. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the events leading to the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the exile.

SCRIPTURE READING

1 and 2 Chronicles

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the geo-political significance of Palestine.
2. To assess Judah's military threats after the fall of Israel in 722 BC.
3. To identify the pattern of spiritual reformation and backsliding characteristics of Judah in the years before the exile.

QUOTATIONS

The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.

—2 Chronicles 36:15–16

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The exile was the greatest crisis for the people of God during the Old Testament period.
 - Old Testament history is divided into the pre-exilic era, the exile, and the post-exilic era.
- B. The northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC.
- C. The southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians in 586 BC.
- D. The years between 722 BC and 586 BC were years of great crisis in Palestine.
 1. Palestine was of enormous geo-political significance in the ancient world.
 2. Located between the edge of the Mediterranean Sea and the Fertile Crescent, Palestine served as a land bridge between the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe.
 3. Israel and Judah were caught in the middle of the great campaigns among the larger empires of the Syrians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians.
- E. The collapse of the northern kingdom of Israel left Judah without a buffer zone against the raids of the Assyrians.
 - The defeat of the Syrians in the north left Judah without another ally.
- F. Sennacherib of Assyria raided towns in Judah and laid siege against Jerusalem as early as 705 BC.
 - God intervened for His people in response to their repentance and prevented the fall of Jerusalem to the Assyrians.
- G. Multiple reformations and periods of spiritual renewal occurred during these years in Judah, followed by spiritual collapse and backsliding.
 1. Hezekiah led a spiritual reformation, but also formed an alliance with the king of Babylon for military protection.

-
2. The prophets condemned alliances with foreign nations because God was not being trusted to deliver His people, and the alliances with pagan nations led to pagan worship.
- H. Manasseh succeeded his father, Hezekiah, as king of Judah and became the most wicked king in the history of Judah.
1. He set up pagan images throughout the towns of Judah and within the temple of God itself.
 2. Manasseh was brought to repentance in his old age.
- I. Amon succeeded his father Manasseh as king of Judah and perpetuated his father's sins until his assassination.
- J. Josiah ascended to the throne of Judah in 637 BC and enacted the greatest period of reformation in the southern kingdom's history.
- K. "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. . . . And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left" (2 Kings 22:1-2).
1. Josiah ordered the rebuilding and repair of the temple which was damaged from several attacks against Jerusalem.
 2. A scroll was found in the temple which was probably a lost portion of the book of Deuteronomy.
- L. "When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, 'Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us'" (2 Kings 22:11-13).
1. The purity of worship was a focal point of Josiah's reformation.
 2. The loss of purity in morality is usually preceded by a loss of purity in worship.
- M. The Battle of Megiddo occurred in 608 BC.
1. Pharaoh Neco of Egypt was on a campaign towards the Euphrates River, but Josiah took his army out to meet him.

2. Josiah insisted on fighting the Egyptians and was killed.
 3. The prophet Jeremiah lamented the death of Josiah.
- N. Jehoahaz was supposed to reign after Josiah, but Pharaoh Neco deposes him and replaces him with King Jehoiakim.
- Jehoiakim continued the wickedness of Judah by even burning one of the prophetic scrolls of Jeremiah.
- O. The Battle of Carchemish occurred in 605 BC between the Babylonians and the Egyptians.
1. Nebuchadnezzar deported a portion of Judah's population as part of his victory in the area.
 2. Daniel and his companions were most likely part of this deportation.
- P. King Jehoiachin of Judah was deported to Babylon in 597 BC along with the nobles, craftsmen, and elite of Judah.
1. The poor and peasants were left in the land of Judah.
 2. The prophet Ezekiel was brought to Babylon in this deportation.
- Q. Zedekiah became the last king of Judah as a puppet king of the Babylonians.
1. Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and his reign was terminated.
 2. Zedekiah's sons were murdered in front of him, he was blinded, and then he was deported to Babylon.
 3. The city of Jerusalem and the temple of the Lord were destroyed and left in ruins.
- R. The exile lasted from 586 BC to 536 BC.
1. The people were taken from their land and lived as captives in Babylon.
 2. The Persians soon defeated the Babylonians, and under a decree from King Cyrus approximately 50,000 Jews, were allowed to return and rebuild their country.

BIBLE STUDY

1. The northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. Read 2 Kings 17:7–23. Summarize the author's explanation of the reason for Israel's judgment.

2. Read the descriptions of the Israelite kings in 1 Kings 15:26, 34; 16:25, 30; 22:52; and 2 Kings 3:2. How is this description similar to the description of the Israelites found throughout the book of Judges (See Judges 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). What does God do in response to the action described in the book of Judges? How is this judgment similar to the punishment that befell Israel at the time of the exile?
3. When Moses described the curses that would fall upon Israel if they broke the covenant, exile was listed among the judgments. Read Leviticus 26:33 and Deuteronomy 28:64. How is the judgment of exile described by Moses?
4. Read Ezekiel 37:1–14. What imagery does Ezekiel use to describe Israel in exile? What imagery does Ezekiel use to describe Israel's restoration from exile?
5. Read the record of Hezekiah's invitation in 2 Chronicles 30:1–31:1, which was written after 722 BC. According to verse 6, did any Israelites remain in the north after the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians? Read Luke 2:36. To what tribe is Anna said to belong? Is this a northern tribe or a southern tribe? Read Acts 26:7. What does Paul say here to Agrippa concerning the tribes of Israel? In light of all these texts, were the ten northern tribes of Israel completely lost in 722 BC?

DISCUSSION

1. Most of the prophetic books of the Bible center around the events of Israel's exile and restoration. Some are pre-exilic prophets; some are exilic prophets; and some are post-exilic prophets. What does this fact reveal about the importance of the exile in the history of Israel?
2. The books of Chronicles were written after the exile to Israelites who were returning to the land or who had already returned to the land. The Chronicler's objective is to demonstrate continuity with the past. Given this, how do the genealogies in the first chapters of 1 Chronicles contribute to the author's objective? Would post-exilic Jews have considered these chapters as dry as many Christians today consider them to be? Explain.
3. The Old Testament occasionally describes the restoration of Israel from exile in terms of a new exodus (see Hos. 2:14–15; Isa. 10:24–26; 11:15–16; 41:18–19; 43:19–21; 44:3–4; Jer. 16:14–15; Ezek. 20:33–38). Do the gospels present Jesus as the one who leads the new exodus? If so, is there a sense in which the exile continued even after many Israelites returned from Babylon? How does Nehemiah 9:36, written after the return to the land, contribute to the discussion? Is there any sense in which Israel continues in exile after rejecting Jesus' claims?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Allen, Leslie. *1, 2 Chronicles*

Pratt, Richard. *1, 2 Chronicles*