

“The Exile”

A Walk Through the Old Testament - Class 20

Various Scriptures

Dr. Jeff Stivason

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Jeff: Well, why don't we get started today? And we are going to jump right into looking at *The Exile*, the period of time we're in now. There's going to be that little refresher on that in a second. Why don't we just pray a second?

Our heavenly Father, thank You for this day. And thank You for the Word, and for the time that we have to be in it. Father, we're thankful for the Holy Spirit who inspired it and who continues to illuminate it to our hearts. We thank You for His work in us even now. We pray that You'll bless us and strengthen us by Your grace. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. So we are looking at that time in the life of Israel that is known as the Exile. It is a couple hundred years after the people of Israel have been living in the land. I hate to go through all of this again. But let's just think about this for a minute because I'm eventually going to have us think about this under a particular section called *the Covenantal Section*.

But if you'll remember, the Garden of Eden is a decisive time. It's in the Garden of Eden that Adam is created, placed in a covenant with God, given a task or a precept to follow. If he follows that precept he'll receive the promised reward. If he does not follow the precept he will receive the penalty of the covenant. And the penalty of the covenant was exile. And he obviously did not listen to God. He was obviously exiled from the garden. And having been exiled from the garden God could have left him in his fallen state, but did not leave him in his fallen state, but indeed redeemed him.

At this point let me simply say that you can sum up the Bible under two heads: *Adam I* and *Adam II*. Now it's under Adam II that we find that the covenant of grace is unfolded. And under Adam II we find that this covenant of grace has five exfoliations.

Think about a rose. It's one flower and yet it has various petals. And in the springtime it unfolds, it exfoliates. So it's like a flower. And these different exfoliations begin to unfold in history. And the very first exfoliation is that covenant with Noah. And that covenant with Noah is the covenant whereby God says, "I'm going to preserve the earth. I'm going to promise that I will not destroy it. I will keep it."

And so we find that it's actually a really interesting covenant, because when you look at Genesis 6-9 one of the things that you find is that you find God using words like *reaffirm* and *re-cut* that covenant. And what is He doing? He's actually saying, "I'm reaffirming the covenant I made with creation at the very beginning." In other words, this isn't something new. "I'm reaffirming what I promised to do from the beginning, prior to the Fall."

Then after the Noahic covenant what do we find? We find the stage of redemption. If you think about it like this, think about the stage of redemption. It's preserved. And then God calls out the first actors upon the stage. And that's the family of Abraham.

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And this is a wonderful time in the covenant of grace. Why? Because it's here that we find reiterated to Abraham the gospel that was given to fallen Adam in the garden. In Genesis chapter 3 God says to Adam, "I will send a Redeemer." And that Redeemer will come, and though His heel will be struck by the serpent, the Redeemer's foot will crush the head of the evil one. So the gospel is given in Genesis 3:15. And here we find it reiterated to Abraham. And it's reiterated in such a way as to help us to understand that this is going to be a worldwide solution to the problem of the Fall. And so the promise given to Abraham is that he will be given a land. He will be made a nation to fill that land. And that nation filling that land will then be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. And so that's the promise.

And then just so you know, in Galatians 3 what Abraham was given in Genesis 12 is called *the gospel*. That's the gospel promise.

And after Abraham what happens? Well, you know the story of Genesis unfolds. It's really a great story. But really it's the story about how the Abrahamic covenant begins to unfold.

For instance, when you think about this, Abraham gives way to Isaac and Jacob. Jacob has twelve sons, and what happens? Joseph is sold into slavery. And what's happening here? What's happening is that God is moving the family of Abraham into Egypt so that they might be protected so as to become a great nation. And then when they do become a great nation God moves them into the land of promise. And that's what the book of Exodus is about.

And once they get moved into the land of promise, what happens? God gives them a code whereby to live. And that is the Mosaic covenant. He says to them, "I want you to understand that when you go into this land you will not live like the pagans who are in that land. You are a redeemed people. I've bought you; I purchased you. This is how you are to live."

It's like your father tells you. "Now you know you are a." And then you fill in the last name. "And therefore, when you go to your friend's house, you act like a," and then you fill in the last name, right? "Otherwise, you're going to wish you had, because I'm going to tan your butt, you know?" (*Laughter*) Some of these younger people may not understand that expression "tan your butt." (*Laughter*) I'll have to explain that later in more detail at another time. (*Laughter*) Anyway, I digress. No, you don't need it, Kirk. (*Laughter*) No, go ahead.

Kirk Ellerbusch: When you talk about a redeemed people,--

Jeff: That's good. I thought you were going to talk about tanning your butt.

(*Laughter*) You're talking about a redeemed people. Go ahead.

Kirk: Could you explain exactly what you mean by that? Are they saved for eternity?

Jeff: All right. What you need to understand is that what we are seeing in the Old Testament are shadows and types of what is to come. And so God is dealing with a church under age in the nation of Israel. And we see a lot of things in that nation that get unpacked as you go. So what we are to understand is this, at least in this regard.

You find this in Romans chapter 5. This is one aspect of Kirk's question, one aspect of it. So what did we have in the Garden? We had in the Garden God creating a world,

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making a garden, making Adam outside of the garden, placing him in it, giving him a law. He didn't keep it. He expelled him from the garden.

Now what do we find? We find here in the Mosaic covenant that God is repeating this story. He creates a people. He gives them a land. He puts them into the land and gives them a law. They don't keep it. They're expelled from it.

So what is God doing? Well, God is teaching these people various things along the way. And one of the things that He's teaching the people of Israel through the law is the need for the promise that He gave to Abraham, the promise of the gospel.

So when I say that these people are saved, what I'm talking about is I'm talking about a nation that He promised to bring into the Promised Land that would, going backwards, look like Adam in the garden being expelled from the garden. And that's exactly what we're finding with Israel. They're created outside the land. They're created in Egypt and brought into the land. They don't listen to the law. They're expelled from the land. It's just like Adam.

Now what we're doing is, we're asking the question that we've asked a number of times already. Why the law? And the answer to that is to show the need for the Abrahamic promise, which is the gospel.

So is everyone in Israel saved? No. Are there saved people in Israel? Yes. But is everyone in Israel personally saved? No. But is everyone corporately saved from Egypt? Yes. Everyone who leaves Egypt is saved from Egypt. So there's a double meaning to this all along. Does that help, or does that muddy the waters? All right, it's okay.

All right, so Moses. And then after Moses what do we find? We find *the Davidic covenant*. The Davidic covenant highlights something that is in the Mosaic, and I talked to you about this when we went through the Kings. And I said, “Why the Kings?”, you know? And I said to you, “Why the Kings?” And it's the very question we ask when we ask the question, why the law? The law drives us to the promise. All of these bad kings that we see drive us to the one King promised in Exodus 18, who is Jesus. And Jesus is the fulfillment of this covenant.

In other words, think about this. Think about it like this. The promise given to Abraham is fulfilled in Jesus. That promise was that God was going to make a Seed, to give them a land so that they could be a blessing to the nations. Jesus is that Seed who is the King. Galatians says He is the Seed. And what? He is given authority in all heaven and earth. Why? To be a blessing to the nations. So Jesus is the fulfillment of all of this.

And what is it that He came to do? He came to live an obedient life. He came to die a death on the cross. Why? So that by faith in His death upon the cross, bearing the curse on our behalf, would be the basis for the forgiveness of our sins. His obedient life would be the basis for the imputation of righteousness in us as we stand in Christ—salvation. That was the way anyone was saved all along.

You know, for instance, the people in this day and age were saved by looking to the promise of the gospel as they had it in that time, right?, and so on. Is that good? All right.

Brave Man: Jeff, before you move on, can you go back to slide 1? Can you move back your slide up one? There you go, that picture. That is your diagram.

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Jeff: Let me get sweaty first. (*Laughter*) All right. So next week’s reading is Esther. Take a read through Esther.

Today we’re going to do what for us is a very short outline. We’re going to talk about some introductory things. I want to talk about *the Old Testament church in exile*. And then I want to talk just briefly about *the decline and fall of Babylon*.

So let’s just recap for a minute. You remember that Assyria was the power of the day. I’m going to erase this for just a second and draw up our map here. I think this is helpful. So this is the sea. This is the land of Israel. Here’s Egypt down here. Here is Damascus. Here is Assyria. And here is Babylon. And for later reference here are the Medes and the Persians.

Now you’ll remember that Assyria was the power of the day. But Babylon was always the thorn in the flesh of Assyria. Eventually Babylon overthrows Assyria. Egypt comes out to help Assyria. And guess what? They at first take Judah as spoils. Assyria loses the day, but Egypt wins Judah.

Now that doesn’t happen for long, because what happens is that Babylon says, “Oh, no you don’t!” Babylon comes out and defeats Egypt. And so it takes possession of Judah.

Now when they do that it’s at the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. And Judah becomes the spoils of Babylon. So now they’ve traded hands. They were in the hands of Assyria and they’re in the hands of Egypt. Now they’re in the hands of Babylon. And God is simply bringing about the curse of the covenant on them.

And then what happens is that Babylon sets up, remember, three kings. And these three kings are really puppet kings. You remember that just as there was an anti-Assyrian party in power that didn’t like Assyria, that always wanted the king to stand up against the Assyrians, there was also a pro-Assyrian party who always wanted the king to sort of buddy up to Assyria. The same with Babylon—an anti-Babylonian party and a pro-Babylonian party. And the anti-Babylonians were in power most of the time, despite the fact that Babylon placed them in power. They didn’t realize the politics going on in Israel at the time.

But eventually Zedekiah, who is part of the anti-Babylonian party, rebels. You know, this is always funny. I mean, you know, there’s this wee little tiny nation, and Babylon is this enormous power. And Zedekiah says, “We can take ‘em!” (*Laughter*) You know, he’s somebody who likes to get on the playground, right? He was constantly being wuffed on and always thought in the end that he was going to win. And I guess he does win because of the Lord. But at this particular time he’s not with the Lord and he does not win. And so Babylon comes and Babylon sacks Jerusalem under Zedekiah and takes them into slavery and exiles them from the land.

The covenantal view is what I wanted to go through, and I just put it in a little earlier just so you could see that what’s happening here is that God, all the way back under Moses under this picture said, “I’m going to put you into this land. But if you don’t do what I’ve told you to do, if you act like the pagans, you’re out.” And that’s exactly what happens to them. They are receiving the curses of the covenant right now in our time of

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study. So that’s just a brief introduction. Any questions about that before we move on to what we’re going to look at today? Yes?

Brian Whittington: Jeff, real fast, you referenced something in Exodus 18. Could you clarify that a bit?

Jeff: Yes. Exodus 18 is the promise of the king. Oh, you know what? It’s not Exodus, is it? It’s Deuteronomy.

Don Maurer: Are you referring to the Prophet?

Jeff: Is it the Prophet in Exodus 17, or is it Deuteronomy 17?

Don: Deuteronomy 18:15-18. The Prophet, like unto Moses.

Jeff: I’m going back to Deuteronomy. I’m not seeing it.

Brian: 17:14,

Jeff: Oh, yes!

Brian: In Deuteronomy 18:18 it says, *“The LORD will raise up for you a Prophet.”*

Jeff: Yes. Don, where is the king?

Brian: 17:14.

Don Maurer: Deuteronomy 17.

Jeff: All right. So it’s not Exodus 17, it’s Deuteronomy 17. This is in Deuteronomy 17:14. *“When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it, and then say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,’ you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose, one from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you who is not your brother.”* And then he must not acquire these things—horses and women and excessive gold, and so on. And then he goes on to say in verse 18 that he is to write the law, that he is to make a copy of it to be approved by the Levites, and he is to live by it all the days of his life.

This is interesting, right?, because the people wanted a king, right? The people wanted a king, but what was the problem? The king they wanted was like the other nations. We’re leaving a lot out, but that’s a great question.

Brian: Thank you.

Jeff: Any others that Don can answer? *(Laughter)*

All right. So *the church in exile*. Think about that for a minute. I want us to think about life in Judah. I want us to think about life from different segments at this point. And if you would, just go with me to the book of Lamentations. I just want to read select passages from it. It’s right after the book of Jeremiah; in fact, Jeremiah is the author. I want you to listen to some of these passages. This is written about the siege of Jerusalem. This was written about the time that the Babylonians were sacking it. Just listen to this.

“Zion stretches out her hands,

But there is none to comfort her.

The LORD has commanded against Jacob

That his neighbors should be exposed.

Jerusalem has become a filthy thing among them.

The LORD is in the right,

For I have rebelled against His word.

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*But hear, all you peoples, and see my suffering.
The young women and my young men
Have gone into captivity.
I called them my lovers, but they deceived me;
My priests and elders perished in the city
While they sought food to revive their strength.
Look, O LORD, for I am in distress;
My stomach churns; my heart is wrung within me,
Because I have been very rebellious,
In the street of the sword of the reeds,
In the house that is like death.”*

Go to chapter 2. Look at verse 4 and following.

*“He has bent his bow like an enemy;
With His right hand it is set like a bow;
He has killed all those
Who were delightful in our eyes,
In the tents of the daughter of Zion
He has poured out His fury like fire;
The LORD has become like an enemy;
He has swallowed up Israel.
He has swallowed up all its palaces;
He has laid it in ruins and strongholds.
He has multiplied in the daughter of Zion
Mourning and lamentation.”*

Jump over to verse 18.

*“Their heart cried to the LORD:
O wall of the daughter of Zion,
Let tears stream down like a torrent day and night.
Give yourself no rest, your eyes no respite.
Arise, cry out in the night,
At the beginning of the night watches.
Pour out your heart like water
Before the presence of the LORD.
Lift your hands to Him
For the lives of your children,
Who faint for hunger at the head of every street.
Look, O LORD, and see!
To whom have you dealt thus?”*

Here it is. Listen to this.

*“Should women eat the fruit of their womb,
The children of their tender care?
Should priest and prophet be killed
In the sanctuary of the LORD?”*

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*In the dust of the streets
Lie the young and the old.
My young women and my young men
Have fallen by the sword.
You have killed them in the day of Your anger,
Slaughtering without pity.”*

Look at 46 and 47 of chapter 3.

*“All our enemies open their mouths against us.
Fear and a snare have come upon us;
Devastation and destruction.”*

You know, the wonderful thing about this is that it’s in that chapter that God says, “*My mercies are new every morning.*” You know, when we look at a passage like this first of all we have to remember that it’s in a particular context. This is the fall of Jerusalem. That’s first and foremost what this text is about.

You’re irresponsible if you open Lamentations and say, “This is a word to me.” This is not a word to *you*. This is a word first and foremost to the people who were in Jerusalem who needed to repent.

But it *is* a word to you and me.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And the word that it is to you and me is this. And you know, this is how the Word is best applied. When you understand it in its context then its application is rich, right? Because when you think of the devastation of Jerusalem *because of their sin*, and God says in that same chapter, chapter 3, “*My mercies are new every morning.*” Then all of a sudden you realize that His mercies are new to me every morning in the midst of the devastation of my own sinfulness, my own bad choices, my own reluctance to obey. And if His mercies are new every morning to them, then they’re new to me, right? And that’s the beauty about thinking about a text in its context and then making application. Don, go ahead.

Don Maurer: Yes. People do that too with I think it’s Jeremiah 29:13.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeremiah 29:11,ESV. “*‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”*

Jeff: Right.

Don: They do the same thing to that. Now there is comfort for us. But you’ve got to keep it in it’s context.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. Okay. So how many are left in Judah? Because Babylon has come; they’ve sacked the city. About twenty thousand remain in the land of Judah—not many. And many of them are farmers. There is evidence that they set up a local government within the confines and the parameters of what Babylon will allow.

Judaism continues to be propagated in the synagogue. However, in the main during this period of time, what we have from this area of the world is pretty much silence. There’s not a lot that we can know about what’s happening in Judah during the time of exile in Babylon. We’re just not told.

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But I'll tell you this. This is what we're told. And you know, foolish people never cease to exist. And there were foolish people who were living in Judah at this time. Now I want you to see this. It's in Ezekiel 33.

Ezekiel was a transitional prophet, transitional because he was free prior to Babylon's raiding of Jerusalem. But in an earlier siege he's taken into captivity. We'll talk about that in a minute. But look at what is said here. This is verse 21 of Ezekiel 33.

“In the twelfth year of our exile, a fugitive from Jerusalem came to me and said, ‘The city has been struck down.’ Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came. And He opened my mouth by the time the man came to me in the morning. So my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute.”

Now listen to this; this is great. *“The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel keep saying.’”* Now this is what the people in Judah keep saying. *“Abraham was only one man, yet he got possession of the land. But we are many. The land is surely given us to possess.”*

So do you see what they're saying? They're saying, “Abraham was only one guy and God gave him this whole thing. We're okay. We're twenty thousand! We can take it!” (*Laughter*) That's what they're saying.

Verse 25. *“Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD God, ‘You who eat the flesh with the blood, and lift up your eyes to your idols and shed blood, shall you then possess the land?’”* In other words, what God is saying is this, and it reads more like this in the Hebrew. “Fat chance!” (*Laughter*) “This isn't about your power; this isn't about your life. This is about what I say. This is about the curse you're reaping for your disobedience.”

Okay, so you have that going on. Isn't that funny? You have that going on in the land, in the midst of this really, really desperate time.

How about *life in Babylon*? The best of Judah go. You can understand this. You know what I'm saying to you. You know what they're saying in Judah. “The worst of the crop is going. We can take them!” The best go into captivity. The best go to Babylon.

There doesn't seem to be any anti-Semitism in Babylon. They're allowed to flourish. And this is where Don brought up Jeremiah 29. In Jeremiah 29 there is actually this wonderful passage where God says, “Look! You're not going anywhere for 70 years. So settle down. Plant gardens, build houses. Pray for the best of the city. Live there because this is your lot. This is what was behind door #2; you chose it.” (*Laughter*) “Okay? So live there.”

And this is what God was saying. Jeremiah 29:11—*“I know the plans I have for you”*—is for the people of Babylon. Now it's for us secondarily. But oftentimes we see texts like this and say, “Oh, this is for me.” But you see the richness of it when you place it in its context.

These are people in a foreign land, exiled for their sin. And God is telling them, “Look, I love you. And I know the plans I have for you. So do what I'm telling you. You didn't do what I told you before; that's why you're here. Do what I'm telling you now.” Okay?

And then Judaism thrives. And think about this. This is the best of the crop. They seem to do what God tells them to do, and Judaism actually thrives. Have you ever heard of

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The Babylonian Talmud? It was written in Babylon! There were all kinds of Babylonian texts of the Old Testament that were copied in Babylon.

There is a Jewish tradition that really originates in Babylon. And so there’s a whole vital life of Judaism that grows up in Babylon during this time. So Judaism really thrives there.

The problem is that the people get comfortable with that life. And when it’s time to go home, many don’t want to go. We’ll see that in due time.

What’s the view of Ezekiel? Ezekiel has quite a unique view. He’s freed before the Exile. He goes into exile with Jehoiachin, I believe. And so he goes into exile in Babylon before Jerusalem falls. He warns Jerusalem though. “This is what’s going to happen.” And you see that warning in these texts. (*A list of texts follows.*)

Transcriber’s Note: Ezekiel 4:1-3, NKJV. *“You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem. Lay siege against it, build a siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around. Moreover take for yourself an iron plate, and set it as an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face against it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel.”*

Ezekiel 5:1-4. *“And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber’s razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take scales to weigh and divide the hair. You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel.”*

Ezekiel 7:23-27.

*“Make a chain,
For the land is filled with crimes of blood,
And the city is filled with violence.
Therefore I will bring the worst of the Gentiles,
And they will possess their houses;
I will cause the pomp of the strong to cease,
And their holy places shall be defiled.
Destruction comes;
They will seek peace, but there shall be none.
Disaster will come upon disaster,
And rumor will be upon rumor.
Then they will seek a vision from a prophet;
But the law will perish from the priest,
And counsel from the elders.
The king will mourn,
The prince will be clothed with desolation,
And the hands of the common people will tremble.*

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*I will do to them according to their way,
And according to what they deserve I will judge them;
Then they shall know that I am the LORD!”*

Jeff: Texts like that. He warns the people. But I’ll tell you what. Here’s a disturbing chapter. It’s Ezekiel chapter 8.

In Ezekiel chapter 8 this is where Ezekiel talks to the elders. And he tells them. He says, “Hey, look what’s behind that wall. Dig behind that wall.” And he digs, and he sees every abomination behind the wall.

And what’s the idea there? The idea there, what he’s saying, is that these people are like whitewashed tombs, that behind the wall of their heart is idolatry. It’s wicked, it’s ugly. This is what’s happening in the hearts of these people that you’re surrounded by, even these religious people that you’re surrounded by. And that’s why you’re going into exile.

And then look at chapter 10. In chapter 10 the glory departs from Israel. It departs from the temple. And it sort of rises and it sort of goes to the hill, the Mount of Olives, and then takes off. God is basically saying, “I’m deserting it; I’m leaving.”

This isn’t the first time that God has done this. Remember what God did during the time of the Judges? He went into self-exile in the land of Philistia. Remember that? Why? Because Eli and his sons were wicked and did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD. So God exiled Himself. Well, here God is exiling Himself again; He’s departing.

And then notice. This is one of the saddest stories in the Old Testament. God says to Ezekiel, “Ezekiel, here’s the deal. What I’m going to do is, I’m going to make your marriage to your wife a sign. Your wife is going to die. And I don’t want you to mourn for her, because I want that to be a sign to the people of Israel that My wife is dead, and I’m not mourning for her. Israel is My wife. She’s dead. I’m not crying about it.”

I mean, can you imagine that prophet? Because God is going to strike His wife dead as a sign. I just think that’s staggering.

And then Ezekiel 37. Ezekiel 37 is that promise of the Valley of Dry Bones. This is where Ezekiel goes to the Valley of Dry Bones. It has bones. And God says, “Go! Now I want you to preach to the bones.” And he begins to preach to the bones.

And then He says, “I want you to speak to the wind.” What is He saying? He’s saying, “I want you to pray to the Spirit.”

So what do we see in Ezekiel 37? We see preaching to dead bones and praying to the Spirit. And what happens. All of a sudden he hears a rattle and a crackle. And then the bones begin to form. And then sinew covers them, flesh covers them. And then the *nephesh*, the breath of life, is breathed into them, and they live. And He says, “This is what I’m going to do.”

This is a great picture of what preaching the gospel is all about, right?—preaching to dry bones. And God says, “This is My work and this is what I’m going to do. Just like I didn’t leave Adam in his sin, I’m not going to leave Israel where they are either.”

Now what about a view from Daniel? Daniel is great: an able scholar, a young man. He’s doing what he can.

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You know, oftentimes I think we understand this as “I’m not going to eat from the king’s table” a bit wrongly. The text says, *“He would not defile himself.”* I think that another way to read that is that he would not redeem himself. In other words, this isn’t Daniel necessarily saying, “Nope, I’m sticking to the Jewish law at this point. And I’m not giving on it, because your food is sacrificed to idols.”

I mean, as soon as I hear that my question is this. I want to say, “Well, didn’t the idols of Babylon like veggies? And so the veggies weren’t offered and sacrificed to idols in Babylon, and he knew that, so he said, ‘I’m just going to eat veggies?’” That joke did not go over at all. *(Laughter)* Anyway, I think what he’s saying is that “I’m going to make a conscious choice to fast and only eat vegetables. And if God saves me and causes me to prosper, then it will be God who causes me to prosper and not this king.” I think that’s the idea.

This is the great story of the book, what’s happening in Babylon. I think this is really important, because though God is telling them to settle down, get a wife, have a family, plant a garden and be prosperous, I think that we have to understand that though there was no direct anti-Semitism, there was, in fact, active paganism and idolatry. And so you get a king like Nebuchadnezzar. He has a dream. And he says, “You know what? I don’t want to be just the gold part of the body, but I want to be the gold body.”

And so he makes a gold statue. “There are going to be no other kingdoms, just me. And everybody is going to bow down to me.” And so there is this kind of pressure that exists in Babylon. And people need to *“choose this day whom you will serve.”*

Don Nemit: Amen.

Jeff: And the three friends choose. And they end up finding themselves in the fiery furnace with One like the Son of God. It’s a great story; lots there about anticipation of redemption in the Son. “Though you walk through the fire, I’ll be with you,” that sort of imagery. But it reminds us that it’s not just a cushion of joy in Babylon, it really isn’t.

Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar have sort of a battle of who’s really in charge with Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Remember this? And then eventually Nebuchadnezzar goes out. He’s overlooking his gardens and he says, “Look at all I made!” And remember that he’s struck with insanity. And then he comes to.

And when he comes to, the question is this. Is Nebuchadnezzar converted at that point? I’m not going to spend time with that, but you can think about that if you’d like.

What about life in Egypt? Egypt is a very small community, a very bad situation. If you look in Jeremiah 44, one of the things that you discover is that life in Egypt was—well, I won’t read this. But in Jeremiah 44:1-4 the people had committed idolatry.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeremiah 44:1-4, NKJV. *“The word that came to Jeremiah concerning the Jews who dwell in the land of Egypt, who dwell at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘You have seen all the calamity that I have brought on Jerusalem and on all the cities of Judah; and behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them, because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke Me to anger; in that they went to burn incense and to serve other gods whom they did not know, they nor you*

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nor your fathers. However I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, ‘Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!’”

Jeff: The people had committed idolatry and provoked the Lord to anger. And so it looks like what we find is this little group that is still left in Egypt because of the Egyptians and the Assyrians, the Assyrians falling and Judah becoming the spoils. You know, Babylon didn’t go into Egypt and say, “Okay. Everybody that was in Judea, come with me.” There were some that remained in Egypt. This small group that remained was not a healthy group. Jeremiah in chapter 44 says that there would be a remnant saved. But it would be a remnant because it wasn’t a vital community.

I want to say something about *the decline and fall of Babylon*. But do you have any questions about this?

Sig Tragard: I was curious as to how you might characterize what it was like when the glory departed. Was there this vacuum, like the sun no longer gave warmth, or—

Jeff: The glory cloud lifts up. The glory cloud is basically what you see under the Mosaic covenant. It comes to rest on the tent of meeting. It’s during the time of Solomon. The glory cloud descends on the temple. It’s the glory cloud. And so this visible cloud of glory, God’s presence, lifts up from the temple and departs.

Sig: So there was an awareness among the people that God was no longer with them.

Jeff: Oh yes.

Sig: But God is always everywhere. That’s sort of an oxymoron, right? That can’t really happen.

Jeff: Yes, but think about it. God is everywhere, but His saving presence isn’t everywhere, right? I mean, God’s presence is everywhere. But God’s presence is manifested in various ways to different people, right? Some people just experience His displeasure at this point, and some people experience His saving graces. The struggle is that when you experience His saving graces, sometimes that doesn’t look a whole lot different from His displeasure because we’re walking in the humiliation of the Son at this time, right? We’re following the Lord in His humiliation, that in God’s timing we might be exalted.

But in the midst of our humiliation God manifests His presence to us by His Spirit at work in us. And so we have those delightful times where we know of God’s presence in a way that the world wouldn’t possibly understand, His presence in the midst of our difficulty. So the world looking at us would say, “What difference is your life compared to mine? It looks like God’s displeasure is on you as well as it is on me.” But they don’t understand that we’re being shaped and formed and fashioned in Christ’s own image through the walk that we’re experiencing. It’s like our battle. All right?

Okay, so let’s think about this for a minute. I want to go through this fairly quickly because I know we’re running out of time. Nebuchadnezzar dies in 562. Remember, 586 was the time of the sack of Jerusalem. So you count backwards and you lead up to 0 in the B.C. period, right? His son Ebal-Merodak takes power in 2 Kings 25-27. He seems to have something of a heart to him. He’s an interesting sort of fellow.

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But a few kings and conspiracies later a guy by the name of Nabonidus takes the throne. Nabonidus is a mama’s boy. And because of Mama’s influence he begins to worship the moon god Sin. He likes sin. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: No pun intended. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Now the problem is this; here’s the problem. The problem is that Marduk was the main deity of the Babylonians.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff shows a picture of Marmaduke.

Jeff: There’s a picture of Marduk. Oh, no! *(Laughter)* I’m sorry; that’s Marmaduke. *(Laughter)* This brings problems for Nabonidus. And so Nabonidus tries to replace Marduk, and decides after that fails that he’s going to go on a ten-year absence, and he does. And he goes on sort of a tour to refurbish temples. And so he’s absent.

So while he’s absent Belshazzar reigns. Now Belshazzar is not the man of the hour. For instance, if you go to Daniel chapter 5, this is where the handwriting is on the wall, so to speak. The hand appears, and we’ll talk about this in a minute. But Daniel comes and interprets the writing on the wall for Belshazzar.

But notice what Belshazzar says. It’s very interesting in 5:16. He says, *“Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and you shall be third ruler in the kingdom.”*

Why does he say that? Because he’s not the first ruler. Nabonidus is the first ruler. Nabonidus is the ruler, and he’s just off on a ten-year tour. He has absented himself from the throne. Belshazzar is in power. And so Belshazzar says, “If you can interpret this writing for me, you’ll be third in the kingdom.”

And so what is the writing on the wall in Daniel 5? *“Mene, mene, tekel, Upharsin.”* Never mind. I was going to make another joke. *(Laughter)* “Numbered, numbered, weighed and divided.” That very night the kingdom is taken from them by the Medes and the Persians.

Babylon falls in 539. And Cyrus the king of the Medes and Persians comes to power. Here’s what I want to say to you. This is 539. But in Isaiah 45, written back in the 700s, I want you to notice that God 200 years before this says this in Isaiah 45.

“Thus says the LORD to His anointed, Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him, and to lose the belts of kings. To open doors before him that gates may not be closed to him.”

Go to verse 13 and it says, *“I have stirred him up in righteousness. I will make all his ways level. He shall build My city and set My exiles free.”*

Two hundred years before they go into exile God says before it happens that there will be a man who comes to power. His name is Cyrus. And he will set the exiles free. That’s amazing! That’s our God.

Brian: Praise Him, praise Him!

Jeff: Well, there is One better than Cyrus, and that’s the Lord Jesus Christ who set us free from sin and death. Let’s pray then before we close out today.

Father, thank You for our time together. And we thank You not just for Cyrus but for the Lord Jesus, who is King of all. And Father, we’re thankful for the redemption that we

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have in Him. We're thankful for the fact that we are free in Him, and that we are members not of the kingdom of sin and darkness but of the kingdom of the Son of Your love, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.