

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

LESSON SERIES

Old Testament Survey - Unit V
The Books of Prophets during the Period of Exile
The Books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Lamentations and Obadiah

for

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BOOKS BY THE PROPHETS IN EXILE**THE PERIOD OF THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY
606 B.C. - 536 B.C.****INTRODUCTION**

The defeat of Jehoiakim and Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar 5 army in 606 B.C.,

II Kings chapter 24, marked the beginning of the final conquest and captivity of the Southern Kingdom. At this time the first installment of the population of Judah was carried away as captivities to Babylon. Included in the number was a youth, Daniel by name, who was to become famous in the court of the king in Babylon. Daniel was relocated in the city of Babylon.

The most famous of the captives was the prophet Ezekiel, just eight years after the deportation of Daniel. Whereas Daniel was placed in the city of Babylon; Ezekiel was located in the country, on the river Chebar, a great canal southwest of Babylon.

The other prophets who wrote during this period: Daniel, Jeremiah (Lamentations), and Obadiah.

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

Ezekiel, a young priest (1:3), although he never served in that office, and son of Buzi was carried away to Babylon with King Jehoiachin and his household, and with large numbers of others. With these Jewish exiles, he was settled by the river Chebar.

In the fifth year of his exile (1:2), Ezekiel had a vision of God and received a call to become a prophet among his people. His prophetic ministry thus begun, it was carried on for the next twenty-three at least, perhaps longer. The latest date in the book is the twenty-seventh year of the Captivity, 570 B.C. Thus, the book of Ezekiel was written in exile, by an exile, almost a thousand miles away from his native land.

Ezekiel was contemporary with Jeremiah and Daniel. Jeremiah was an old man who spoke to the remnant that remained in Judah; Daniel spoke to the court of the king of Babylon; Ezekiel spoke to the captives who had been brought to the rivers of Babylon. While the others were weeping when they remembered Zion, Ezekiel was exulting in the greatest visions ever given to any prophet.

Ezekiel began his ministry 5 years after his captivity when he was about 30 years old.

Ezekiel's message was the most spiritual of the prophets as he dealt more with the person of God. Someone has said, "**Ezekiel is the prophet of the Spirit, as Isaiah is the prophet of the Son, and Jeremiah the prophet of the Father.**"

During the first years of the captivity the false prophets said that the people would be returned to Jerusalem, and that the city would not be destroyed. It was not until the final

deportation, during Zedekiah's reign, that the city was destroyed - some twelve years after Ezekiel was taken captive.

Jeremiah had sent a message to Babylon (Jeremiah 29) saying that the city would be destroyed. Ezekiel confirmed this message, and warned the people that they must turn to God before they could return to Jerusalem.

In many ways he spoke in the darkest days of the nation. He stood at the bottom of the valley in the darkest corner. He had to meet the false hope given by the false prophets and the indifference and the despondency begotten in the days of sin and disaster. The people would not listen to him or to his message. Therefore, he resorted to a new method. Instead of speaking in parables, he acted them out (24:24). We have had "flagpole sitters" and "walkathons" and "sit-ins" in our day which attracted the attention of the public. This sort of thing was the method of Ezekiel and is indicative of a day of decay.

Ezekiel is the prophet of the glory of the Lord. Three prophets spoke when they were out of the land: Ezekiel, Daniel, and John. Each has written an apocalypse. Although they used highly symbolic language, they saw the brightest light and held the highest hope. Ezekiel saw the Shekinah glory of the Lord leave Solomon's Temple, and he saw the return of the glory of the Lord which was projected into the future during the Kingdom.

The meaning of Ezekiel is seen in the coming glory during the Kingdom. Ezekiel looked beyond the sufferings of Christ to "the glory that should follow" (I Peter 1:11).

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

I. Glory of the Lord; Commission of the Prophet, Chapters 1-7

1. Display of the Glory, chapter 1
2. Prophet's Call and Enduement with Power for the Office, chapter 2
3. Prophet's Preparation; Office as Watchman, chapter 3
4. Judgment of Jerusalem, chapter 4
5. Sign of Prophet Shaving Hair, chapter 5
6. Sword to Fall upon Jerusalem; Remnant to be Saved, chapter 6
7. Prophecy of Final Destruction of Jerusalem, chapter 7

II. Glory of the Lord; Complete Captivity of Jerusalem and Israel; Departure of the Glory, Chapters 8-24

1. Vision of the Glory; Temple Defilement by Idolatry Explains its Destruction, chapter 8
2. Shekinah Glory Prepares to Leave Temple, chapter 9
3. Shekinah Glory Fills Holy Place; Leaves the Temple, chapter 10

4. Prophecy against Rulers of Jerusalem, chapter 11
 5. Ezekiel Enacts Destruction of Jerusalem, chapter 12
 6. Prophecy against Pseudo-Prophets and Prophetesses, chapter 13
 7. Prophecy against Idolatry of Elders; Certain Destruction of Jerusalem, chapter 14
 8. Vision of the Vine. chapter 15
 9. Jerusalem Likened to Abandoned Baby Adopted by God, chapter 16
 10. Riddle of 2 Eagles, chapter 17
 11. Wages of Sin is Death, chapter 18
 12. Elegy of Jehovah over Princes of Israel, chapter 19
 13. Review of Sins of Nation; Future Judgment and Restoration, chapter 20
 14. King of Babylon to Remove Last King of Davidic Line Until Messiah Comes, chapter 21
 15. Review of Abomination of Jerusalem, chapter 22
 16. Parable of 2 sisters (Samaria and Jerusalem, chapter 23
 17. Parable of Boiling Pot, chapter 24
- III. Glory of the Lord; Judgment of Nations, Chapters 25-32
1. Against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, chapter 25
 2. Against Tyre, chapters 26-28
 3. Against Egypt, chapters 29-32
- IV. Glory of the Lord and Coming Kingdom, Chapters 33-48
1. Recommission of the Prophet, chapters 33-34
 2. Restoration of Israel, chapters 35-36
 3. Resurrection of Israel, chapter 37
 4. Repudiation of Gog and Magog, chapters 38,39
 5. Rebuilt Temple, chapters 40-42
 6. Return of Glory of the Lord, chapters 43-48

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The book of Daniel, like the book of Ezekiel, is a product of the exile.

We know more about Daniel, the man than we do of any other prophet. He gives us a personal account of his life from the time he was carried captive to Babylon in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, about 606 B.C. (1:1), until the first year of King Cyrus, about 536 B.C. (1:21). (See also 9:2). Daniel's life and ministry bridge the entire 70 years captivity. At the beginning of the book he is a boy in his teens; at the end he is an old man of fourscore or more years.

God's estimate of Daniel is given in chapter 10, verse 11, where we read "0 Daniel, a man greatly beloved". Three words characterize Daniel's life: purpose, prayer, and prophecy.

Daniel's story, much of it told in the first person, reads like the success story of Joseph in Egypt, or a modern story in the western world. After his special education to serve in the king's palace, he rose from one promotion to another until, because of his many years of faithfulness, he had won the high office of ruler over the province of Babylon and head over its wise men.

In this office, he was honored with the distinction of serving two great Empires - the Babylonian Empire until its fall in 538 B.C., and then the Empire of the Medes and Persians. The story makes it clear that only by the grace of God was he able to remain uncompromisingly faithful to his religion and to himself as a Jewish exile, even when he was face to face with death.

Three other young Jewish exiles - Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are associated with Daniel in his trials and successes, although they play supporting roles in this court drama.

The book of Daniel was written by Daniel between the third year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, about 606 B.C. (1:1) and the first year of Cyrus, about 536 B.C. (1:21). Most likely near the end of his Ministry.

It is written partly in the third person, and partly in the first, with extensive quotations as if the prophet were quoting himself.

This early dating of the book of Daniel has been maintained successfully by conservative scholars against the massed onslaught of liberalism. Porphyry, a heretic in the 3rd Century AD., declared the book of Daniel was a forgery, written during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees (170 B.C.) - almost 400 years after Daniel had lived.

However, the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament which was written prior to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes contains the book of Daniel. And the historian Josephus records an incident during the time of Alexander the Great, which supports the early authorship. Also Daniel's contemporary, Ezekiel, who was with the captives, made reference to the character of Daniel (Ezekiel 14:14,20), and to his office as prophet (Ezekiel 28:3), which is conclusive evidence against the theory that this book belongs to Maccabean period.

Finally, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of Daniel "the prophet" (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). His endorsement is valid and sufficient for every believer whether or not he has examined the argument of the critics.

Daniel is the prophet of "the times of the Gentiles." The major portion of his prophecies was directly concerned with the Gentile nations. The notable exception is Daniel 9 which concerns the 70 weeks, but here the emphasis is upon the interval after the cutting off of the Messiah between the 69th and 70th weeks. It is during this period that the city and sanctuary are destroyed, and the "times of the Gentiles" is identified as the time when "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles."

The message of Daniel is loud and clear: God presides over the history of the world. Gentile nations as well as the Jews have always been under His control and the succession of human empires is ordained by Him; He permits the pride and fury of oppressors for a time, but humbles them in the end and saves His own. God's kingdom will come at length and will endure forever and faithfulness and constancy to Him lead to a of reward and glory.

In short, the book teaches that God Himself is the sovereign ruler and will determine the destinies of both Babylonians and all gentile nations and the Jews, as outlined in the visions of His servant Daniel.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

The measure of the influence of the book of Daniel is seen in the use made of it in the New Testament.

Many of the saying of our Lord are based on the language of the book of Daniel, including the description of the great tree in the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:32; Mark 4:32; Luke 13:19); the pictures of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven (Matthew 24:30;26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62), and other expressions in the great discourse of the Last Things (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21).

The most notable parallels to be seen, however, are those between the apocalyptic visions of the book of Daniel and those of the Apostle John's Revelation. The Beast which John saw coming up out of the sea (Revelation 13:1) is a make-up of the Four Beasts which Daniel saw lifting their heads from the sea (Daniel 7:3-7). Daniel saw a lion with eagle's wings, a bear, a leopard with four wings and four heads, and a beast with ten horns. John combines the features of these four beasts into one beast.

For other parallels, compare these passages: Daniel 7:7 with Revelation 12:1-6; 7:13 with 1:7; 7:19 with 1:14; 7:7, 20 with 5:5-7; 7:9, 22 with 20:4; 8:10 with 12:4; 12:4 with 22:10-15.

The last vision of Daniel (chapters 10-12) suggests at once to us two other famous visions of the Future Time, both in the New Testament. Jesus in Matthew 24 prophesied the signs which would take place before the End, and His Second Coming, and quoted from the prophet Daniel (24:15).

The other famous vision of the approaching End of Time is given in the Book of Revelation, the vision of the Seven Seals, chapters 4 to 8:5.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

I. The Historic Night with Prophetic Light, Chapters 1-6

1. Decline of Judah; Fall of Jerusalem. Daniel Taken Captive to Babylon; His decision to be True to God, chapter 1.D
2. Dream of Nebuchadnezzar about a Multi-Metallic Image Interpretation by Daniel Concerning the Four Kingdoms of "the Times of the Gentiles, chapter 2
3. Decree of Nebuchadnezzar to Enforce Universal Idolatry; Three Hebrews Cast in the Furnace for refusal to Bow to Image of Gold, chapter 3
4. Dream of Nebuchadnezzar about a Great Tree Hewn Down to a stump; fulfilled in Madness of King, chapter 4
5. Downfall of Babylon Foretold by Daniel as He Read Handwriting on Wall at the Feast of Belshazzar, chapter 5
6. Decree of Darius, the Median, to Enforce Worship of Himself Daniel Cast into Lion's Den, chapter 6

II. Prophetic Light in the Historic Night, Chapters 7-12

1. Daniel's Vision of Four Beasts Concerning Four Kingdoms of "the Times of the Gentiles", chapter 7
2. Daniel's Vision of Ram and He Goat and another Little Horn, chapter 8
3. Daniel's Vision of Seventy Weeks, chapter 9
4. Daniel's Vision Relating to Israel in Immediate Future and Latter Days; Historical Little Horn and Little Horn of the Latter Days, chapters 10-12
 1. Preparation for Vision by Prayer of Daniel; appearance of Heavenly Messenger, chapter 10
 2. Prophecy Concerning Persia and Grecia, Historical "Little Horn"; Eschatological "Little Horn" chapter 11
 3. Preview of Israel in Latter Days; Great Tribulation; Resurrection; Rewards; Final Word about the end Times, chapter 12

THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

The prophet Jeremiah's second book, Lamentations, is the only complete elegy in the Hebrew Scriptures. An elegy is usually written on the death of some person or persons. However in the case of Jeremiah the poem was written shortly after the destruction and passing of a great city, Jerusalem (586 B.C.), which to the prophet represented a personal, as well as a national loss.

Although in the original Hebrew the author of the book is anonymous, well established early tradition ascribed the authorship to Jeremiah. This tradition first appears in the title of the Septuagint version of Lamentations. The tradition of Jeremiah's authorship was continued by Jerome in The Vulgate, and others, until modern times.

The best conservative opinion is that the poem was very likely written during the three months or so between the burning of Jerusalem, July, 586 B.C., and Jeremiah's exile in Egypt.

The composition of the poem is that of a elegy or dirge in five parts, each part corresponding exactly to each of the five chapter divisions of the poem.

Also, each of the five elegies contain twenty-two verses, except that the third, and middle elegy contains three times as many verses as each of the others, or sixty-six verses.

In turn, each of the verses has three parts, or are in the form of triplets, except in elegies three-to-five many of the verses are in two parts, or are in the form of couplets.

As you begin your to read the poem, you see a picture of the old prophet sitting on the ruins of a great city, himself overcome with sorrow and grief. After a long silence, he slowly begins his elegy . . .

How lonely sits the city
that was full of people!

How like a widow has she become,
she that was great among the nations!

The poet then reviews step by step the cause of Zion's sorrows, the people's disobedience and sin and the Lord's anger, until finally he comes to the great passage, the central theme of the poem, which is the hope of God's everlasting love and mercy:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end...

The Lord is good to those who wait for Him,
To the soul that seeks Him...

THE OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

The book of Lamentations may be grouped under the five chapter divisions corresponding to the five poems, as follows:

1. The fires of Nebuchadnezzar dispelled the last enchantment of the Holy City. Hence the prophet Jeremiah, disconsolate and sorrowful, sits on the ruins of Jerusalem and writes this national elegy of the people - himself no less lonely than the empty city, the loss of which he mourns.
2. Zion's sorrows, described in this death-in-life elegy, are due to the Lord's anger, whose doings have humiliated and punished his people.
3. Zion's hope is in God's love and mercy, verses 22-36
4. Zion's former glory is contrasted with her present misery and humiliation, especially during the last stages of the Babylonian siege.
5. For a concluding theme, Jeremiah leads Zion's earnest prayer for deliverance, from their present miseries, and for renewal of their place with the Lord, as in the days of old, verses 2-21.

In this chain of elegies, Jeremiah is much more than a mourner for a lost city. He becomes the spokesman for the sorrowful, and for the disconsolate of all time and ages, and points to the love and mercy of God as the only hope of any people.

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

Here we have the shortest book in the old Testament, and yet it is a genuine book of prophecy. The title of the book is "the vision of Obadiah," and the vision is "concerning Edom." Edom is the rocky, mountainous and desert-like country south of the Dead Sea and east of the valley of the Arabah, and was inhabited by the descendants of Esau.

The best opinion is that the message must be dated shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (556 B.c.), for verses 11-14 almost surely refer to Judah's recent ruin and the part that Edom played in it..

THE MEANING OF OBADIAH'S PROPHECY

What was Obadiah's prophecy "concerning Edom"? In the long, drawn-out siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, Edom was guilty of taking sides with the Babylonians against Judah.

Historically, Jacob the ancestor of Judah, and Esau the ancestor of Edom, were twin-brothers and sons of Isaac. But Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, and the two men parted, Esau settling in the region south of the Dead Sea and east of Arabah.

The descendents of Esau, like their first ancestor, never developed a sense of mutual responsibility or loyalty to their brother Judah. The Herods in the time of Jesus were Edomites (Greek, Idumeans), and true to type. Thus, Obadiah's prophecy is in consequence of the failure of the Edomites of his day, verse 10.

Edom is to be punished, because she aided the Babylonians in the capture of Judah, in looting Jerusalem, and in gloating over its disaster. For these crimes, the Day of the Lord is near, which is the day of judgment for all the enemy nations of God's people, Edom in particular.

In short, Judah is to be vindicated against her enemies. But this is not the main message of the prophet Obadiah. But is it not in this, that the everlasting hope of men is in the love and mercy of the Lord, and in the knowledge that He will overcome every foe of His rule, and that His kingdom shall endure for ever?

END of Lesson

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