

Purity in a Pagan World

Daniel

1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god. (~605 BC 2 Kings 24)

3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility- 4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. 5 The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

6 Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, 10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." 14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. 16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. 20 **In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.**

21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus. (~535 BC or 70 years)

2 Kings 24:1-25:21

24:1 During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. **But then he changed his mind and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar.** 2 The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him. He sent them to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets. 3 Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, 4 including the shedding of innocent blood. **For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.**

5 As for the other events of Jehoiakim's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? 6 Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. And Jehoiachin his son succeeded him as king.

7 The king of Egypt did not march out from his own country again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

8 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan; she was from Jerusalem. 9 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father had done.

10 At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, 11 and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it. 12 Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to him.

In the eighth year of the reign of the king of Babylon, he took Jehoiachin prisoner. 13 As the LORD had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed all the treasures from the temple of the LORD and from the royal palace, and took away all the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the LORD. 14 He carried into exile all Jerusalem: all the officers and fighting men, and all the craftsmen and artisans-a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left.

15 Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother, his wives, his officials and the leading men of the land. 16 The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand craftsmen and artisans. 17 He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah.

18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. 19 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. 20 It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence. Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

25:1 So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it. 2 The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 3 By the ninth day of the [fourth] month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat. 4 Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah, 5 but the Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered, 6 and he was captured. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him. 7 They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. 8 On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. **9 He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. 10 The whole Babylonian army, under the commander of the imperial guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. 11 Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had gone over to the king of Babylon. 12 But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields.**

13 The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the movable stands and the bronze Sea that were at the temple of the LORD and they carried the bronze to Babylon. 14 They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. 15 The commander of the imperial guard took away the censers and sprinkling bowls-all that were made of pure gold or silver.

16 The bronze from the two pillars, the Sea and the movable stands, which Solomon had made for the temple of the LORD, was more than could be weighed. 17 Each pillar was twenty-seven feet high. The bronze capital on top of one pillar was four and a half feet high and was decorated with a network and pomegranates of bronze all around. The other pillar, with its network, was similar. 18 The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest next in rank and the three doorkeepers. 19 Of those still in the city, he took the officer in charge of the fighting men and five royal advisers. He also took the secretary who was chief officer in charge of conscripting the people of the land and sixty of his men who were found in the city. 20 Nebuzaradan the commander took them all and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. 21 There at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king had them executed.

So Judah went into captivity, away from her land.

The Exile & Babylonian Captivity

605 BC - Babylonian King Nabopolassar (founder of the Chaldean Empire 605-562 B.C.) sends his eldest son Nebuchadnezzar II to stomp on the Egyptians. On the way back from a massive victory, they attack Judah which had aligned itself with Egypt. The attack is cut short when Nabopolassar suddenly dies. Nebuchadnezzar II rushes back home to ensure control of the throne. First deportation takes place (including a young lad named Daniel, Dan 1:1).

597 BC - Babylon attacks the troublesome little state of Judah; 2nd deportation is very extensive (2Kgs 24:8-16). King Jehoiakim dies. Jehoiachin reigns but is brought captive to Babylon and kept for 37 years. Ezekiel is also brought to Babylon at this time.

587 BC - Judah continues to be an annoyance, always ranting about their God, Yahweh. Babylon has no more patience for this: Jerusalem is destroyed; 3rd deportation takes place. The army hangs around into 586 BC making certain that everything including the Temple is totally destroyed and even the walls and gates are burned with fire. (2Kgs 25:1-12; Psalm 137).

582–575 BC - [estimated date] Nebuchadnezzar II, believing his own press reports and failing to acknowledge the one true God, suffers from insanity for seven years (Dan 4).

561 BC - Nebuchadnezzar II dies, the empire passes to his son Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach - 2Kgs 25:27). King Jehoiachin is released from captivity after spending 37 years under house arrest in Babylon.

555–539 BC - Nabonidus reigns in Babylon. He is the last Chaldean ruler of Babylon. However, he spends the final ten years of his reign at his time-share condo in Arabia (Teima) and leaves his son Belshazzar in charge of Babylon. The kid blows it big time and realizes it when he sees the writing on the wall.

550 BC - Cyrus II defeats Astyages, king of the Medes. The Medes accept Cyrus readily.

547 BC - Cyrus II conquers Croesus, king of the Lydians.

539/8 BC - Cyrus II takes control of Babylonia absorbing it into the massive Persian Empire. He decrees that the Jews may return to their homeland!

The Return from Exile & Reconstruction of Jerusalem

538 BC - A small but loyal group returns. It doesn't take long for their initial enthusiasm to slam head-on into tough circumstances. Everything had been destroyed: The Temple, the city walls, their homes -- everything is rubble. Foreigners had moved in and they aren't pleased to see the Jews return. There is very little commerce or infrastructure. Feeding their own families becomes a full-time, difficult task. This isn't the way they had envisioned their triumphant return to their sacred homeland.

Zerubbabel is political leader from the line of David, **Joshua** is high priest from the line of Aaron.

522 BC - Darius I becomes King of Persia.

520 BC - Temple founded. Work stops once obstacles arise. The Jews divert their attention to themselves -- vision drift. Two prophets, Haggai (“Build My Temple”) and Zechariah (“Don't Be Afraid, You Are My People”), motivate them to continue construction.

516 BC - Temple completed! (70 years after its destruction).

Second Temple Era

510 BC - A small republic is established in Rome.

485–465 BC - Xerxes I King of Persia. His reign ends abruptly by his assassination in August. He was murdered by his own political aids.

465–424 BC - Artaxerxes I Longimanus rules Persia.

457 BC - Ezra leads a second group of exiles to Jerusalem. He is known as a powerful scholar of God's law. He leads reforms dealing with foreign wives (& their false gods). While Ezra has grasped God's vision personally, he seems to lack the social and political savvy necessary to inspire those around him.

445 BC - Nehemiah, assigned as governor of Judea, travels to Jerusalem (from Susa) with a personal mission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, which would serve to restore dignity and honor to the sacred land. Nehemiah has political clout and a strong vision of God's mission. He leads and inspires others. The walls of Jerusalem are re-built in 52 days, much to the surprise of surrounding hostile peoples. Nehemiah also deals with social justice, foreign wives, and reforms surrounding the Temple. When he returns to Susa, the people rather quickly fall back into bad behaviors.

435 BC - Malachi warns God's people of the dangers of apathy, challenges their doubts, and assures them they are God's people.

433–430 BC - Nehemiah's second term as governor. Upon his return, he is horrified that the people have backslidden from the many reforms he had previously implemented.

The Intertestamental Period

331 BC - Alexander conquers Palestine.

323 BC - Alexander the Great dies. His empire is divided among his four generals (not quite that simply, but roughly accurate)..

- Ptolemy gets Egypt and control of Jerusalem.

198 BC - Seleucid King Antiochus III (Babylon/Syria) battles the Ptolemies and gains control of Palestine.

187 BC - Seleucus IV takes the throne. Control of the Jews tightens. Conflict and pressure to conform to the Hellenistic society now surrounding them. Jews polarize around those wanting to modernize and those who abhor the idea.

175 BC - Antiochus IV Epiphanes takes the throne.

169 BC - Antiochus IV loots the Temple to help ailing finances and disrupt the troublesome Jews.

168 BC - The Maccabean Revolt begins