

# THE CAPTIVITY

## 1) Introduction

- a) In 587BC, Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and takes most of the Jews into Babylonian captivity (Jer 52:15)
  - i) This captivity, designed by God for discipline, lasted 70 years (Jer 25:8-11; Dan 9:2)
  - ii) This is the lowest point in the history of Israel, as they find themselves foreigners in a strange land (Psa 137)
  - iii) Babylon was generally hostile to their morals and ideals. Persecution was common
- b) Though many believed God had forsaken them, He displays His sovereign control during this period in 3 ways
  - i) In Daniel, God demonstrates His control through miracles, divine intervention, and foreknowledge
  - ii) In Ezekiel, God demonstrates His control through the power of preaching and prophecy
  - iii) In Esther, God demonstrates His control through His providential care

## 2) Daniel

- a) Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were taken in 1<sup>st</sup> deportation (Dan 1:1-2)
  - i) Nebuchadnezzar plans to train them for service in his royal chambers (Dan 1:3-7)
- b) These young men will face a multitude of challenges to their faith in a spiritually hostile environment
  - i) They are required to eat food that violated Jewish dietary restrictions (Dan 1)
  - ii) Daniel saves lives by revealing Nebuchadnezzar's dream and interpretation (Dan 2)
  - iii) Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego refuse or bow down to an image and are thrown in a furnace (Dan 3)
  - iv) Daniel reveals to Nebuchadnezzar that he will be punished for his pride (Dan 4)
  - v) Daniel reveals to the new king, Belshazzar, that he will be punished for his pride (Dan 5)
  - vi) Daniel is cast in a lion's den for praying to God (Dan 6)
- c) In each instance God exhibited His sovereign control – this led to the antagonist giving Him glory
  - i) Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are shown to be the best of all the youths (Dan 1:13, 17, 20)
  - ii) Nebuchadnezzar recognizes Daniel's God as the greatest of all gods (Dan 2:46-47)
  - iii) Nebuchadnezzar prohibits any from speaking against God (Dan 3:28-29)
  - iv) Nebuchadnezzar recognizes and thanks God for humbling him (Dan 4:34-37)
  - v) Belshazzar rewards Daniel for revealing the truth to him (Dan 5:29)
  - vi) Darius commands all nations to fear the God of Daniel (Dan 6:25-27)
- d) Messianic promises are given to remind the Jews of His plan to bring about the chosen "seed"
  - i) The general time period is revealed for the Messianic kingdom (Dan 2:44-45; 9:24-25)
  - ii) The Messiah would ascend to heaven, exalted before God, and receive everlasting dominion (Dan 7:13-14)
  - iii) The Messiah would bring an end to sin and usher in an age of righteousness (Dan 9:24)
  - iv) The Messiah would be "cut off" (killed) (Dan 9:26)
  - v) A destruction would follow the coming of the Messiah (Dan 9:27)

## 3) Ezekiel

- a) Ezekiel was taken in the 2<sup>nd</sup> deportation along with Jehoiachin (Ezek 1:1-3)
  - i) God calls Ezekiel to preach to the exiles despite the fact they would initially be resistant (Ezek 2 – 3)
- b) Ezekiel's preaching was to accomplish 4 purposes
  - i) To convince the exiles that they are not going home anytime soon (Jer 29:1-7)
    - (1) God proclaimed through Jeremiah that Israel would be in captivity for 70 years (Jer 25:8-11)
    - (2) False prophets in both Judah and amongst the exiles in Babylon were denying this (Jer 27 – 28; 29:8-9)
    - (3) Ezekiel graphically predicts their inevitable sabbatical from Jerusalem (Ezek 4 – 7; 24)
  - ii) To expose their wickedness
    - (1) Ezekiel is taken by vision to Jerusalem to observe the wickedness of the city (Ezek 8 – 11)
    - (2) Ezekiel uses parables and attacks their false parables used to remove accountability (Ezek 17-18; 20; 22)
  - iii) To move them to repentance

- (1) God's plan is to use these exile to one day return and rebuild Jerusalem (Jer 29:10-14)
- (2) But the people must first repent. God uses news of Jerusalem's destruction to do this (Ezek 33:21-22)
- (3) Parables are used to remind Israel of God's longsuffering toward them (Ezek 16; 23)
- iv) To offer hope
  - (1) Once they begin repenting, God offers them hope for the future (Ezek 33 – 48)
- c) Messianic promises were given to remind the Jews that He is still planning to bring about the chosen "seed"
  - i) The Messiah would be a great Shepherd, descendant of David (Ezek 34:23-24)
  - ii) The Messiah would unite Israel (Ezek 37:24-28)
  - iii) A greater temple and greater Jerusalem is promised (Ezek 40 – 48)

#### 4) Esther

- a) The book of Esther takes place ~484BC, 56 years after the Jews return to Jerusalem
  - i) However only 70,000 Jews returned; having built lives in these foreign cities, many stayed behind
  - ii) Esther centers on God's providential care towards the Jews as their entire race faces elimination
- b) Esther is a beautiful Jewish woman who was raised by her cousin Mordecai at the citadel in Susa (Esth 2:5-7)
  - i) Esther catches the eye of the Persian king who chooses her in marriage over all others (Esth 1 – 2)
  - ii) The king had employed a narcissistic man named Haman, whom everyone paid homage (Esth 3:1-2)
  - iii) However Mordecai would not bow before him because of its close connection to idolatry (Esth 3:2-6)
  - iv) Haman, not knowing Esther is a Jew, suggests to the king that all Jews be exterminated (Esth 3:8-9)
  - v) When Mordecai finds out, he tells Esther she is in the best possible position to stop this (Esth 4:13-14)
  - vi) Esther risks her life approaching the king having not been summoned, and is spared (Esth 4:11; 5:1-3)
  - vii) Esther invites Haman and the king to a feast; she reveals Haman's plot to annihilate her people (Esth 7:1-6)
  - viii) The king decides to hang Haman on the gallows Haman had intended for Mordecai (Esth 7:7-10)
  - ix) Mordecai is greatly exalted and promoted to Haman's position (Esth 8:1-2)
  - x) The king decrees that all Jews in every province be allowed to defend themselves (Esth 8:3-13)
  - xi) Administrators of the provinces assisted the Jews in defending their lives (Esth 9:1-3)
- c) God can show His control through miracles and preaching, but also through His providence
  - i) Esther is the only book in the entire bible that does not contain the word "God"
  - ii) Yet God's control is evident all throughout the story of Esther, protecting His people through providence
  - iii) By the end of Esther, the Jews are well-respected by all throughout the entire Persian province