

Jewish Dispensation Captivity And Return

Jeremiah 25:8-14

Babylonian Captivity

Due to habitual unfaithfulness, Judah was sentenced to 70 years of captivity at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and his forces.

Jeremiah told the people about what was coming – **Jeremiah 25:8-11**.

He told them how long it would last – **Jeremiah 29:10-13**.

70 years can be figured in two ways:

605 – 536BC – First attack to first return from captivity.

586 – 516BC – Temple destroyed to the temple rebuilt.

The events unfolded just as Jeremiah said – **2Chronicles 36:19-21**.

Others also announced these days – **Habakkuk 1:1-11; 3:16-18**.

The Babylonians attacked Jerusalem three times. Each time more people were taken captive.

Ultimately, the temple of worship was destroyed.

Three Deportations

605BC – Some were taken, including Daniel – **2Kings 24:1-2**.

597BC – More are taken, including Ezekiel – **2Kings 24:8-14**.

586BC – Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed – **2Kings 25:8-10**.

Prophets of the Exile

Jeremiah (c. 626 – 572BC)

He prophesied to the remnant left in Judah – **Jeremiah 29:1; 32:1-2**.

Jeremiah lamented over what he saw in Jerusalem – **Lamentations**.

He later prophesied to the exiles who fled to Egypt – **Jeremiah 43:6-13**.

Daniel (c. 606 – 530BC)

Daniel prophesied to the ruler in Babylon – **Daniel 1:1-7,17-21**.

The first 6 chapters cover his interaction with Kings during his life in Babylon. The second 6 chapters show dreams he had during that time.

Daniel's prophecies about Christ abound! – **Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14; 9:24**.

Ezekiel (c. 593 – 570BC)

He prophesied to the exiles in Babylon – **Ezekiel 1:1; 2:1-7; 3:15-17**.

These men give different perspective on the same event. They also demonstrate faithfulness, regardless of surroundings.

Returns from Captivity

Just as God promised through Jeremiah, the Jews were freed after 70 years captive. The Babylonian empire fell to the combined Medes / Persian empire. Daniel records the deposing of the final Babylonian king, and Darius the Mede taking over in Babylon (**Daniel 5:29-31**). Ezra, a letter that recounts the history of the first two returns, opens by noting that Cyrus is now the Persian king over all the known world, and immediately begins to fulfill the promise God made to His people (**Ezra 1:1-2**).

The First Return – Led by Zerubbabel – 537BC – **Ezra 1:1-2:2**

The foundation to rebuild the temple was laid quickly – (**Ezra 3:1-11 – 536BC**).

The Jews face opposition and stop rebuilding the temple – (**Ezra 4:4**).

The temple remains incomplete for 16 years! – (**Ezra 4:24 – 520BC**).

Haggai and Zechariah stir the people to complete the work – (**Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 1:4-9; 2:4**).

The temple was finally completed – (**Ezra 6:15-16 – 516BC**).

The Second Return – Led by Ezra – 458BC – **Ezra 7:1-10**

Note the gap in time between Ezra chapters 6 and 7 – c. 60 years.

Ezra returned to assist with religious reform in Jerusalem – **Ezra 7:25-26**.

This included difficult reform issues, like leaving unlawful marriages – **Ezra 10:1-3**.

The Third Return – Led by Nehemiah – 445BC – **Nehemiah 2:1-8**

Nehemiah lived far away in Susa, but learned that the wall of Jerusalem had not been reconstructed. This troubled him greatly, so he petitioned to return and help – **Nehemiah 1:1-4**. What the people failed to do in 90 years, Nehemiah led them to do in 52 days! - **6:15**.

“Esther”

The story of Esther is dated to about 475BC, based on the king who is identified as ruling in Susa.

This places the events of the book somewhere in that 60 year span between **Ezra 6 and 7**.

This historical event has great importance to the Jewish people. As seen in **Esther 3:12-15**, King Ahasuerus signed an edict effectively announcing an annihilation date for the Jewish people! God’s providential plan places Esther and her cousin Mordecai in unique positions to thwart the efforts of the evil Haman, and save the Jewish people from this fate! (**Esther 2:5-8; 8:1-6**).

The dinner, with the king, Esther and Haman, is an incredible moment of courage defeating evil! (**7:1-10**).

Out of this came the Jewish feast called “Purim” (**Esther 9:16-32**).

“Malachi”

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. It is probably the last written book as well, dating to somewhere between 445BC and 420BC This would make Nehemiah and Malachi contemporaries.

The date of Malachi is largely determined by connecting it with Nehemiah’s point in history.

The nation of Israel was being ruled by a “governor” – **Malachi 1:8; Nehemiah 8:9-11**.

It is clear that the temple had been rebuilt – **Malachi 1:6-10**.

Malachi addresses similar problems to those of Nehemiah:

Intermarriage with foreigners – **Malachi 2:11; Nehemiah 13:23,28**.

Failure to tithe – **Malachi 3:7-8; Nehemiah 3:10-12**.

Priests defiling the covenant – **Malachi 2:8; Nehemiah 13:29**.

Silence

If the book of Malachi was written in 420BC, and the earliest written New Testament book was written in 50AD (1Thessalonians), then that is 470 years without prophetic record! The distance between Nehemiah’s work and Jesus’ coming would be roughly 450 years (445BC to 0AD – roughly). But this doesn’t mean significant things weren’t happening! They were not inspired things, but still had an impact!

Apocrypha

These are 14 books of Jewish history and religious writings.

These men were not inspired, but have been generally considered godly men. It is not a part of the Holy scriptures. It was not written by inspired men.

However, it has been preserved due to its historical content.

For more information on why these books are not included as Scripture, see:

<http://carm.org/apocrypha-it-scripture>.

Septuagint (LXX)

This is sometimes called “Greek Old Testament.”

In around 250BC, 70 scholars (LXX) began translating the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language. Due to the conquests of Alexander the Great a hundred years before, Greek was becoming the language of the world.

Interestingly, New Testament writers often quote the Septuagint version of the Old Testament.

A primary reason to know about the Septuagint is to demonstrate to people that the Old Testament dates before AT LEAST 250BC.

Sadducees and Pharisees

We don’t hear anything about these two groups through the whole Old Testament. Yet they are present as the Gospels open (**Matthew 3:7**).

Sadducees were a wealthy collection of aristocrats, commonly including the chief priests and high priest. They held the majority of the 70 seats of the council called the Sanhedrin. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, nor the existence of angels or demons.

Pharisees, on the other hand, were mostly middle class business men, and had more favor with the common folks. They did believe in resurrection and also the spiritual realm. Through the gospels, both parties earned numerous rebukes from Jesus. They both rose to prominence in the years between Old Testament and New Testament revelation.

Six World Empires

Egypt (1600 – 1200BC) Egypt was in power during the time of Joseph and Moses.

Assyria (800's – 612BC) Assyria destroyed Israel in 722BC, but ultimately Nineveh fell to Babylon.

Babylon (612 – 539BC) Babylon led Judah captive for 70 years, but was then defeated by the Persians.

Persia (539 – 331BC) King Cyrus let the Jews go home, but Alexander the Great later overtook Persia.

Greece (331 – 146BC) Greece ruled for nearly 200 years, before becoming a Roman province.

Rome (146 BC – 476AD) Rome was in power during the time of Christ, just as Daniel said (**2:44**).