

**“THE GREAT OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGIAN”**  
**A Scriptural Study of the Prophet Isaiah (chapters 40-66)**  
**Exilic Background in Scripture**

**2 Kings chapters 24 and 25**

**This section speaks of the reigns of the final three Kings of Judah – Jehoiakim, his son Jehoiachin, and Jehoiachin’s uncle, Zedekiah, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon appointed. What significant events transpired in their respective reigns?**

**Jehoiakim became Nebuchadnezzar’s vassal but then after 3 years rebelled; the Babylonians and other neighboring vassals attacked Judah to destroy it; the King of Egypt did not assist Judah; Jehoiakim died in about 598 B.C. before he could be punished.**

**Next his son Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah) began to reign when just 18 years old; like his father “did evil in the sight of the Lord.” Nebuchadnezzar’s forces besieged Jerusalem. Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar; taken prisoner in the 8<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. Temple treasures carried off; defaced the temple; First deportation - carried away into exile the royal family, the elite, many soldiers, artisans and smiths.**

**Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin’s uncle Mattaniah as king; changed his name to Zedekiah. He was 21 years old when he began his reign and reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. He also “did evil in the sight of the Lord.” He also rebelled against the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar and his army besieged Jerusalem yet again. Residents inside experienced a terrible famine! The King and some soldiers escaped through the city wall in the direction of Arabah but were pursued and caught. The Babylonian King slaughtered Zedekiah’s sons in front of him and then put Zedekiah’s eyes out, bound him in chains, and led him to Babylon. Second deportation. This time the Babylonians burned the temple, the palace and every great house to the ground and**

**broken down the walls around Jerusalem. After this second deportation few were left in the city as the vast majority were taken into captivity. Only some of “the poorest of the poor” were left to till the land and care for the vines.**

**What hopeful word do we hear at the end of this sad text?**

**(2 Kings 25:27-30; King Evil-merodach of Babylon released King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison; “he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the other seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes. Every day of his life he dined regularly in the king’s presence. For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion every day, as long as he lived”.)**

### **Jeremiah chapter 29**

**What message had false prophets been delivering the Judean exiles who had been taken to Babylon?**

**(their stay in Babylon would be very short; allowed to return to rebuild Jerusalem soon)**

**What surprising guidance does the Prophet Jeremiah offer Judean exiles who were taken to Babylon in terms of the way they are to live in that foreign land?**

**(fully invest themselves in the new life in Babylon; settle in, build homes, give your children in marriage, seek the welfare of the the city of Babylon; pray to the Lord on its behalf; “in its welfare you will find your welfare.”)**

**What hope does the prophet offer for the people after approximately a 70-year stay in exile in Babylon?**

**(God has good plans for the people “plans for your welfare and not for harm”; if they seek Yahweh, he will restore their fortunes and gather them from the places they have been scattered; bring**

**them back to their homeland in Jerusalem “to give them a future with hope”)**

**The Book of Lamentations chapter one**

**What message expressed here at 1:5, 8, 14) explain the reason for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the exile of the majority of the people to Babylon?**

**(“the Lord has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions”)**

**How is the city of Jerusalem described in this chapter?**

**(deserted; her gates are desolate; her children have become captives of their enemy; a recipient of mocking; having done evil and sinned “grievously”)**

**What is the writer feeling?**

**(grief, regret, ashamed, distressed)**

**Psalm 137**

**In this exilic psalm, how would you describe the feelings of the Jewish exiles who had been taken to Babylon?**

- **depressed, discouraged, disoriented**

**Why is Jerusalem to be remembered?**

- **home of the temple; Yahweh’s presence among the people**

**In verses 7-10 what feelings are expressed by the psalmist?**

- **wants vengeance to be taken on those who rejoiced with the destruction of Jerusalem, including some neighbors (Edom) and the Babylonian conquerors**

**What might exilic life in Babylon have meant for the Jewish people who were brought there following the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah, including their capital in Jerusalem?**

**How might the Babylonian Exile be a good metaphor for the state of the Protestant Mainline Church here in the US at the present time?**

**(no longer very large or powerful; in decline; Many wonder – will we ever capture our former influence, numbers, and power? Will God use us again in a more significant way? Many wonder, “why have we shrunk so precipitously in the past half century?)**

**Have you ever personally felt like you were in “exile” – alienated from God in a time of loss and personal defeat? What resources did you use to cope with that situation?**