

## *Promised Land 2 Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Twelve: The Exile – Ezekiel, Daniel, Esther*

After reading Daniel 1:1, glance at 2 Chronicles 36:17 as a reminder about Nebuchadnezzar's role in Biblical history.

- 1) What do you learn about Daniel from:
  - a) Daniel 1:1-7? Daniel was among the group of Israelite royalty and nobility whom Nebuchadnezzar exiled to Babylon during Jehoiakim's reign (2 Kings 24:1 [although the Kings and Chronicles records do not mention a deportation at that time]). He was young, handsome, intelligent, and one of those being trained to serve the king of Babylon.
  - b) Daniel 1:8, 12; 6:10, 22b? Daniel resolved not to defile himself. He was a disciplined and spiritually sensitive man of prayer, courage, and integrity.
  - c) Daniel 1:17, 20; 2:19; 4:9; 5:12; 7:1, 15; 8:1; 9:23b; 10:1b? God gave Daniel the ability to understand and interpret visions and dreams.
  - d) Daniel 1:21, 2:1a, 5:30-6:1, 7:1a, 8:1a, 9:1, 10:1a? Daniel assisted the royal court from the time of Nebuchadnezzar through Belshazzar's reign (Nabonidus was actually the last king of Babylon, but he was a sickly man who, after campaigning outside the kingdom, spent ten years living in the Arabian oasis of Tema. His son Belshazzar served as the chief administrator over Babylon in his absence [some say the "Nebuchadnezzar" of Daniel 4 was actually Nabonidus]). When the Babylonian Empire was overthrown, Daniel apparently became an official of Darius the Mede. Darius' identity is unknown outside the Biblical account. One possibility is that Darius was another name for Cyrus the Great.
- 2) Compare Daniel 1:8 with Daniel 6:26.
  - a) How does Daniel's life show that one small act of obedience to the Lord can be used for His glory beyond our wildest imagination? As a very young man and a new servant of the Babylonian court, Daniel chose to abstain from the rich feasting that was typical in the palace. Instead, he maintained the diet prescribed by Moses and necessary for ceremonial cleanliness. Little did he know that the Lord would reward his courageous decision by gifting him with unusual wisdom, insight, and ability, and as a result, the king would one day demand his people to worship Daniel's God. Daniel's remarkable influence in his culture occurred because he first chose to do something counter-cultural.
  - b) What act of obedience to the Lord will you take to heart? **Personal sharing**

The first six chapters of Daniel contain narratives about the influence the Lord gave Daniel and his companions in a pagan culture. The last six chapters of Daniel are visions Daniel received from the Lord that relate to future events in world history.

- 3) Skim to discover the theme:
  - a) common to Daniel 3 and Daniel 6 **Miraculous deliverance of courageous, God-fearing men who refused to dishonor the Lord.**
  - b) common to Daniel 4 and Daniel 5 **The humbling of a pagan king**
- 4) The visions in chapters 7-12 are apocalyptic. One of the characteristics of apocalyptic literature is symbolism. Read these portions of Daniel's visions and record what they reveal about God's relationship to human history:
  - a) Daniel 7:13-14 **Jesus is a real king who has ongoing authority over all human history. Daniel saw a vision of Jesus being given "authority, glory and sovereign power" by God the Father over "all peoples, nations and men of every language" -- an everlasting kingdom.**

- b) Daniel 7:15-27 Daniel's vision of four great beasts was interpreted as representing four kingdoms. For a period of time, God's people (the "saints") will be handed over to the fourth "beast," but in the end the "court will sit" and the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom as an eternal possession. The clear implication is that these four kingdoms received their authority by God's sovereign ordination and ended at the time of His appointed judgment.
  - c) Daniel 8:19-26 Again, God is depicted as sovereign over the affairs of human beings and human history. Daniel was told what would happen "later in the time of wrath... the appointed time of the end." This vision also described earthly world powers ("kingdoms") that were in Daniel's "distant future." An evil ruler is described as being "destroyed, but not by human power."
  - d) Daniel 10:5, 12-14 God's kingdom includes an invisible spiritual world that is highly involved with the affairs of men, including human government. Daniel received wisdom from the Lord through an angel who was "detained by the prince of the king of Persia," but apparently released with the assistance of the "chief prince" Michael (angels, both good and evil, fighting an invisible battle, one of whom apparently had authority over the king of Persia).
  - e) Daniel 12:1-3 Again, God is shown to be in charge. Daniel was told of a future time of distress, greater than had ever occurred, in which those "whose name is found written in the book will be delivered." Resurrection to everlasting life or to everlasting contempt was also foretold. Men cannot raise themselves from the dead nor deliver themselves from a distress as great as described.
- 5) Read Daniel 2:20-22 with Acts 17:24-28 and Romans 8:28. For which issue or aspect of your life do you need spiritual eyes to see the Lord's involvement and control? Will you begin asking Him for insight?  
Personal sharing

### Ezekiel

- 6) What do the following verses reveal about Ezekiel as a man?
  - a) Ezekiel 1:3 (background and present situation) Ezekiel was an exiled priest, living in Babylon by the Kebar River.
  - b) Ezekiel 8:1, 24:18 (personal information) Ezekiel had his own home. He was married but became a widower during his years of prophesying.
  - c) Ezekiel 3:17 (titles he was given [find two]) watchman; son of man
- 7) What do these following passages tell you about Ezekiel's ministry?
  - a) Ezekiel 1:4-5, 15-16, 20, 26-28 (manner of his call) His call included a vision of "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" on His throne. He also saw four living creatures and wheels intersecting wheels.
  - b) Ezekiel 2:3-8, 3:17-21; also 33:1-9 (requirements of his call) God told Ezekiel He was sending him as a prophet/watchman to the stubborn, rebellious Israelites. Ezekiel was not given a choice about the matter. God told him not to be afraid or become rebellious, like the people to whom he would minister. Also, God gave him a very serious warning that he would be held accountable for the deaths of the wicked if he failed to issue God's forewarnings to them.
  - c) Ezekiel 4:1-5:5; 12:3-6, 11; 12:17-19; 24:15-27 (one type of prophetic ministry) Ezekiel was required to do unusual, symbolic, public acts as signs to Israel of what was awaiting them. These included lying on his side for 390 days, while eating rationed, defiled food, and then for another 40 days; shaving and dividing his hair; packing his bags and crawling through a hole in the wall with his belongings; trembling as he ate and drank; experiencing his wife's death without mourning.)
  - d) Ezekiel 5:6-8, 6:1-2, 7:1-2, 14:4a (another type of prophetic ministry) Ezekiel issued prophetic words and warnings.
  - e) Ezekiel 1:1; 8:2-4 ending in 11:24, 40:2, 43:3 (a third type of prophetic ministry) Ezekiel saw visions.

- 8) Use these references to determine the themes of Ezekiel's messages:
- Ezekiel 9:3 with 10:18; then 11:23 (consider what was meant by the movement of the glory of God away from the Temple and out of the city of Jerusalem). **God planned to abandon Jerusalem.**
  - Ezekiel 16:59, 22:2-4 **Judgment was about to come on Israel for despising and breaking their covenant with the Lord and for all her years of idolatry and bloodshed.**
  - Ezekiel 14:14 (implied); 18:4b and 18:20 with 18:5, 9 and 18:10, 13 and 18:14, 17b **Everyone is accountable for their own sins.**
  - Ezekiel 25:2 with 25:7b; 25:8-9 with 25:11b; 25:15-16 with 25:17b; 28:21 with 28:26b; 29:2 with 29:21b **The Lord is the God of the whole world. The judgments He brings against Gentile nations are for the purpose of bringing people to acknowledge Him.**
  - Ezekiel 34:11-13, 36:24-28; the well-known vision of 37:1-14 with its interpretation in verse 12-14 **God planned to restore His people to the land of Israel and into a new kind of relationship with Him.**
- 9) To what ministry or ministries has the Lord called you? How would you summarize the message your life and words give to others (be as specific as possible)? **Personal sharing**

Ezekiel 38-48 contains very controversial prophecies. Chapters 40-43 describe a new Temple to be built, Ezekiel 43:13-chapter 46 describes a new ritual for worship at this Temple, and chapters 47-48 portray a new description of the land for God's people.

- 10) See if you can discover the three main viewpoints about a temple future to Ezekiel's day from the following groups of reference (each group represents one viewpoint):
- Ezra 1:1-5, 3:8-10, 6:14-15 **A literal interpretation, saying that Ezekiel's temple was a blueprint for the Temple to be built in Jerusalem under Zerubbabel's leadership (a rebuilding of Solomon's temple).**
  - 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Kings 8:27 with Revelation 21:22 **A figurative interpretation, that the body of Christ is the temple of the Lord in this age and that the church of Christ will worship God in heaven one day where God Himself and His Lamb are the Temple.**
  - These passages:* Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 33:18, Ezekiel 20:40-41, Micah 4:1-2, Zechariah 6:12-15, 14:16-21; *placed in this time frame:* Revelation 20:1-6 **A literal millennial Temple built during the time of Christ's 1000-year reign on earth.**
- 11) Regardless of one's viewpoint about "Ezekiel's temple," what all-important biblical truth about the Lord's temple and its ultimate purpose must be acknowledged (see Exodus 25:8, 29:44-46; 1 Kings 8:12-13; 2 Chronicles 7:1-3; John 1:14, 14:20, 23; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 3:17a; Colossians 1:26-27; Revelation 21:3)? **God's purpose has always been to dwell in and with His people and have His people dwell with Him. The physical temple was a symbolic dwelling place for God among men. In our day, no physical structure is necessary, since the need for animal sacrifices ended with Jesus' permanent sacrifice and because the Holy Spirit now indwells believers. One day, those who are God's children will be in His physical presence forever.**
- 12) How will this concept influence the way you live your life this day (be specific)? **Personal sharing**

Although Esther lived during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (after Jewish exiles were allowed to return to Jerusalem), she was one of many Jews who remained in the lands where they had been exiled. This period of Biblical history (the “post-exilic” period) will be covered in the next lesson. Nevertheless, Esther is included in this lesson because her story, like Daniel’s and Ezekiel’s, gives us insight into the lives of the Jewish people who were living in the land of their exile.

- 13) In what sense were Esther and Daniel foreign ambassadors (refer to your answers to Question 1 and to Esther 1:1, 2:5-7, 17; 3:1, 5-6; 4:12-14)? **Both Daniel and Esther were Jews living in exile during the Babylonian and Persian empires. Both were appointed to serve in the court of the king. Both exerted tremendous influence.**
- 14) What ironies do you discover in the following passages (you will benefit most from reading all of Esther but can catch a glimpse of the story line by simply referring to the passages given)?
- Esther 2:7 (Esther’s past); Esther 2:9, 15b, 17-18 **Esther was a young Jewish orphan living in exile, but despite her sad history, she won the favor of all those in the palace in Susa, including King Xerxes, and she became Queen of the Persian Empire.**
  - Esther 3:6b; 4:14b **A Jewess (Esther) just happened to be made Queen at the time a plot arose to kill all the Jewish people**
  - Esther 5:9, 13-14; 6:4-10; 8:2; 10:3 **Haman intended to kill Mordecai, but the king honored Mordecai, even giving him Haman’s position and estate. Ultimately, Mordecai was second only in rank to the king and held in high esteem.**
  - Esther 2:21-23 with 5:11-6:4 **Mordecai just happened to overhear a plot to kill the king. Later, the very night before Haman planned to kill Mordecai, the king just happened to be unable to sleep, just happened to order the chronicles of his reign read, and just happened to hear about Mordecai’s assistance.**
  - Esther 5:14, 7:5-10 **Haman had gallows built on which to kill Mordecai but was hanged on them himself.**
  - Esther 3:8-9, 13-14; 8:9-11, 17; 9:1-5 **Jews were doomed by the king’s edict to destruction, but the Jews ended up joyfully rejoicing and destroying their enemies instead. Furthermore, “many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them” (8:17).**
- 15) God’s name is never mentioned in the book of Esther. What do the ironies you discovered in Question 14 tell you about God’s role in Esther’s story and in your own life, even when He appears to be absent? With regard to what circumstance does this comfort you today? **These ironies reveal God’s providence -- His sovereign orchestration of life’s events. Personal sharing**