



## Bible History

### *The Captivities and the Returns*

#### I. THE ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL

##### A. The Captivity (2 Kings 17:6, 22-23)

1. The timing of the captivity
  - a. Dated ~ year 3,502
  - b. Completing the reign of Hoshea (2 Kings 17:1-6)
2. The cause of the captivity—Israel walked in the sins of Jeroboam (2 Kings 17:22)
3. The nature of the captivity
  - a. The Lord removed Israel out of His sight, because of their rebellion (2 Kings 17:23).
  - b. Israel was carried to Assyria (2 Kings 17:23).
  - c. They were spread out through various locations (2 Kings 17:6; 2 Kings 18:11).
    - (1) Halah
    - (2) Habor
    - (3) The cities of the Medes
    - (4) Note: This was a strategic move that would hinder a captive people from uprising against their captives. They would be spread throughout various locations causing cultural and communication difficulties.

##### B. The Hope of a Return (Isaiah 11:10-13; Jeremiah 3:17-18; Jeremiah 30:3-4; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Jeremiah 33:7; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Hosea 1:11; Zechariah 10:6)

1. Historically, Israel never completely returned from the captivity.
2. In the future
  - a. The Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people (Isaiah 11:11).
  - b. Israel will be brought again to the land of their fathers, and they shall possess it (Jeremiah 30:3-4).
  - c. The houses of Judah and Israel will be reunited with the Lord as their one and only King (Jeremiah 3:17-18).
  - d. The Lord will again build Judah and Israel as He did at the first (Jeremiah 33:7).
  - e. The Lord will put His law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
  - f. The Lord will cleanse His people and be their God (Ezekiel 37:23).
  - g. They shall be as though they had not cast them off (Zechariah 10:6).



## II. THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

### A. First Stage (2 Chronicles 36:5-8; Daniel 1:1-6)

1. The timing of the captivity
  - a. Dated ~ year 3,616 (see Daniel 1:1)
  - b. This was in the third (Daniel 1:1) or fourth (Jeremiah 25:1) year of Jehoiakim's reign (2 Chronicles 36:5-6), but after a space of time Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:1).
2. The cause of the captivity—they did evil in the sight of the Lord (Jeremiah 25:4-7)
3. The nature of the captivity
  - a. Jehoiakim was bound and carried to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:6).
  - b. The vessels of the house of the Lord were carried to Babylon and placed in a heathen temple (2 Chronicles 36:7; Daniel 1:2).
  - c. Nebuchadnezzar took certain of the children of Israel and groomed them to be wise men of Babylon (Daniel 1:3-6).

### B. Second Stage (2 Kings 24:8-16)

1. The timing of the captivity
  - a. Dated ~ year 3,624
  - b. This occurred during the reign of Jehoiachin in Judah (2 Kings 24:8) and was at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (2 Kings 24:10).
2. The cause of the captivity—continued evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Kings 24:9)
3. The nature of the captivity
  - a. Nebuchadnezzar came up against Jerusalem and besieged it (2 Kings 24:11).
  - b. Jehoiachin, his mother, and his servants were taken by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:12).
  - c. Nebuchadnezzar carried away treasures out of the house of the Lord (2 Kings 24:13).
  - d. Nebuchadnezzar carried away all but the poorest people of the land (2 Kings 24:14-16).

### C. Third Stage (2 Chronicles 36:11-21)

1. The timing of the captivity
  - a. Dated ~ year 3,631 to 3,633 (2 Kings 25:1-21; 2 Chronicles 36:17-21)
  - b. From the ninth to the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign king of Judah, Jerusalem was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar.
2. The cause of the captivity—the people of God rebelled against the clear warnings of the Lord (2 Chronicles 36:12-16).



3. The nature of the captivity
  - a. The remaining people were given into the hand of the enemy (2 Chronicles 36:17, 20-21).
  - b. The remaining vessels and treasures were carried to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:18).
  - c. Much was destroyed at the hands of the enemy (2 Chronicles 36:19).
    - (1) The house of God was burnt.
    - (2) The wall of Jerusalem was broken down.
    - (3) All the palaces were burnt with fire.
    - (4) All the goodly vessels were destroyed.

### III. THE EXILE FOR JUDAH

#### A. Under Babylon

1. King Nebuchadnezzar
  - a. He began to reign during the third or fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign in Judah (Jeremiah 25:1).
  - b. In his second year, he dreamed of the image of coming kingdoms (Daniel 2:1-49).
  - c. His reign is covered in the first four chapters of Daniel's book.
2. King Belshazzar
  - a. The record of history—History records that Belshazzar was actually the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, with Nabonidus reigning after Nebuchadnezzar.
  - b. The problem solved
    - (1) Nabonidus was gone on campaigns or for other reasons.
    - (2) Belshazzar reigned with his father, but was the main ruler in the absence of his father.
    - (3) A grandfather is generally called a father in scripture and therefore presents no conflict when Nebuchadnezzar is identified as the father of Belshazzar.
  - c. His fame
    - (1) During the first and third years of his reign, Daniel saw the content of chapters 7 and 8.
    - (2) The hand wrote on the wall of his demise at the hands of the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:1-30).

#### B. Under Persia

1. The Babylonians fell to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:22-30).
2. The kings
  - a. Cyrus (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1-4)
  - b. Darius (Ezra 4:5; Ezra 6:15)
  - c. Ahasuerus (Esther 1:1-3); Note: historically called Xerxes
  - d. Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11-13)



#### IV. THE RETURNS OF JUDAH

##### A. The First Return (Ezra 1-6)

1. The expiration of seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11-12)
  - a. Jeremiah prophesied by the word of the Lord that the people of God would serve the king of Babylon seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11).
  - b. At the end of the seventy years ~ 3,686, the Lord would turn His judgment upon the nation and king of Babylon (Jeremiah 25:12; see 2 Chronicles 36:20-21).
2. The decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4)
  - a. The time of the decree
    - (1) Dated ~ year 3,686
    - (2) In the first year of the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia (Ezra 1:1)
  - b. The origin of the decree (Ezra 1:1)
    - (1) From the mouth of the Lord to the spirit of Cyrus
    - (2) From the spirit of Cyrus to a spoken proclamation
    - (3) From a spoken proclamation to a written decree
    - (4) Note: It is interesting to note that this is very much in line with the way God gave scripture to mankind (see 2 Peter 1:21; Jeremiah 36:4).
  - c. The contents of the decree (Ezra 1:2-4)
    - (1) The praise of the decree (Ezra 1:2)—of the LORD God of heaven
    - (2) The plan of the decree (Ezra 1:2)
      - a) Cyrus had been given all the kingdoms of the earth.
      - b) As a part of his responsibilities, he had been charged with building a house for the Lord in Jerusalem.
    - (3) The plea of the decree (Ezra 1:3)
      - a) Who of the Jews would go up to Jerusalem?
      - b) Who would build the Lord's house?
    - (4) The provision of the decree (Ezra 1:4)—silver, gold, goods, and beasts for sacrifice
3. The leadership of Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:1-2; Haggai 1:1; Matthew 1:12); just over 42,000 people returned.
  - a. He was clearly designated as the leader of those returning to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:1-2).
  - b. He was later the recipient of the Lord's message to Haggai (Haggai 1:1).
4. The building of the temple
  - a. Began ~ year 3,686 (Ezra 3:8)
  - b. Halted (Ezra 4:24)
  - c. Completed ~ year 3,706 (Ezra 6:15)
5. The prophets of the time
  - a. Haggai (Haggai 1:1)
  - b. Zechariah (Zechariah 1:1)
6. The focus of the return—rebuilding the temple



B. The Story of Esther (Esther 1-10)

1. Occurred between the first and second returns
  - a. The story of Esther occurred in Persia in the royal city of Shushan.
  - b. The king of Persia at the time was Ahasuerus, historically known as Xerxes.
  - c. The third year of Ahasuerus (Esther 1:3) would have been about
    - (1) Thirty-four years after the restoration of the temple was complete (Ezra 6)
    - (2) Twenty-five years before Ezra's return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7)
2. Occurred among the Jews remaining in Persia

C. The Second Return (Ezra 7-10)

1. The leadership of Ezra (Ezra 7:1, 6-10); around 1,500 Jews returned at this time.
  - a. He rose up during the days of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:1).
  - b. He rose up from Babylon (Ezra 7:6).
  - c. He rose up to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:6-10).
2. The problem of intermarriage (Ezra 9:1-15)
  - a. The leaders of Israel informed Ezra that the people had intermarried with the heathen contrary to the word of God (Ezra 9:1-2).
  - b. Ezra moved with great fervency to rectify the situation and restore the purity of the people (Ezra 9:3-15).
3. The focus of the return—rebuilding the spirituality of the nation

D. The Third Return (Nehemiah 1-13)

1. The leadership of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:1; Nehemiah 2:9-11); the number of people with Nehemiah is unknown
  - a. Nehemiah was in Shushan (Nehemiah 1:1).
  - b. The Lord put it in the heart of Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and help his people (Nehemiah 1:4-11).
  - c. Nehemiah arrived to find no small disputation (Nehemiah 2:9-11).
2. The building of the wall (Nehemiah 2:17-18; Nehemiah 4:6)
  - a. The need presented (Nehemiah 2:17)
  - b. The hand of God on the work (Nehemiah 2:18)
  - c. The willingness of the people (Nehemiah 2:18)
  - d. The continual opposition (Nehemiah 2:10, 19; Nehemiah 4:1-3, 7-8; Nehemiah 6:1-6)
  - e. The completion of the task at hand (Nehemiah 4:6)
3. The last Old Testament prophet came after this time—Malachi
  - a. Beginning with an admonition to the religious leaders concerning their worship of God
  - b. Ending with a promise of future and greater restoration
4. The focus of the return—rebuilding the walls