



Date: Oct. 30th, 2011

Title: Exile

Series: #2 of "The Post-Exilic Community"

Ps. 137:1-6, "There by the rivers of Babylon we sat down; also we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our lyres on the willows in its midst. For there our captors asked us the words of a song; yea, our plunderers asked joy, saying, Sing to us a song of Zion. How shall we sing the song of Jehovah on a foreign soil? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget; let my tongue cleave to my palate, if I do not remember you, if I do not bring up Jerusalem above the head of my joy."

A "brief" history leading up to the Jewish exile:

- 1) One nation divided in 931BC over the conflict between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. 2 Chron. 10:1-19, the Kingdom of Israel (north) & the Kingdom of Judah (south).
 - a) Northern kingdom: Ten of the twelve tribes, 19 kings none of whom were judged righteous, its capital was Samaria, captured by the Assyrians in 721BC having existed 210 years.
 - b) Southern kingdom: Two of the twelve tribes, a total of 20 kings 8 of whom were judged righteous, its capital was Jerusalem, captured by the Babylonians in 606BC having existed 325 years.
- 2) Israel was conquered in 721BC by Assyria, and there is no commonly accepted historical record of the fate of those ten tribes, which are sometimes referred to as "*The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel*." 2 Kings 17:24-26
 - a) Assyria's policy is to carry off captives and to repopulate regions with other ethnic groups. The people who move into the northern kingdom become known as Samaritans and due to divine retribution, the Assyrian king orders Israelite priests, who've already been compromised with idolatry (cf. Baal and Asherah), to minister to calm the "God of the land." 2 Kings 17:25-41
- 3) Judah became an Assyrian client state, but as Babylon grew stronger, Egypt invaded north clear up to the Euphrates River. However, Babylon counter-attacked and in the process King Josiah was killed at Megiddo (2 Chron. 35:20-27), under obscure circumstances in (609 BCE). Judah then became a Babylonian client, but in the following years two parties formed at the court in Jerusalem: one pro-Egyptian and the other pro-Babylonian.
 - a) The 1st deportation of Jews to Babylon was in 605BC, including Daniel and other youth of influential families. Daniel 1:1-2
4. After the death of Josiah, the Jewish people made Jehoahaz king (2 Chron. 36:1-2) but Pharaoh Necho of Egypt intervened after 3 months and made Eliakim, Jehoahaz's brother, king, renaming him Jehoiakim (2 Chron. 36:3-4). Nevertheless, 8 years later Babylon moved in and for 3 years Jehoiakim was a vassal to Nebuchadnezzar until Jehoiakim rebelled in 599BC. Nebuchadnezzar placed Jerusalem under siege during which time Jehoiakim died as was succeeded by his son Jeconiah, aged either eight or eighteen. The city fell about three months later on 597 BC and Nebuchadnezzar pillaged Jerusalem and its Temple and went back to Babylon. Jehoiakim's brother Zedekiah was appointed king in his place.
 - a. The 2nd deportation of Jews to Babylon was in 597BC, Nebuchadnezzar carried off King Jeconiah, his court and other prominent citizens including the prophet Ezekiel. 2 Kings 24:10-17
5. Despite the strong warnings of Jeremiah and others, King Zedekiah revolted against Babylon and entered into an alliance with Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar returned, defeated the Egyptians, and again besieged Jerusalem. The city fell in 587BC and this time Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city wall and the Temple, King Zedekiah was blinded, and taken to Babylon, together with many others, the 3rd deportation. 2 Kings 24:20, 2 Kings 25:1-10, 2 Chron. 36:13-21 Judah became a Babylonian province, called "*Yehud Medinata*" ("*Yehud*" being the

Babylonian equivalent of the Hebrew “*Yehuda*” or “*Judah*”, and “*medinata*” the word for province), putting an end to the independent Kingdom of Judah.

- a. The exile was to last 70 years at which time God would punish Babylon. Jer. 25:12, 29:10
- b. It is interesting to note that 2 Chron. 36:21 tells us, “*to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.*” God spoke back in Leviticus 26:14-46 that if Israel disobeyed God that they would be sent in exile and that their land would lay desolate and enjoy its Sabbaths. From King Saul until the captivity, Israel and Judah had not respected the Sabbath year (every 7th year plus the 50th year), thus God “*pays back*” the land the rest it is owed.
6. The first governor appointed by Babylon was Gedaliah. Gedaliah encouraged the many Jews who had fled to surrounding countries such as Moab, Ammon, Edom, to return, and took steps to return the country to prosperity. 2 Kings 25:22-24, Jer. 40:9-10. Sometime afterwards, possibly around 582BC, Ishmael, a surviving member of the royal family, assassinated Gedaliah and his Babylonian advisors, prompting a rush of refugees seeking safety in Egypt. 2 Kings 25:25-26, Jer. 40:15-16, Jer. 41:1-22, Jer. 43:4-7 Consequently, in addition to those who remained in Judah, there were significant Jewish communities in Babylon and in Egypt; this was the beginning of the later numerous Jewish communities living permanently outside Judah in the *Jewish Diaspora*.
7. Prophets who are active during this time of turmoil:
 - a. Jonah (780-750BC), note that Nineveh was the Assyrian capital.
 - b. Amos (765-750BC), wrote against Israel for its idolatry
 - c. Hosea (765-750BC), wrote against Israel for its adultery
 - d. Micah (740-690BC), wrote against Judah of its upcoming retribution, restoration and repentance
 - e. Isaiah (739-681BC)
 - f. Nahum (630-612BC), wrote of the punishment of Assyria and the promise to Judah
 - g. Zephaniah (625-610BC), wrote against Judah of God’s judgment and justice
 - h. Habakkuk (620-610BC), wrote against Judah
 - i. Jeremiah (627-575BC)
8. In 538BC, Persia conquers Babylon the night of the feast of King Belshazzar. Daniel 5
9. Cyrus the Great of Persia ended the exile in 538BC. 2 Chron. 36:20-23
 - a. Isaiah, who prophesied from about 740-681 B.C., called Cyrus by name almost 150 years before he ruled (559-530 B.C.) Is. 44:28, “*He says to Cyrus, You are My shepherd; and he shall complete all My pleasure, even for Me to say to Jerusalem, You are built; and to the temple, You are founded.*” Later historians said that Cyrus read this prophecy and was so moved that he carried it out.
10. What did the Jews struggle with?
 - a. Idols and religious syncretism. The syncretism was so prevalent that in today’s journals there is considerable evidence that Jews prior to the Babylonian captivity were polytheistic as opposed to monotheistic. Post-exile worship of these idols among Israelites practically disappeared.
 - i. Baal (Canaanite), the sun-god, under the general title of Baal, or “lord,” was the chief object of worship of the Canaanites, similar to Zeus among the Greeks. As the Sun-god, Baal was worshipped under two aspects, beneficent and destructive. On the one hand he gave light and warmth to his worshippers; on the other hand the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being. Hence, human victims were sacrificed to him in order to appease his anger in time of plague or other trouble, the victim being usually the first-born of the sacrificer and being burnt alive.
 - ii. Asherah (Canaanite), mistress of Baal and a fertility goddess. It is suggested that one her poles was in the first temple alongside the Ark of the Covenant 2/3 of Solomon’s time.
 - iii. Molech (Ammonite) Solomon had even erected a high place to Him at the Mt. of Olives. The image of Moloch was a human figure with a bull's head and outstretched arms, ready to receive the children destined

for sacrifice. The image of metal was heated red hot by a fire kindled within, and the children laid on its arms rolled off into the fiery pit below. In order to drown the cries of the victims, flutes were played, and drums were beaten; and mothers stood by without tears or sobs, to give the impression of the voluntary character of the offering.

- iv. Chemosh (Moabite), Molech among the Moabites.
 - b. Nationalism and political syncretism; “...appoint a king to us, to judge us, like all the nations.” Having a king would make it easy to forget that God was their real leader. It was not wrong for Israel to want a king; God had mentioned the possibility in Deut. 17:14-20. Yet, in reality, the people were rejecting God as their leader. The Israelites wanted laws, an army, and a human monarch in the place of God. They wanted to run the nation through human strength, even though only God's strength could make them flourish in the hostile land of Canaan.
 - c. External conformity rather than internal submission. Jer. 7:3-12, “...So says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust yourself to lying words, saying, The temple of Jehovah! The temple of Jehovah! This is the temple of Jehovah! For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor; if you do not oppress the stranger, the orphan, and the widow; and do not pour out innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your evil; then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, from forever and to forever...”
11. What are the lessons that we can learned from all of this?
- a. God from the outset placed before them the choice between blessing and curse, between obedience and disobedience. Lev. 26 God is just, He has a standard of holiness that His people are taught about, He promises blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience. There are consequences to our choices.
 - b. God is sovereign, He reigns over the nations. Prov. 21:1, Ps. 22:28
 - c. God seeks the good of His people, even under conditions that are unfavorable.
 - d. God is concerned with His glory and His holiness, not our comfort levels or our affections.
 - e. God demands all of our affections, trust and worship – none is to be shared with any other.
 - f. The presence of “religious objects or practices” doesn’t save if there isn’t a submission to God’s will in our lives.