

**Park Street Church – Christian Formation**  
**Exilic and Post-Exilic Judaism**  
**Introduction – 24 September**

This class is designed to follow last year’s focus on 1 and 2 Kings—the history of Israel and Judah in the Land. This term we will consider the radical changes God’s people faced in the cosmopolitan culture of Babylon and later Persia. For the minority who did return to Judah, the challenges of being a persecuted minority were equally daunting. In both cases, the lessons for us are powerful.

**How Do We Know About Events During These Decades?**

**Our Biblical Sources**

Daniel	Ezra, Nehemiah
Haggai, Zechariah	Esther
Malachi	

**Extra-biblical** – Persian inscriptions; Herodotus; Josephus

**Brief Timeline: Review and Preview**

<b>Covenant at Sinai</b>	approx. 1440 BC
<b>Settlement in Land</b>	approx. 1400 BC
<b>Establishment of United Monarchy</b> (Saul, David, Solomon)	1010 BC
<b>Split in Kingdom</b> (Rehoboam in South; Jereboam – North)	931 BC
<b>Fall of the North to Assyria</b> (population exchange policy)	722 BC
<b>Fall of South to Babylon</b> (into exile)	587/6 BC
<b>Edict of Cyrus the Great</b> (exiles return; beginning of “diaspora”)	539 BC
<b>Second Temple Completed</b> (Darius I)	516 BC
<b>Esther in a Foreign Court</b> (Xerxes I)	approx. 483 BC
<b>Ministries of Ezra/Nehemiah/Malachi</b> (Artaxerxes I)	560’s-540’s

**How Did God’s People get to The Point of Exile from the Promised Land?**

**Covenant** – which established the *relationship* between God and His people

Heart of the commandments – “love the LORD your God; have no other gods before Me”

- Deut 7 – don’t get trapped in Canaanite idolatry; sober warning against intermarriage
- Deut 7:6 – “a people holy to the LORD” – chosen and beloved
- Deut 28 – if they disobeyed the LORD of the covenant, they would be besieged, conquered, scattered from one end of the earth to the other

**Broken covenant** – persistent turn to other gods

- Starting with the golden calf (Exod 32-34)
- Period of the Judges – Baal was temptation
- Solomon’s apostasy (1 Kgs 11)
- Kings up north – Baal worship (1 Kgs 17-18); summary indictment (2 Kgs 17)
- Kings of the south – notable offenders (Ahaz and Manasseh – 2 Kgs 16; 21)
- Cumulative record (1 & 2 Kgs) – pervasive idolatry with occasional short-lived reforms

**Messages of Judgment and Hope from Isaiah and Jeremiah**

**Isaiah** [late 8<sup>th</sup> c. BC – under kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah] **1:4** – Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evil-doers, children given to corruption. They have forsaken the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on Him.

**41:21-24; 44:6-18** [stinging condemnation of idols that cannot predict the future]  
**44:24-45:4** - This is what the LORD says: ‘I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread the earth out by Myself . . .who foils the signs of false prophets . . .who says of Jerusalem, “It shall be inhabited,” . . . who says of Cyrus [**6th c. BC**], “He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please;” he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt” and of the Temple, “Let its foundations be laid.”’” This is what the LORD says to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him. . . so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by name. For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I call you by name and bestow on you a title of honor [anointed] though you do not acknowledge Me.”  
**[48:20-21** - the “second Exodus”]

**Jeremiah** [7<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> c. BC – living through the horror of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple]

**7:9-11** – “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods . . . and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, ‘We are safe,’—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you. . .?”

**7:16** – “So, do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them; do not plead with me, for I will not listen to you.”

**25:11** – “This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”

**29:10-14** – “This is what the LORD says, ‘When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.’ For I know the plans I have for you . . .to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. . . I will bring you back from captivity. . . I will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

**Ch 31** – assurance of God’s never-failing covenant love; promise of the new covenant

### **Prophetic Voices in Exile**

**Ezekiel 37** – the dry bones, “the whole house of Israel” – “I will put My Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land” (vs 14).

**Daniel** [mentions Babylonian and Persian rulers: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, Darius “the Mede”] **9:2** – “...in the first year of [Darius’] reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.”

### **Isaiah’s Prophecy Fulfilled – the Edict of Cyrus**

[compare with 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-4]

### **Surveying the World Stage**

**Cyrus the Great** (559-530 BC) – the Cyrus Cylinder

**Cambyses** (530-522 BC) – court intrigue, threats of a usurper

**Darius I** (522-486 BC) – accession to throne; favorable toward that province on his western border  
→ temple completed

**Xerxes I** (486-465 BC) – Esther in a foreign court

**Artaxerxes I** (464-425 BC) - ministries of Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi