

**Israel Ignores God's Prophets<sup>1</sup>**  
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC  
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.  
January 31, 2021

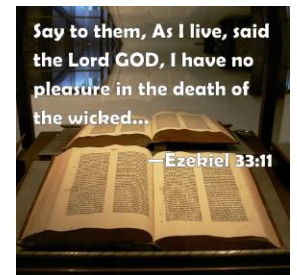
Diaspora XLVI – The Church Scattered, Forty-sixth Sunday

Text: 2 Kings 25:1-12

Purpose: God had warned Israel repeatedly about their sin against God. They refused to put away the other gods that the inhabitants worshipped in the Promised Land. Judgment came (finally after numerous prophets warned Israel) to Jerusalem and it was destroyed and most of the inhabitants were taken as prisoners or murdered. But God restored them after 70 years. Alexander the Great conquered in 330 B.C. and then the Romans in 63 B.C. God was preparing the world through these two great nations for Jesus Christ and His message to be delivered to the world.

### Introduction

One cannot read through the Old Testament prophets without seeing that we have a God of wrath who hates and judges sin. But judgment is not the only message of the prophets. The message of Israel's impending judgment was, and still is, intended to cause men and



---

<sup>1</sup> Outline from "Firm Foundations: Creation to Christ" by New Tribes Mission, Lesson 29 (p. 379-390).

women to believe God and to repent of their sin. In Ezekiel 33:11 God says, “... *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*”

The message of the Old Testament prophets is enough to give us chills as we consider the moral and spiritual condition of our own nation. We have so much knowledge of God and His Word available to us, yet we are becoming an increasingly godless society. Self, money, things, pleasure, and even Satan are the focus of people’s lives. It is as if we have turned to our government as the source of our blessings, as if it is a golden calf we are to worship. We know that God will not let all this continue. In His time, He will bring swift, sure judgment on our society, just as He did upon Israel and her godless neighbors. How horrible it will be for those who have known so much about God but have still rejected Him and in turn, taught others to do the same!



These lessons are exceedingly timely for our culture. The clock is ticking away toward the day when the Church will be removed from the earth. I was going to bring a ticking clock up here as a reminder that the time of judgment is coming. We do not know God’s timing, but we do know that before He returns, He has given us a job to do.

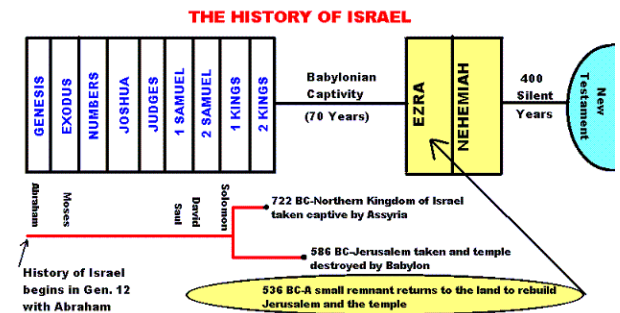
Acts 1:7, 8 is just as relevant for us today, as it was for Jesus’ disciples. “*And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath but in*



*his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*” If we belong to Christ, we have His Spirit; and we have been given His precious Gospel to share with others so that all may have opportunity to hear salvation is found only in Jesus Christ. We are to be the bearers of this Good News before time runs out.

## Transition

This morning, I want us to review the last half of the Old Testament and move quickly through a period in Israel’s history known as the time of the prophets. Last week we examined the life and failings of King Solomon. God promised that the kingdom would be divided after his death. When Solomon died, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms, just as God said it would be. The Northern Kingdom was comprised of ten tribes while the Southern Kingdom was Judah. The passage we read this morning detailed the horrible scene that unfolded as the Babylonian army came and blinded the eyes of King Zedekiah and finished killing many of the citizens of Jerusalem.



This time of judgment in the life of Israel didn't happen at once. God’s judgment always comes after a period of warning, waiting, and then when there is no repentance,

judgment comes. God has always given individuals an opportunity to repent before judgment comes.

## God spoke to Man from the Beginning



God spoke to *Adam and Eve* in the Garden of Eden and warned them about the choices that they would have to make. – they chose to disobey.

God spoke to *Cain* about the lion that was crouching at the door of his heart waiting to destroy him. – he chose to disobey and killed his brother Abel.

God spoke to *Noah* and He listened. For 100 years Noah preached to his neighbors while he built the Ark. Noah and his family were saved from the flood while his neighbors drowned in judgment.

At the age of 80, God spoke to *Abram* (later called *Abraham*) and called him away from his people in Ur. Because he was obedient, God raised up and blessed an entire nation. He trusted God and was even willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. But God intervened and provided a sacrifice for Himself – a ram.

God blessed *Isaac and Jacob*. Jacob was blessed with twelve sons that became the twelve tribes of Israel. Those 70 individuals moved to Egypt where God provided for them through Joseph.

Four hundred years later, God spoke to *Moses* and gave him the words he needed to confront the Egyptian Pharaoh. The pharaoh was warned through various plagues to let God's

people go, but he hardened his heart and refused to listen or obey God's command. The children of Israel, almost a million, left Egypt on that Passover night. The nation of Egypt followed after the children of Israel and were decimated and the army was defeated at the Red Sea.

God spoke to the children of Israel in the wilderness through Moses and gave them the Ten Commandments. They said with their lips that they would obey, but their actions proved otherwise. The children of Israel repeatedly failed to trust God thus they were sentenced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Only *Joshua* and Caleb were allowed to enter into the Promised Land. Moses was buried by God on Mt. Nebo.

God spoke to the Nation of Israel through judges like *Gideon*. God spoke to the people through prophets like Samuel. Did the people always listen? No! When they rebelled and turned from God, they were judged.

## The Message of the Prophets

In Israel's case, God sent numerous prophets to come and call the people to repentance. While they were a united nation under *King Saul, David, and Solomon*, prophets like *Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, Micah, Hosea, and Nathan* called the kings to obedience and judgment. When the nation divided into two kingdoms, other prophets began to call for the nation to repent and turn to God. Prophets like *Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah* pleaded with the leaders to trust God and repent.



But they would not listen and continued to do evil. They continued to call the people to turn from their polytheistic worship (the worship of multiple gods) which involved following after the gods of Baal – but the children of Israel, their priests, nor their Kings would listen.

**Jeremiah** was the one known as the weeping prophet because he was the one that brought the bad news to Jerusalem that God was going to judge them. But they refused to accept the coming judgment. The Book of Lamentations is comprised of five laments, thought to be written by Jeremiah, concerning the sin of the nation and God's judgment of them.

**Ezekiel and Daniel** are prophets that were in exile during their Babylonian captivity. There are four books of the Bible known as the Major Prophets of Israel. (**Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel**) The only reason they are called that is that their books in the Bible are longer than the other prophets.

The remaining 12 books are affectionately known as the Minor Prophets. Their writings are included in the last portion of the Old Testament. Those books include: **Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.** Each of these men were called by God to bring a message to a particular group of people at a specific time in history.

### **The Message of the Prophets**



Each of these men was called to preach repentance. God wanted his chosen people to turn from their sin, and call upon the name of the Lord. But with such regularity, the children of Israel went back to the pig pen of sin and idol worship that judgment fell time and time again.

God did not want to judge them; He wanted them to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and mind. But they refused God. They rejected God's commandments. Some may have followed God externally, but internally, they continued in sin and false worship.



### **READ Jeremiah 5:1-6**

God sent the Assyrians first, and later the Babylonians to be the rod of God's anger. They became the staff of God's indignation against this rebellious and stiff-necked people. God sent a godless nation to judge, plunder, and trample the city into the dust. (Isaiah 10:5-6 – reworded)

### **The Promise of a Redeemer**

Even though God allowed this to happen, God was still in control of the Nation of Israel. God is still in control of your situation as well. We need to remember; God's sovereignty is still intact even in the midst of tragedy.

Ever since the Garden of Eden, God had promised a redeemer. That promise was repeated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and echoed again and again through the prophets. This future redeemer would be from the line and lineage of David. He would be born in Bethlehem. He would give



sight to the blind. He would be rejected by His people – in much the same way the prophets were rejected. This longing for a future Messiah resonates throughout the latter portions of the Old Testament.

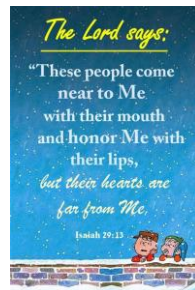
God was going to do a new thing and bring the Messiah – the Christ – to redeem them.



### Israel's attitude toward the Prophets

There were always some Israelites who believed God and believed the messages of His prophets. But the vast majority refused to obey the words of God. Often the Prophets were persecuted, thrown in the bottom of wells, put in prison, stripped of their wealth, and sometimes killed. A prophet of God doesn't fair well in this world.

During all those years, the people continued to worship idols. They followed in the wicked ways of neighboring countries. Some even worshipped on Saturday in the temple and then would go and offer sacrifices to Baal through the week.



Isaiah 29:13 says, “... *these people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me...*”

God wanted to make sure that an accurate record of Israel's rebellion was recorded. In spite of their sin, God had these prophecies written down as a reminder to the children of Israel that God had not forgotten His promise of a redeemer. God had been faithful to them. God had kept His word in the past, and will keep His word in the future.

### After the Judgment



The time of the exile was a traumatic event in the life of Israel. They thought that God had abandoned them and forsaken them. From their vantage point, everything was hopeless. They always felt that God would some way, forgive their sin again, not judge them, and allow the city of Jerusalem to stand.

There are people today hoping God grades on the curve and our good deeds will outweigh our bad ones. I want to remind us, that we are only saved by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, not our righteousness. We are only saved by the shed blood of our Savior, Jesus, not our good works.

Even while they were in captivity in Babylon, some knew that there was hope after the judgment. The children of Israel were taken as captives to Babylon in 586 B.C. and Jerusalem was finally destroyed in the year 606 B.C. (This was roughly 450 years after Saul was crowned King of Israel). The people of Israel remained in captivity until 536 B.C. It was then that King Artaxerxes gave permission to Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and begin to rebuild the walls, streets, and temple.

When they returned from captivity after 70 years, there was a realization among the children of Israel that there was only one God. From that time of judgment, idol worship never became a serious issue again in the nation. They worshipped YHWH alone.

Those that returned had time to review God's plan for Israel. Many scholars believe that it was during this period that

most of the Old Testament was consolidated into one collection. Many of the Psalms reflect the feeling of exile, isolation, and abandonment. But there was a theme running throughout the Old Testament that one day, there would be a coming redeemer – a Messiah – the Christ.

## The Remaining Remnant

When those in exile returned, they found that some of those that were left to tend the flocks and fields had intermarried with the Assyrians. They had mingled their faith in YHWH with the gods of Assyria. The descendants of these marriage relationships were known as Samaritans. The Samaritans continued to worship the Lord but did not worship Him as God instructed Moses. They refused to worship God in Jerusalem.

Samaritans	Jews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intermarried with non-Jews</li><li>• Only accept 1 prophet - Moses</li><li>• Only accept the Torah (Gen to Deut) &amp; Joshua</li><li>• Holy Place - Mount Gerizim</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No inter-marrying with non-Jews</li><li>• Torah plus the Writings, Psalms &amp; Prophets</li><li>• Holy Place – Jerusalem Mount</li></ul>
	

Those that returned from exile hated this first group. This hatred and animosity continued over the next several hundred years – even until the days of Jesus. You may recall the story of the Good Samaritan and the woman at the well at Samaria.

## The Return from Exile

The Israelites who returned to their homeland were given a new name. They were given the name Jews. This name was probably derived from the word Judah. The other ten tribes of Israel (Northern Kingdom) were lost to history. Only Judah remained. The Jews continued to worship the

Lord, but it came out of sense of cultural identity instead of doing it from their heart.

They brought their required sacrifices to the temple, but really didn't believe they were sinners who needed God's mercy.

## The Greeks and Romans

Around 330 BC, Alexander the Great came and invaded Jerusalem. The Greek culture, which began around 400 B.C., began to transform the known world into one language - Greek. The influence of Greek thought, culture, theatre, government, and language rippled through the known world. Even today, those same influences are felt.



At the time of Alexander the Great's conquest, the Old Testament Bible had not been fully completed. Only part of the Old Testament was completed. Some of these were being translated from Hebrew (which almost all of the Old Testament was written) into Greek. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. People all across the new nation were reading God's word concerning the coming redeemer – the Messiah – the Christ.

Later in the first century, after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God gave men the rest of His word, the New Testament, written in the Greek language.

Alexander the Great's Empire was broken up into various regions after his death. The Maccabee family broke away from Roman Rule, and Jerusalem was self-ruled for almost

100 years. After the failed self-rule by the Maccabees, the Roman Empire took firm control of Jerusalem in 63 B.C. The Romans ruled over Jerusalem until they destroyed the city and temple (for the second time) in 70 A.D. The Roman Empire lasted until 476 A.D.

The Romans ruled over the Jews and made them pay taxes. If anyone disobeyed, he was strictly punished. Crucifixion was widely practiced by the Romans as a way of bringing a community into submission. The Romans worshipped many false gods; including the worship of Caesar.



But in God's sovereignty, He allowed the Roman army to build vast roads which linked the entire empire together. God was preparing a common language – Greek – and a common distribution system – the Roman roads – for the distribution of God's message of Salvation to the entire world.

### **The Jewish Believers**

Once the prophet Malachi died around 400 B.C., there was no longer a prophetic word heard in Israel. The nation quietly continued for 400 years until the voice of John the Baptist began preaching in the wilderness. Scholars call this period the inter-testament period. The word of the Lord was completed for Israel. Now it was a time of waiting for the Messiah – the Christ.

Even though Israel's faith was weak, there were some that believed God and his promise for a redeemer.

Zacharias, who was John the Baptist's father, said of his son John, *"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on 'Before the Lord to prepare His ways; (Malachi 3:1) To give His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.'"* (Luke 1:76-77)

There was a hopeful anticipation growing in Israel of what God was going to do when the Messiah came. Mary, the mother of Jesus, knew this and was anticipating the coming of the Messiah. She may have been shocked at the news of the angel, but received the pending news of Jesus' birth, with great grace and understanding.

### **Conclusion and Challenge**

This news concerning a Savior is great news. Some in Jerusalem received it with great joy. Others rejected God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ because they were convinced Jesus was not the One they were anticipating.

The coming of Jesus Christ was not just a second hand thought on God's part. Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Jesus Christ came as the promised Messiah and Redeemer of Israel and all that call upon His name.

The repeatedly rejection of God by His chosen people caused great grief to God's heart. Psalm 81: 13, 14, 16 says, *"Oh that My people had harkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies..."* God said He would have *"...fed them ... with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock..."*

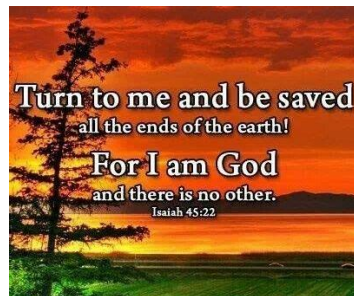
God was indeed saddened and heart broken by Israel. But God's plan of salvation is not only available to the Jews; it is extended to all – to the entire world – available to all that believe. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and Only Son, that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”* (John 3:16-17)

for so loved  
God the world  
He  
**GAVE**  
His only Son  
THAT whosoever believeth in **HIM**  
SHALL NOT PERISH  
but have  
Eternal **LIFE**

Today God is extending that same invitation that He has been sending throughout history. God is saying to you today, *“Believe in Me.”* *“Turn from your wicked ways.”* *“Seek My face.”* *“And I will hear from heaven, and forgive your sins, and heal your land.”* (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Which are you? Are you like the Israelite that continues to reject God's offer - or – are you like those few that wisely believe His words and trust only in Him?

The challenge of Joshua is the same for us today. *“Choose Ye this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* (Joshua 24:15)



**LET US PRAY**