

The Captivity and the Return of the Remnant

Last quarter we ended with the final four kings of Judah:

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| ▪ Jehoahaz | ▪ Jehoiachin |
| ▪ Jehoiakim | ▪ Zedekiah |

None of them were good kings, but all led Judah further from God's commands – then God allowed Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to invade the land. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the house of the Lord, broke down the walls of Jerusalem and burned the city gates. He killed many and took hostages to his land, making them his servants.

The Captivity:

The destruction of Jerusalem and the nation of Judah took place in three definite movements:

1. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, taking Jehoiakim and many leading nobles (princes, possibly including Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mischael, and Azariah) captive.
2. Nebuchadnezzar invaded a second time, took Jehoiachin and the most important people (most likely including Ezekiel).
3. When Zedekiah broke his allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, joining an alliance with Egypt, the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem burning the Temple and taking the final hostages to Babylon.

Remember the final words we read in Second Chronicles tell that the people of the Lord were slowly restored to their homeland (after the seventy years of captivity were fulfilled). “22. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD *spoken* by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, 23. Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. Who *is there* among you of all his people? The LORD his God *be* with him, and let him go up” (2 Chronicles 36:22-23). God touched the heart of King Cyrus to send His people home to rebuild the Temple.

The Return:

The return of God's people back to Jerusalem took place in the three definite movements:

1. Cyrus (of Persia) issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. Zerubbabel led this first group.
2. Ezra, a scribe and priest, led a second group back to Jerusalem about eighty years later.
3. Nehemiah returned to rebuild the city walls (the walls that had been broken and the gates that had been burned) of Jerusalem.