

## Conquest And Deportation

In the latter days before Babylon conquered Judah and burned the capital city of Jerusalem, there were partial reforms toward godliness. However, the reforms would not last long. Hezekiah removed the high places of idolatry and crushed in pieces its images (*2 Kings 18:4*). But in the next generation, his son Manasseh would lead them right back into idolatry, even putting an idolatrous image in the very temple of God (*2 Kings 21:7*). Besides idolatry, Manasseh consulted with those who had familiar spirits (*2 Kings 21:6, 1 Samuel 28:3, 7*), and shed innocent blood (*2 Kings 21:1, 16*). All of his sinful ways moved the Lord to say, “*And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies*” (*2 Kings 21:14*). Josiah would lead the people again into reform cutting down the idols, putting away the workers with familiar spirits (*2 Kings 23:14, 24*). But change was only temporary, and permanent reform no longer possible because God says in Josiah’s day, “*I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel and will cast off this city which I have chosen, even Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there*” (*2 Kings 23:27*).

Jehoiakim (609-597 B.C), Josiah’s successor, experienced the beginning of Babylon’s conquest of Jerusalem as Nebuchadnezzar left Jehoiakim on the throne, but as Nebuchadnezzar’s servant for three years. Prior to Nebuchadnezzar, bands of Judah’s enemies such as the Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites came upon Judah to destroy her, just as God promised (*2 Kings 24:2*). In 606-605 B.C., When Jehoiakim rebelled, Nebuchadnezzar took selective members of the nobility, and along with vessels from the temple, sent them to Babylon (*2 Chron. 36:6, Dan. 1:1-7*). This is the first of a series of deportations of Judah into Babylonian captivity. Daniel and his three friends, later known as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were among the captives taken to Babylon.

Jehoichin, Jehoiakim’s successor to being king of Judah, only reigned for three months before Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged Jerusalem. In 597 B.C. Jehoichin, his family, and servants along with 10,000 others including the mighty men of valor and talented craftsmen were



taken captive to Babylon. Only the poorest of citizens in Jerusalem were left to take care of the land. Treasures from the temple and the king’s house were taken to Babylon, while the vessels of gold which Solomon had placed in the temple were cut to pieces (*2 Kings 24:1-16*). The prophet Ezekiel was in this group taken to Babylon (*Ezek. 1:2-3*).

While Daniel would be God’s prophet among royalty in the city of Babylon, Ezekiel would be God’s spokesman among the people in the countryside.

After this deportation in 597 B.C. Jeremiah receives a vision of two baskets of figs (*Jeremiah 24:1*). One basket had good figs, and the other contained bad figs. God applies the good figs to those who have gone into captivity in Babylon. God would set His eyes on them for good and bring them back from captivity as they would return to God with their whole heart. The bad figs were those who would remain in Jerusalem under Zedekiah and leave to find protection in Egypt. They would be consumed according to the word of



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Jehovah (*Jeremiah 24:1-10*). God was already during these deportations promising that a remnant would return with a new heart to serve God. As prophesied, God's captives in Babylon would serve the king of Babylon for 70 years and then return to dwell in the land given to them and their fathers in Jerusalem (*Jeremiah 25:11*).

In 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar established Mattaniah on the throne, changing his name to Zedekiah to emphasize that he was a vassal king (*2 Kings 24:17*). Zedekiah revolted, forming a coalition with Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Phoenicia, ignoring Jeremiah's prophecy to not fight against the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar (*2 Kings 24:20, Jeremiah 27:3-16, 34:1-7*). The Babylonian leader came to take control of the fortified cities in the hill country of Judea, and then besieged Jerusalem.

Warfare in ancient times was vastly different from modern warfare. Instead of planes dropping bombs from the air to destroy a city, an evading army would surround a city for a lengthy period of time, cutting off needed food supply. Eventually starvation would occur and cities would surrender, try to escape, or die from famine. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem for about 18 months (*2 Kings 25:1-4*). Then in 586 B.C. Zedekiah tried to flee Jerusalem. He was captured near Jericho and taken to Nebuchadnezzar's headquarters in Riblah. Zedekiah's sons were put to death before his eyes, and then his eyes were put out, leaving him blind as he was bound with chains for Babylon (*2 Kings 25:5-7*).



Later in 586 B.C. Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard in Nebuchadnezzar's army entered Jerusalem. He looted the temple carrying away valuable metal vessels and burnt the temple and the king's house. Every great house in Jerusalem was set on fire. The walls were also torn down. The residue of the people left in the city along with those who tried to flee were taken captive to Babylon (*2 Kings 25:8-17*). Jeremiah records that 832 people were taken captive to Babylon. Five years later, in 581 B.C. Nebuzaradan took 745 people away as captives from Judah (*Jeremiah 52:29-30*). The Psalmist portrays the sadness of the people going into captivity, and grasping the reality of leaving Zion: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. Upon the willows in the midst thereof we hanged up our harps" (*Psalms 137:1*). The sad captives would travel approximately 500 miles before entering the gates of Babylon.



How would you conduct yourself in a foreign land? We see the godly example of Daniel instructing the heart. The king has instructed a daily portion of the king's dainties and wine for the young and promising captives for his court. Daniel knew God's law had dietary restrictions



as to what meats were clean and unclean (*Leviticus 11*). Daniel “*purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king’s dainties, nor with the wine which he drank*” (*Daniel 1:8*). Taking this stance against the king’s wishes, Daniel was risking his promising position in the palace of the king, and the life of the prince of the eunuchs if they appeared unto the king looking unnourished (*Daniel 1:4, 10*). After all, isn’t the matter of food and drink just a trivial matter? Daniel, you can give in to the king’s wishes and ignore God’s law because you are so far away from home. God will understand...

Daniel lived life by submitting to God’s law, not by some subjective situation ethics! The prince of the eunuchs gave Daniel a ten-day test and allowed Daniel and his three young friends to eat vegetables (pulse) and water (*Daniel 1:12-14*). At the end of the ten days the four youths appeared fairer and better nourished than the others who ate the king’s dainties and drank his wine. They were allowed to continue their diet of pulse as God continued to bless them before king Nebuchadnezzar (*Daniel 1:15-20*).

We should purpose in our heart to cleave to the Lord (*Acts 11:23*). Cleaveing to the Lord we will like Daniel respect God’s word in all things. We will avoid harmful drugs, not allowing anything to control us (*I Cor. 6:12, cf. Gal. 5:20- “pharmakeia”*). Knowing the Lord wants us to put his kingdom and righteousness first in our lives, we will not put our jobs, recreational, or school activities first before assembling with the saints for worship (*Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 10:25*). While Daniel did not change his ways in the Lord just because he was in a foreign land, we will not cease to assemble with the saints when we go off to college (*cf. Acts 9:26-28*).

In our day we should purpose in our heart that we will not defile ourselves. Keeping ourselves sexually pure should be a priority in our young lives. We need to control our eyes and thoughts that will keep us from sinful lust (*Matt. 5:27-28, Job 31:1*). We should never be embarrassed to flee youthful lusts (*2 Tim. 2:22, Gen. 39:9-12*). We should also purpose in our hearts to keep our speech from transgression (*Psalms 17:3*). We should refrain from lying, and corrupt or filthy speech (*Ephesians 4:25, 29, 5:4*) as we purpose in our heart that our speech will be true and uplifting before others (*Colossians 4:6*).

As Daniel lived up to the meaning of his name: “*God is my judge,*” we should live acknowledging God as our judge, and follow His will in our lives regardless whether we are at home or abroad.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What sins did King Manasseh lead the Israelites into that displeased God?
2. How can we make sure we do not become evil in a single generation following a generation whose leaders lead in godly reform?

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3. How many deportations of people into Babylonian captivity does the Bible reveal?  
(a). 2 (b). 3 (c). 4 (d). 5
4. What is the meaning of Jeremiah's vision of the baskets of figs?
5. When was God's temple in Jerusalem burnt and the walls torn down?
6. What is meant by the Psalmist saying Judah left their harps hanging on the willows at the rivers of Babylon?
7. How far did the captives travel from Jerusalem to Babylon?
7. How long would Judah be in Babylonian captivity?
8. When was Daniel taken captive to Babylon?
9. Show how Daniel was not living according to "situation ethics"?
10. What should we all purpose in our heart to do today?