

Lesson 4: Persistence



Introduction

During the time of the exile, the Prophet Daniel faithfully served in the court of the Persian King Darius. But Daniel's enemies plotted to have him removed. When forbidden to worship, Daniel continued to pray to the Lord, for which he received the sentence of death and was thrown into a den of lions.

Read: Daniel 6:1-28

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

Old Testament

New Testament

Where in the Bible?

Most of the books of the Prophets are near the end of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament: History

Israelite history is often broken down into three sections: the **pre-exilic** period, the **exilic** period, and the **post-exilic** period — referring to the time before, during, and after the exile to Babylon. There were prophets who taught in each of these periods.

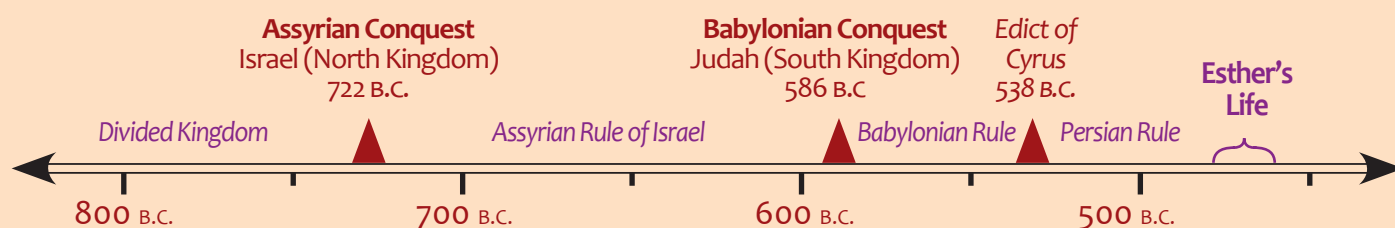
Biblical Time Period: Exile

The time of the Exile was a significant period in the history of Israel. God's people were first attacked and conquered in the north by the Assyrian Empire, then later in the south by the Babylonian Empire. Many of the people were carried away into exile in Mesopotamia, far from home.

Eventually God brought King Cyrus of Persia to power over the Babylonians. God's people were allowed to return home to rebuild their temple and their nation. The Prophet Daniel lived under the Babylonians, as well as under the rulers of the Medes and Persians.

When in Time?

The Assyrian Empire conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. Years later, the Babylonian Empire from Mesopotamia overcame the Assyrians. In 586 B.C., they conquered the southern kingdom of Judah, carrying many of the Judean nobility into exile in Babylon. The Babylonian exile lasted until 538 B.C., when King Cyrus of Persia allowed God's people to return to their homeland. Some stayed in Persia.



Discuss: Daniel 6:1-28

1. Who were the people who wanted to get Daniel in trouble? Why do you think they did this? What was the only way they could get at him?
2. Hearing that prayer to the Lord was forbidden, what did Daniel do? Why would he do this? Would you have the courage to do the same if our Christian faith were made illegal?
3. In what sense is our secular society resistant (or even hostile) to faith in God? Have you ever felt "targeted" for being a believer? How did you respond?
4. How did King Darius feel about Daniel? Given his personal feelings, why did the king send him to the lions' den?
5. What did God do to protect Daniel in the lions' den? Do you think Daniel knew this would happen, or did he simply trust in God? What is the difference?
6. What effect did all this have on King Darius? When we know that God has saved us and done great things for us, why is it natural for us to want to tell others?
7. Read 1 Peter 5:6-11. Scripture compares the devil to a prowling lion, "seeking someone to devour." In what sense is the power of evil a reality in this world? What practical and spiritual caution does this require of us in everyday life?
8. How has the promise of Christ given you hope and confidence in the face of danger? Can you give an example? Is it possible to have fear and doubts, yet still trust and believe in God?

Where in the World?

In the centuries prior to the coming of Jesus, the Jewish people had been exiled to the lands of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. Advances in travel and trade also meant that people could more easily move from place to place.

This "spreading-out" of the Jewish people is referred to as the **Diaspora** (pronounced: die-AAH-spoeh-rah).

By the time of Jesus, there were more Jews in the Diaspora than were actually living in Israel.



"The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations." (Deuteronomy 4:27)