

Lesson 4: Resistance



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.

Introduction

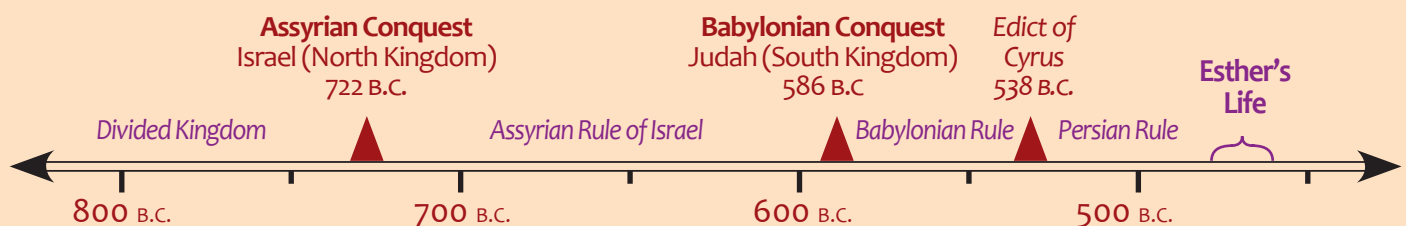
The King of Babylon built a large golden statue and forced the people to bow down and worship it. Whoever didn't pray to the statue would be thrown into a fiery furnace. But three young Hebrew men stood up in faith and resisted the King's edict. God was with them.

Read: Daniel 3:1-30

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

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 3:1-30

1. What did King Nebuchadnezzar expect people to do when the musical instruments were played? Why do you think he made such an order? What would happen to people if they refused?
2. Who were the three men who resisted the king's order? Why would they do this?
3. Why do you think some of the Chaldeans (Babylonian officials) accused them to begin with? What motives could they have had?
4. How did the king react to the stand taken by these three men? What did he do?
5. Reread what the three men answered in verses 17-18. How was this response both an expression of trust in God as well as a statement of submission to God's will?
6. Why do you think the fate of the executioners was specifically mentioned in verse 22?
7. When the king looked into the furnace, what did they see? What was happening here?
8. As a matter of faith, have you ever had to resist something that you knew was wrong, even when everyone else seemed to be doing it? When? What gave you the strength to resist?
9. Read Acts 5:27-29. What were Peter and John commanded to do? What reason did they offer for why they would not do what they were told?

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** (*die-AAH-spoe-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)