

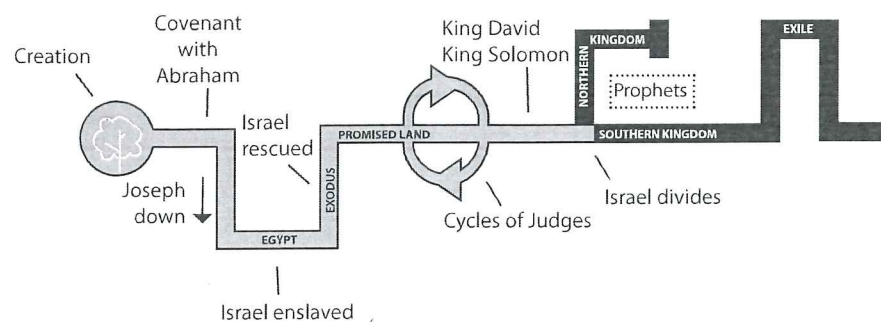


Exile & Prophets

Israel experienced a dark period of division, defeat and exile. However, God raised up prophets who promised that the best was yet to come.

Session 5

The story so far



MY NOTES

The divided kingdom

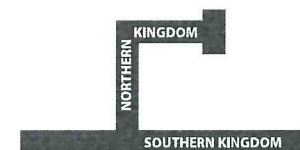
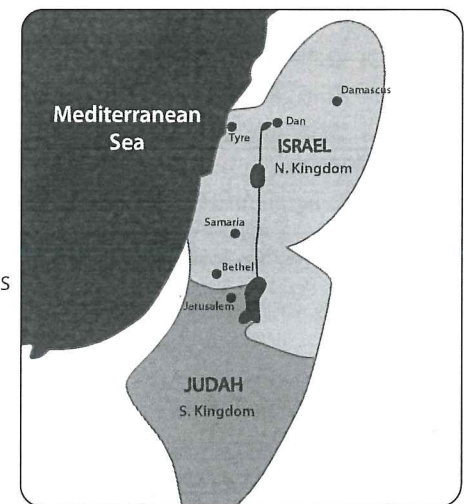
After Solomon died, his son, King Rehoboam, caused a division in Israel (930 BC)

Northern Kingdom (Israel)

- Ten most northerly tribes in the region later known as Samaria
- They set up alternative worship sites at Dan and Bethel

Southern Kingdom (Judah)

- Southerly tribes of Judah and Benjamin
- Retained Jerusalem as capital city and the promise of the Messiah through David's bloodline



The Northern and Southern kingdoms appointed their own kings. God also raised up prophets in each kingdom.

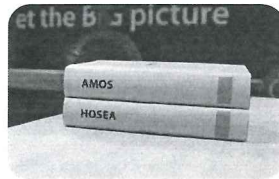
The Northern Kingdom

Hosea

- Called to marry a promiscuous woman called Gomer. Her unfaithfulness mirrors Israel's unfaithfulness to God
- But God's love remains faithful to his people

'Go again and love the adulterous woman who is loved by another man. Love her even as the LORD has loved Israel.'

Hosea 3.1 (paraphrase)



Amos

- Israel becomes a place of exploitation and slavery
- God calls Amos, a shepherd from the Southern Kingdom, to speak up for justice in Israel

'I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies ... But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'

Amos 5.21,24



Martin Luther King quoted Amos in his famous 'I have a dream' speech.

Elijah

Key References

1 Kings 17—19; 2 Kings 1—2

Context

- Northern Kingdom c. 850 BC
- King Ahab and Queen Jezebel turned Israel to Baal worship

Bio

- Elijah means 'my God is Yahweh'
- He declared a drought in Israel
- Showdown on Mount Carmel as Elijah's God sent fire
- Elijah had a breakdown and ran away
- Succeeded by Elisha, then he rode to heaven in a chariot
- Old Testament promised one like Elijah would return to herald the arrival of God himself (Malachi 4.5)
- Elijah makes a final appearance at the transfiguration of Jesus (Luke 9. 28–36)

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

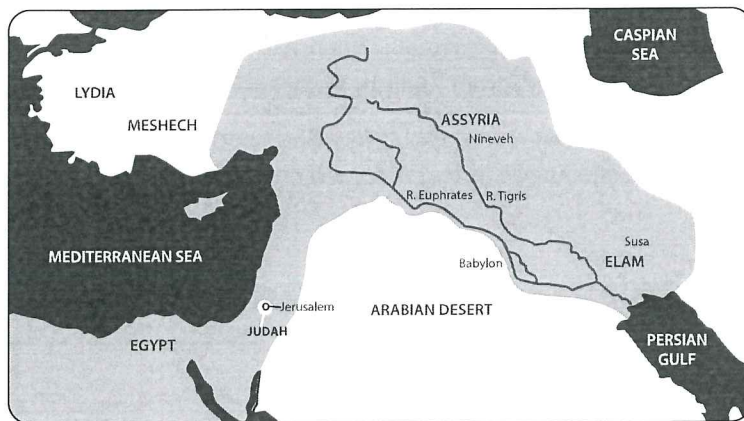
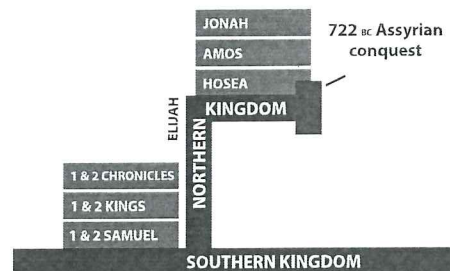
James 5.17



Northern Kingdom defeated

After warnings from the prophets, the Assyrians conquered the Northern tribes in 722 BC.

The Assyrians were brutal and merged ethnic groups they conquered. The Northern tribes were therefore mixed up with other peoples and their identity was dissolved.



The Assyrian Empire c.700 BC

Put the text in context

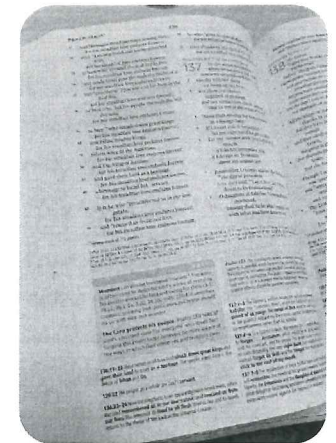
Asking questions can help us to dig deeper:

- When was this passage written?
- What was the historical context?
- Who were the intended audience?
- Why was this message important?

Study Bibles and commentaries

These offer background information and explanation that help us dig deeper and appreciate the historical and cultural context of the Bible.

See page 150 for recommended reading.



MY NOTES

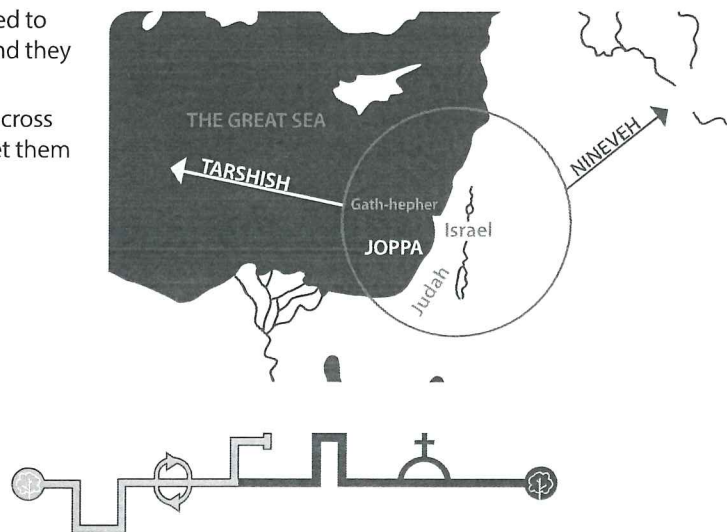
Jonah

Context

- Prophet in the Northern Kingdom c. 750 BC
- Israel under threat from the brutal Assyrian empire.
- The capital city of Assyria was Nineveh

Bio

- Called to preach to Nineveh
- Jonah fled on a ship bound for Tarshish
- In a storm, Jonah was thrown overboard
- A large fish returned him to land
- He preached to Nineveh and they repented
- Jonah was cross that God let them off!



Discussion Time

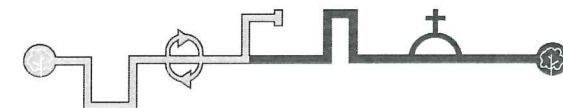
Pause the video for 25 minutes.

Read Jonah 1.1–3 and then Jonah 3.1–5

- So, why did Jonah turn and run away from the call to Nineveh?
- What can make us feel like running away from God's call to share his message?

Consider the symmetry between God's first call to Jonah (1.2) and his second call after Jonah had run away and been restored (3.2).

- What might this reveal about how God handles our failures? How can this encourage us to get up and go again for God?



Restart the video and move on to PART 2.

Exile

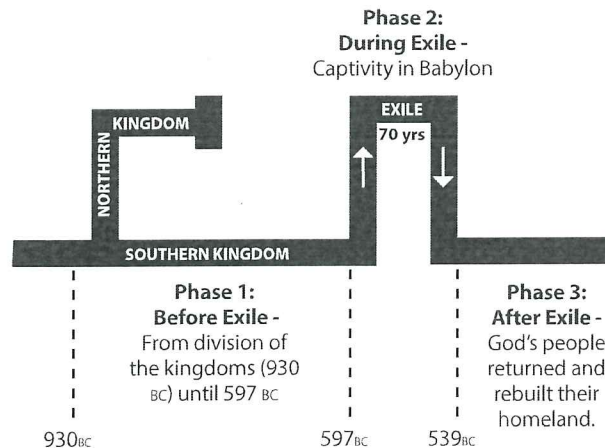
The enforced deportation of Jews to Babylon for 70 years. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, ordered two waves of deportation (597 and 586 BC).

PART 2

The Southern Kingdom

The Southern Kingdom survived the attack of the Assyrians, but later experienced defeat and exile.

This final section of the Old Testament comes in three phases:



Phase 1: Before Exile

Surviving the Assyrian siege

- The Assyrians besiege Jerusalem (c.701 BC)
- The prophet Isaiah urges King Hezekiah not to surrender
- Discovery of a water tunnel enables the city to survive the siege

This same Hezekiah closed the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

2 Chronicles 32.30



- Archaeologists discovered Hezekiah's tunnel in 1838

Historical events in the Bible are supported by archaeological evidence.

Isaiah

Key References

Isaiah 1—66; 2 Kings 18—20

Context

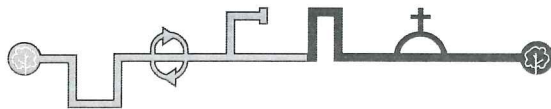
- Southern Kingdom (Judah) c. 750 bc
- The Assyrians conquered the Northern kingdom and then threatened Jerusalem (Isaiah 36—37)

Bio

- The prophet Isaiah spanned the reign of Kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah
- Experienced a vision of God's glory (Isaiah 6)
- Spoke oracles of judgement on God's people and their enemies
- Prophesied about the coming Messiah (Isaiah 9; 53) and global restoration (Isaiah 2; 11; 66)

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 2.4



Interpreting Old Testament Prophets

- Understand the prophets in their context:
There are 16 books named after prophets. They are in order of size, not date.
- Understand the prophets as God's mouthpieces:
Prophets declared, 'Thus says the LORD ...' They also used drama to convey their message.
- Understand the prophets in the light of Jesus:
Remarkable prophecies anticipate the arrival of the Messiah.



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9.6

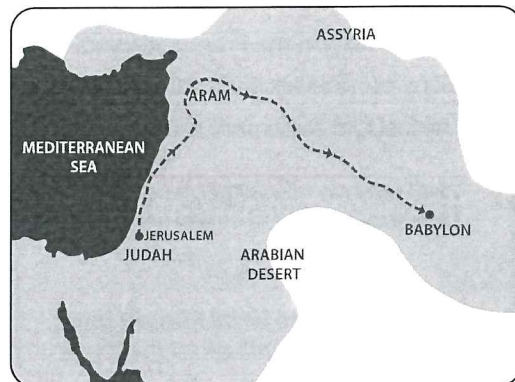
But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53.5

Phase 2: During the Exile

In 597 BC the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem.

- After a failed rebellion, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, smashing the city walls and Temple
- All able-bodied Jews had to make a 500-mile journey to Babylon (modern-day Iraq)



By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion ... If I forget you, O Jerusalem ... let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth.

Psalm 137.1,5–6

Ezekiel's visions

In Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel experienced amazing visions.

- God was still on the throne (Ezekiel 1)
- He would still use Israel to fulfil his global purpose (Ezekiel 47)

Daniel

Key References

Daniel 1—12

Context

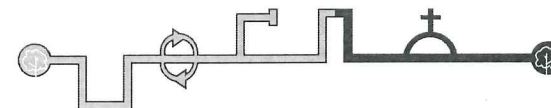
- The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in 597 BC

Bio

- An elite Jewish young man exiled to Babylon
- The Babylonians renamed him Belteshazzar
- Daniel refused to eat Babylonian foods
- Became the king's senior advisor
- Thrown into den of lions for praying to Yahweh
- Daniel is a model for Christians today – living faithfully as exiles in a foreign culture

Conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile ... I urge you as exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

1 Peter 1.17; 2.11



Phase 3: After Exile

The Persians defeated the Babylonians and, in 538 BC, allowed the exiles to return home.

Rebuilding the Temple

- The first wave began to rebuild the Temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel
- They were encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah

Rebuilding the city walls

'This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts...' The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it.

Zechariah 4.6,9

- Nehemiah brought fresh resources to rebuild Jerusalem
- Along with Ezra, Nehemiah reformed the nation's spiritual life

The close of the Old Testament

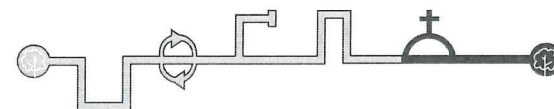
- Israel is back in the Promised Land, with Jerusalem and the Temple rebuilt
- Many prophecies and promises remain unfulfilled
- The last Old Testament prophet, Malachi, declares the greatest promise:

'I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the LORD you are seeking will come to his temple.'

Malachi 3.1

God is about to write himself into the story and walk on to the stage of human history.

MY NOTES 



Personal Reflection

Suggested: 10 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on this verse:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given ... and his name shall be: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9.6

Write down something from this verse or the session that has inspired you ...

Write down something that has challenged you ...

Why not share your reflections with others and pray to finish.

Daily Bible Readings: Week 5

Read each passage through carefully. Then consider:

WHAT? *What did this passage mean in its context?*

NOW WHAT? *Now what does this passage mean for my life today?*

- Write down a key verse or phrase that stands out.
- Pray it through, asking God to help you live in this truth.

Day 1 Luke 1.1–56

Angels, a virgin and a song – the coming of Jesus

Day 2 Luke 4.1–44

Temptation, healing and preaching – the ministry of Jesus

Day 3 Luke 9.1–36

Calling, confession and transfiguration – the identity of Jesus

Day 4 Luke 18.1–43

Parables, miracles and the cost – the call of Jesus

Day 5 Luke 23.1–56

The trial, the cross and the tomb – the death of Jesus

Day 6 Luke 24.1–52

Resurrection and ascension – the victory of Jesus