

- Israel's constant disobedience over hundreds of years, led in the main by their kings (cruelty, violence, infanticide, injustice, lack of compassion to the poor, sexual immorality, unfaithfulness, idolatry, human sacrifice, witchcraft, sorcery, necromancy. Only a very few kings were good (Judah: Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, Josiah; none of the kings of northern Israel were good)
- The incredible grace, patience and forgiveness of the God of the Old Testament!

The Exile

- There was not one exile but several – in stages.
- The northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BC (2 Kings 17:5-18) overthrown by the Assyrians' some taken there, others scattered among the nations. The land was repopulated by foreigners brought in by Assyria. "The ten lost tribes".
- The southern kingdom of Judah ending in 586 BC when overcome by the Babylonians. The cream of the land were taken there, the rest were left in Judah which was left desolate; destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25)

The life of the exiles in Babylon

- Background: Prophets, Jeremiah 52:28-30; Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Esdras, Josephus.
- Dejection, nostalgia, longing, reflection (Psalm 137)
- Numbers reduced to 4,600 (Jer 52:28-30), or was that just the men?
- Faith was tested. The temptation to believe that Yahweh had failed and that Babylon's gods were the true god.
- Their theology was challenged and changed; things they had previously believed about God, the land and the temple had to be adjusted.
- A different culture was encountered. Babylon represented wealth, commerce, idolatry. Some of the Jews embraced the new culture (Isaiah 65:3; Ezekiel 33:31)
- The faithful remnant are strengthened
- The ministry of the prophets: Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel
- The rise and development of the synagogue 'a new way of being church' Emphasis now on liturgical prayer, the Psalms, reading and teaching)
- New orders of 'clergy': Rabbis and Scribes.
- The preservation of the stories, prophets and law through writing.

Resonating with the present times?

More about questions than answers!

- Judgment.
 - (a) Calamity is not always judgment for our sins (Psalm 44:17-22; Psalm 88; Job 1; Luke 13:1-9)
 - (b) Yet there are instances of particular sins in the New Testament being judged (Acts 5:1-11; Acts 12:21-23; 1 Corinthians 11:27;29; the seven churches in Revelation 2-3)
 - (c) The purpose of judgment being correction and purification.
- Modern Babylon
- The faithful remnant
- New ways of being church

Conclusion

We are not alone, our calamity is not unique. God's people have survived trauma; taking solace from the stories.