

OT overview 10

Prophets, Exile, Restoration: God's loving warning – Leader's version

For an hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – ask everyone how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

After 2 Kings, the OT is not in chronological order!

What does the passage say and mean?

*1. Read Deuteronomy 4 v 25-28. What does God warn the people, before they cross the Red Sea into the Promised land?

If they reject God in the future, and worship local gods, as a nation they will lose the land. The key verse for this study is v27, a prophecy of the nation of Israel being scattered among the nations with few survivors.

*2. Read Deuteronomy 4 v 29-31. What promise does God make, that gives hope in such a desperate situation?

If the scattered people honestly seek God, they will find Him. They will return to Him and start to obey Him again. God is merciful. The punishment has limits; there will be a remnant of survivors, God will not abandon Israel, He will not forget the covenant even though the people will.

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The Israelites were in a cycle of disobedience, consequences, calling to God for help, then more disobedience. Do you have good intentions not to come back to prison, but then something happens and you're back inside? What do you need to do to break the cycle for good this time?

Questions 3-5 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. Let the group to work on them in pairs.

*3. **SDL** Read Judges 2 v 7. Joshua led the people into the Promised land. Who did the people worship during Joshua's lifetime and why do you think this was?

The people continued to worship God. The verse implies that this was because the older generation had living memory of all that God had done for them.

*4. **SDL** Read Judges 2 v 10-12. What happened in the next generation, and why do you think this happened?

The next generation abandoned God and started to worship the local gods (Baal and the Ashtoreths). This seems to have happened because there was no living memory of God leading them out of Egypt – parents were not teaching their children, so a whole generation did not know God.

*5. **SDL** Read Judges 2 v 14-15. What happened as a consequence of Israel's disobedience, and do you think this was fair? Why? (Remember Deuteronomy 4 v 25-26)

God stopped fighting for the nation of Israel and they started to lose battles with their enemies. Israel was in great distress. God had given fair warning to the people, but they ignored it.

A warning that is not carried out is no warning; God was fair to punish the people for their disobedience. This may bring up a discussion about judgement, which you will cover at the end of the study.

*6. God raised up judges to rule before Israel had her own king. Read Judges 2 v 18-19. What does this tell us about God's love for disobedient people, and about how people respond to God's love? Can you see yourself in this pattern?

God was with the judges (some were soldiers, some were religious leaders etc) and through them, God saved the nation of Israel from defeat in battle. God did this because of His compassion for the people. But they would become disobedient again, gradually getting worse and worse with each generation.

Think about how we do the same. We rebel against God, God speaks to us, we say sorry, or try to change, but often slip back into old habits and lifestyles again. Consider God's love for us, that He keeps reaching out to us in love, even when we turn our backs on Him.

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Deuteronomy 4 v 29 says that if 'you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.'

Are you seeking God in this manner and are you finding him? If you're not, can you identify what part of your heart / soul you might be holding back from him?

7. Read Jeremiah 2 v 5-8. Almost 700 years have passed since the beginning of the time of the Judges. What has happened to the nation of Israel? (look at what the people, v5-7, the priests, v8 and the prophets v8 have done)

The people have strayed from God and followed local gods / idols. They have not looked for God, or remembered all that God did for them when He saved them from slavery in Egypt. The priests had not sought God either; those who taught the law did not know God and the leaders rebelled against God. The prophets prophesied by Baal, a local fertility god.

*8. Read Jeremiah 2 v 13. What two sins sum up all the sins of Israel?

(This is written as poetry). The people had forsaken (abandoned) God (the spring of living water) and made their own gods (dug their own cisterns).

9. Read Jeremiah 2 v 20. How does God describe the nation of Israel?

As spiritual prostitutes. God was not saying that it was as if they used spiritual prostitutes, but that they themselves WERE spiritual prostitutes. They had given themselves to other gods and refused to serve God. Another description of their treatment of God was spiritual adultery. (High places / sacred trees = places where the Canaanite gods were worshipped).



Do you recognise any false gods in your life? What do you need to do about them?

*10. Read Jeremiah 25 v 8-11. What does God say will happen to the nation of Israel?

An army from Babylon, the North, will destroy Israel, which will become a wasteland. The people will serve (be ruled by, and in captivity to) the king of Babylon for 70 years.

11. **SHOUT-OUT** Read 2 Kings 17 v 5-6 (Israel) and 25 v 1-11 (Judah). What happened to the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem?

NB. After king Solomon died, the nation of Israel divided into two kingdoms, North and South.

Israel, 722BC, 2 Kings 17 v 5-6 (Northern kingdom)

- *Invaded by Assyria (a super-power)*
- *3 year siege against Samaria (the capital city)*
- *Israelites deported to Assyria (Over 300 miles, probably on foot)*

Judah, 586BC, 2 Kings 25 v 1-11 (Southern kingdom)

- *Invaded by Babylon (the next super-power)*

- 18 month siege against Jerusalem (the capital city)
- Siege results in famine in Jerusalem
- Judah's army runs away at night, but are caught – soldiers scattered, king captured
- King's sons were killed, then the king's eyes were put out and he was taken to Babylon
- Jerusalem temple, royal palace and all the houses fired
- Wall of Jerusalem broken down
- All the people taken as captives to Babylon

12. This was an unimaginable disaster. How do you think the Jewish people felt?

Think about how people in exile feel, use the prison experience to help the group to identify the emotions – frightened, traumatised, lonely, far from home, confused, helpless, separated from people, uncertain of what the future holds, under the control of other people etc.

13. Read Psalm 137 v 1-6. The people in exile are asked to sing songs from their homeland for their captors. What does this psalm tell us about how the people felt in captivity?

They were homesick, mourning and weeping when they remembered home. They found it hard to sing songs from home because it hurt too much. They looked back to Jerusalem with love and were determined never to forget it. (NB Zion = Jerusalem).

*14. What promises does God make to the exiles in Jeremiah 29 v 10-14?

He will bring the people back home after 70 years. He has good plans for the people and has a future for them. They will seek and find God.

15. Read Ezra 2 v 1 & 7 v 25, and Nehemiah 2 v 17. What happened after 70 years? Why?

The people started to come back home. This happened in 3 phases. The first group, in Ezra 2 v 1, rebuild the temple. The second group come with Ezra, Ezra 7, and rebuild Jewish culture and law. The third group come with Nehemiah and rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. The exile is over, the remnant have returned, and the Jewish people start to resettle their land.

*16. Remember that the Old Testament is always pointing forwards to the coming of Jesus Christ. Can you see how the exile and the return from the exile point to Christ?

The exile and return is a picture of our separation from God by sin and the restoration of our relationship with God, made possible through Jesus.

God warns us that judgement is coming – we will be judged forgiven or not forgiven. If we ignore the warning, we will remain separated from God for ever. The Bible calls this hell. God has warned us that our

sin carries a death penalty; someone must pay for our sin. God has given His Son, Jesus, to die in our place to pay for our sins. We need to repent and trust in Him.

Check out – ask everyone how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

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