Judah's Disobedience – Captivity & Daniel 9:24-27 Seventy Weeks Prophecy

The exile of Judah to Babylon was prophesied by Moses long before Hezekiah and Manasseh.

> *Deuteronomy 30:15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. 16 For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. 17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to* ***bow down to other gods*** *and worship them, 18 I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed.* ***You will not live long in the land*** *you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.*

God removed the Israelites from the promised land because of their culminating sins of rejecting God.

The reason for Judah being taken into captivity is clearly outlined in Ezekiel 20, and also here …

> *2 CHRONICLES 36:21 to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years*

Let's look at this a little closer. Judah had committed various offenses against their God, including idolatry. And as a consequence, they were afflicted by Nebuchadnezzar, who before taking them into captivity, twice raided Jerusalem,

ransacking the city and temple. So Judah was ‘judged’ for their violations.

We need to understand these violations. They were violations against the Law. And the judgements for violations were clearly prescribed. But, we need to look closer. ‘Personal’ [uncovered] Violations had the penalty of death – usually by stoning. ‘Group’ violations [e.g. complaining] were metered out differently. But here we are looking at the ‘nations’ violations.

The violations of the ‘nation’ were directly attributable to, or by the king’. He, the king, was responsible. And the people, specifically the priests and prophets, were the ones set to keep the king ‘in line’. How the people ‘went’ was directly related to the how the priests were. How the nation ‘went’ depended on the king.

Now the keeping of the sabbath was a unique, specific requirement. The land needed it’s sabbath – and failure was a opening for judgement. These judgements had been delayed, or held off through various periods of repentance – but the ‘payment’, the ‘sabbath’ still had to be met. Under Law, you don’t get let off ‘for good behavior’. The land needed rest, demanded rest – and the only way it could get this is by The Jews, [Judah], being taken ‘off’ it.

So Manasseh’s repentance for his ‘sin’ was forgiven..

> ***2 CHRONICLES 33:12*** *Now when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers* ***13*** *and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.*

But, that could **not** atone for the violations of the sabbath, these had to be ‘paid’. So the captivity was not a consequence

of his ‘sin’, nor the nations idolatry etc, but totally as a consequence of the breaking the sabbath.

Let there be no doubt – God’s grace and forgiveness is very great indeed!!

> *but where sin increased, grace increased all the more, (Rom 5:20)*

Jeremiah 18:7-10 announced an interesting principle that operated in the final years of Judah and what would happen:

> ***7*** *At any time I might announce that a nation or kingdom will be uprooted, torn down, and destroyed.* ***8*** *But if that nation I warned turns from its evil, then I will relent of the disaster I had planned to bring.*
>
> ***9*** *And if at another time I announce that I will build up and establish a nation or kingdom,* ***10*** *and if it does evil in My sight and does not listen to My voice, then I will relent of the good I had intended for it.*

This is illustrated perfectly in the previous chapter of Jer 17 where God issues two prophecies about Jerusalem:

- One of absolute permanence of Jerusalem of they were faithful – Jer 17:24-26
- One of sure destruction of Jerusalem if they were unfaithful – Jer 17:27

(See also Eze 18.) In fact, God even predicted which of these choices Jerusalem, the king and people would make in Jer 18:11, 12 –

> ***11*** *Now therefore, tell the men of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem that this is what the LORD says: ‘Behold, I am*

planning a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways, and correct your ways and deeds.’

12 *But they will reply, ‘It is hopeless. We will follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’ ”*

Unfortunately, this prophecy was precisely fulfilled as recorded in 2 Chron 36:

11 *Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years.* ***12*** *And he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke for the LORD.*

13 *He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. But Zedekiah stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel.* ***14*** *Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people multiplied their unfaithful deeds, following all the abominations of the nations, and they defiled the house of the LORD, which He had consecrated in Jerusalem.*

15 *Again and again the LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to His people through His messengers because He had compassion on them and on His dwelling place.* ***16*** *But they mocked the messengers of God, despising His words and scoffing at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD against His people was stirred up beyond remedy.*

17 *So He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who put their young men to the sword in the sanctuary, sparing neither young men nor young women, neither elderly nor infirm. God gave them all into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar,* ***18*** *who carried off everything to Babylon—all the articles of the house of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king and*

*his officials. **19** Then the Chaldeans set fire to the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem. They burned down all the palaces and destroyed every article of value.*

CONCLUSION

So, why did God send Judah into captivity? We have the answer explicitly stated above – they chose to be unfaithful to God, practice evil and violence and refused to repent. The Scripture makes clear that if they had repented, they would have avoided captivity as stated above by the prophet Jeremiah.

Therefore, Judah did NOT suffer for the sins of the "fathers" (Eze 18:4, 20, 24) – they suffered for their own. "The one who sinned is the one who will dies." The people of Zedekiah's time had learned from the sins of their fathers and sinned even more wickedly and so were sent into captivity despite the warnings.

The prophecies given to Hezekiah and Manasseh were fulfilled, not because God wanted to punish but because the people refused to repent.

God is sovereign over human actions and the consequences of their actions. Hezekiah erred by his foolish pride of exposing his wealth and military powers to strangers – the Babylonians. When he was rebuked, his response was that of delight because there would be peace in his own days, at least. For a man who knew God and had enjoyed answered prayers, a man who knew the ability of God to forgive his error and forgive his descendants, that kind of response to God's verdict appeared divinely pre-determined by God Himself? The wicked life and actions of his son who preceded him further proved the limitations of the good life he lived. One would want to expect Hezekiah to be able to raise a godly child after himself and blame him for not doing so thus ending the restoration and revival brought by his reign. No good man was

good enough to produce his like, not until God does that Himself through His grace and Spirit. The grand story of God recorded in the Bible was advancing to a perfect end where Christ would be the only and perfect solution to sins and errors. This solution was not only promised to Israel but to the entire world, so the exile of God's people to Babylon was essential not just to punish them for their sins but at the same time to reveal the God Yahweh to nations who would never have seen His works. Apparently, part of God's purpose for exiling His people was to raise men like Daniel, and other seeds of Israel who influenced their nations of captivity including prophets who were raised during the era. At the end of that captivity, the people of Judah returned as changed people with whom God could continue His mission to raise the Saviour of the world. Even then, they continued to fail God as a nation. How God works out His plans across thousands of generations remains mysterious and presents God as one who should be feared. The reflection on this for our day is that God still hates sins and would punish every wickedness committed by men. In other words, God rules over our actions and uses them to fulfill His counsel, yet we owe Him a responsibility for our actions. Therefore, the power to do the right thing in the sight of God does not lie in our determination or ability. Christ's righteousness, the grace that comes through Him, and the power of the Holy Spirit are able to accomplish this in us. May we receive the grace and mercy to please God and live to fulfill the good He has purposed in His heart.

70 Weeks Prophecy

Steve Gregg shows the fallacies of the dispensationalist/futurist eisegetical insertion of a GAP of over 2000 years between the 69th and 70th Weeks of Daniel's 490 year prophecy.