

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 61.3%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Jeremiah 32

Monday: Jeremiah 33

Tuesday: Ezekiel 26

Wednesday: Ezekiel 27

Thursday: Ezekiel 28

Friday: 2 Kings 25:2-7, Jeremiah 39:2-7 & Jeremiah 52:5-11

Saturday: 2 Kings 25:8-21, 2 Chronicles 36:17-21, Jeremiah 39:8-10 & Jeremiah 52:12-30

Current # of email addresses in the group: 627

I apologize that this week's reading is coming out late. I'm in Cincinnati for the General Conference of Elders meeting and travel has put me behind.

I hope you enjoyed getting back into the reading last week. We will continue this week bouncing around through a number of books. I hope you have a great study week!

Current and archive of this reading program is available at:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/announcements/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep>

The audio archive information is also available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH

You may actually prefer accessing it directly from this Playlist tab:

<https://www.youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792/playlists>

3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 94

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 631 – SUNDAY: May 4th

Jeremiah 32

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "The events of this chapter occur during the 10th year of Zedekiah (verse 1), which equates to the 11th year of Ezekiel's captivity—for even though Zedekiah's reign and Ezekiel's captivity began at the same time, Zedekiah's first year seems to have

followed an uncounted accession year (see Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 1983, pp. 184, 190).

Zedekiah's 10th year was the second year of the siege of Jerusalem (587 B.C.). As we earlier read, the Egyptian army had approached ([Jeremiah 37:5](#)), prompting Nebuchadnezzar to order his Babylonian forces to temporarily depart from Jerusalem to confront them. The Egyptians suffered a terrible defeat (see [Ezekiel 30:21-22](#)) and withdrew back into Egypt. Now the Babylonians had returned and their siege of Jerusalem was again underway. On King Zedekiah's orders, Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard at the palace (32:2). "Zedekiah should have known by this time that Jeremiah's message was not his own. Yet he found fault with the prophet's predictions because they were wholly unfavorable to the country and to Zedekiah himself. In plain, unequivocal terms Jeremiah foretold Zedekiah's fate" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verses 3-5).

God informs Jeremiah in advance of the visit of his cousin Hanamel. The prophet is to agree to Hanamel's offer to sell him his field in their hometown of Anathoth under the terms of property redemption: "Family property must not pass into the hands of an outsider (v. 7). The purpose of this law was to keep property in the family and preserve the bond between family and their property. For the seller this was duty; for the relative or kinsman-redeemer it was a right... The passage reveals that the ancient laws of land tenure were still followed in Judah in spite of its apostasy. In addition to the general law for all Israel, these land-tenure laws would in Jeremiah's time have special relevance to alienation of property belonging to priestly families—property that should not pass into nonpriestly hands. The situation is all the more dramatic since the field Jeremiah was to buy had already been captured by the invading Babylonians" (*Expositor's*, note on verses 6-7).

Expositor's suggests that Hanamel might have been in financial straits (same note). Biblical historian Eugene Merrill, however, concludes:

"Hanamel obviously believed that, whereas he would soon be exiled, Jeremiah would be left behind and, hence, in a position to care for the estate" (*Kingdom of Priests*, p. 465).

With the Chaldeans outside, the request would have seemed preposterous to anyone who found out about it. Yet God directs Jeremiah to go through with the transaction, which the prophet does, committing the deed scrolls to his scribe Baruch. "According to custom, one copy of a deed was sealed for safekeeping; a second copy was left open for future consultation" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 10-11). Jeremiah, at God's command, tells Baruch to put both copies in a clay jar to be kept safe for a long time to come (verse 14). Interestingly, the oldest copies of the Old Testament, those among the Dead Sea scrolls, were found preserved in just such clay jars in the Judean desert—and they had been preserved more than 2,000 years!

Jeremiah relays the point of what God has told him to do: "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land" (verse 15). The exiles will one day return. But the prophet then prays to God, seemingly to gain understanding of what was happening, mentioning the presently dire circumstances of the nation (verses 16-25). Some commentators "have seen a need on Jeremiah's part for confirmation of the transaction. Still others feel that Jeremiah slipped into an attitude of doubt... Given all the circumstances and the tension of the political and military situation, such an attitude would be understandable. Jeremiah may have longed for some reconciliation of the purchase with his prophecies of Jerusalem's destruction... Although he had explained the meaning of the episode (v. 15), [it is possible that] he was still troubled by its improbabilities; furthermore, he also longed for reassurance for the people" (*Expositor's*, note on verse 16).

God then gives His reply reassuring Jeremiah (verse 26-44). Even though the situation seemed hopeless, God reminded Jeremiah that nothing is too hard for Him.

Yes, for the time being He would deal severely with Judah, destroying the very rooftops where they burned incense to idols (versed 29). Israel and Judah, in spite of God's magnificent promises to them, had rebelled from the very beginning when they were a young nation. Amazingly, God says of the "holy city" of Jerusalem: "For this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My fury from the day that they built it, even to this day" (verse 31). How ironic that the Jews thought that being in that city would save them! The idolatry and rebellion became so bad in the end that they even set up their idols in God's temple. Josiah had removed the idols, but the pagan worship was still in their hearts, and it hadn't taken long for them to revert to their old ways. God knew what human nature was like, but even He hadn't expected Judah to stoop so low that they would actually murder their children, sacrificing them to the false god Molech (see verse 35, where He uses words He had spoken to Jeremiah many years earlier in 7:31). So again, yes, the nation would now be punished as Jeremiah had announced (32:36).

But, as God explains in the remainder of the chapter, He would, in the future, gather the exiles back from captivity and resettle them in the land. While the Jewish return from Babylonian captivity in the days of Ezra may have been in mind on one level, it is clear that this is not the primary meaning of this section. God repeats His promise from chapter 31 to make a new covenant with the people of a changed inner being. He refers to it as an "everlasting covenant" (verse 40) as in [Ezekiel 16:60](#). And this covenant will be made with all the people, who are described as having a unified heart ([Jeremiah 32:39](#)). This is obviously describing not the ancient return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity but the future return of all Israel and Judah at the time of Jesus Christ's second coming, when the Kingdom of God is established on earth. Note the nature of the Kingdom Age. It is not described as transpiring in some "heavenly" place above the clouds. People will buy land, sign and seal deeds, and through business become prosperous (verse 44).

Indeed, this comes back to "the main theme of this chapter. [Jeremiah's] transaction was an example to be universally followed in the future restoration (v. 43). What he did will be repeated by many others in that coming day" (note on verses 43-44).

Notice that Jeremiah placed this hopeful chapter right after chapter 31, the New Covenant chapter. Indeed, chapters 30-33 are sometimes referred to by commentators as the Book of Consolation, as this section looks forward to the wonderful time when Israel will at last be restored, spiritually converted and richly blessed." [END]

Day 632 – MONDAY: May 5th

Jeremiah 33

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "This chapter concludes what some have called the "Book of Consolation," the section containing God's promise of national restoration, before the book of Jeremiah returns to the historical aspects of Judah's downfall.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem were trying desperately to save their city. As had happened in Hezekiah's day, the people pulled down houses, including some within the palace complex, to strengthen the walls (verse 4; see [Isaiah 22:10](#)). "Houses that were built along the city walls could be torn down and filled with rubble to produce a wider, more solid wall. This was one means of combating the sloping earthen siege ramparts that armies constructed opposite domestic quarters rather than at heavily fortified towers or gates" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on [Jeremiah 33:4-5](#)). But this effort would prove to be in vain because it was God they were really fighting against (verse 5).

Verse 6 then switches immediately to a message of great hope, when God will bring "health and healing." The captives of both Judah and Israel will return (verse 7), clearly pointing to the time of Jesus Christ's second coming. Jeremiah was still in prison (verse 1) but God was now

going to encourage him and give him an even greater insight into the wonderful world to come, revealing His secrets (verse 3).

God again tells Jeremiah about the coming new world—prosperity, peace, rebuilt cities, forgiveness, fertile pastures, peace for the flocks, safety and an example to the whole world. It would be so good that even God Himself will be made happy by it. The New Living Translation brings out the impact of this: "Then this city will bring me joy, glory and honor before all the nations of the earth! The people of the world will see the good I do for my people and will tremble with awe!" (verse 9). The people will be so happy that they will again sing praises to God and offer Him their thanks. With regard to the "sacrifice of praise" or "thank offerings," the *Harper Study Bible* comments: "Jeremiah seems to refer to spiritual sacrifices, not animal offerings, i.e., thanksgivings made with the mouth, or what Hosea calls 'the fruit of our lips' ([Hos 14:2](#))" (note on [Jeremiah 33:11](#)).

In verses 14-16, God repeats the prophecy about the coming "Branch," given earlier in chapter 23. "The Messiah is here called *a righteous Branch*, a true shoot of the stock of King David. Many of David's descendants had become kings of injustice; now the people were looking for the coming of a righteous king who would come as the Lord's anointed or Messiah. The phrase *The LORD is our righteousness* must be understood as, 'Jesus is our righteousness.' The word 'LORD' here is 'Yahweh' ['He Is Who He Is'; the Eternal]; in this context, it can only mean Jesus the Messiah. Thus Jesus is Yahweh, or God. And the N[ew] T[estament] refers to Jesus our Righteousness (cf. [1 Cor 1.30](#)). His righteousness is imputed to us [through His death atoning for our sins and His life in us helping us to obey God]. We have no righteousness in ourselves, only his righteousness ([2 Cor 5.21](#))" (*Harper Study Bible*, note on [Jeremiah 23:5-6](#)). In [Jeremiah 33](#), the name "The Eternal Our Righteousness" is given to Jerusalem (verse 16)—as God's people bear His name and receive His righteousness.

Continuity of the Royal and Priestly Lines

The latter part of [Jeremiah 33](#) is a remarkable section concerning two important family lineages. God had promised David that his royal line would continue forever ([2 Samuel 7:12-16](#)). This is repeated here with the addition of a second part, the promise of continuity for the Levitical priests. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* states: "Monarchy and priesthood were the two bases of the O[ld] T[estament] theocracy. When these appeared to be in most danger of extinction in Jeremiah's day, we find their continuance couched in sure and irrevocable terms. What is affirmed of the monarchy in v. 17 is promised the priesthood in v. 18. The Levitical priesthood is assured a permanent ministry (cf. the promise to Phinehas in [Num. 25:13](#)). As legitimate priests, they will serve the Lord" (note on [Jeremiah 33:17-18](#)).

Yet these promises have appeared to many to contradict history. Neither the occupation of the Davidic throne nor the Levitical priesthood's offering of burnt and grain offerings has been continuous. *Expositor's* explains in its note on verses 17-18: "If one sees in them a constant presence and succession of Davidic rulers and Levitical priests, then, of course, history does not validate this interpretation. But the passage claims no such thing. It says only that David's dynasty will never cease. Temporary interruption is only apparent, not true cessation."

Yet when would the two offices, brought down with the Babylonian conquest, resume? The physical sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood were reactivated when the Jews returned to the land of Judah in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. But a few centuries later they were again cut off for a short time under Syrian oppression in the second century B.C. After their next restoration, they continued until the Romans destroyed the second temple in A.D. 70. Since then, nearly 2,000 years have gone by and they have never been reestablished. Of course, the priestly descendants have always been there—recognized even. Many

Jews today bear the names Cohen, Cohn, Kahane, Kagan, Kahn or some other variant, meaning "priest." No doubt many of priestly descent have continued to serve in a "priestly capacity" as teachers and officiators at religious functions. In fact, some have speculated that the true ministry of Jesus Christ has always had descendants of the Levitical priesthood among its numbers, and that may well be. But the prophecy here specifically mentions burnt and grain offerings. Sacrifices are elsewhere prophesied to be reestablished among the Jews soon before Christ's return—to be performed once again, no doubt, by the Levitical priesthood. But these too will be cut off. Then, as the last section of Ezekiel informs us, sacrifices will be reinstated under Levitical priests after Jesus Christ returns to set up His 1,000-year reign over the earth. Indeed, this ultimate resumption appears to be the main focus of this passage in Jeremiah—or, more accurately, the continuity of the priestly line that will make this millennial resumption possible.

What then of the Davidic throne? Since the prophecy of David's descendants is intertwined with that of the Levites, they are usually viewed as being similarly fulfilled. Based on the gaps in the Levitical service, many have interpreted this section of Jeremiah with the view of a very long gap in the occupation of David's throne—from Jerusalem falling to the Babylonians more than 2,500 years ago until David's descendant, Jesus Christ, comes to claim the throne at His yet-future return to then reign forever. But while that is no doubt the ultimate focus of verse 17, parallel with the messianic prophecy of verses 14-16, it does not fully consider the section that immediately follows, which speaks of a vast pool of Davidic descendants (verse 22) from which God will draw "rulers" (*plural*) to set over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (verse 26). Since this multiplicity of rulers of Davidic descent cannot logically apply solely to Christ's millennial rule, it must mean that David's throne would be reestablished before Christ's coming to allow multiple occupants of the throne. So we see that we should view the prophecy here about the Davidic line somewhat

differently from that of the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices. The prophecies are intertwined not because they are fulfilled in exactly the same way and time frame, but to show that these two bedrocks of Israelite government, both civil and ecclesiastical, would both be reestablished. God says His promises in this regard are more certain than the cycle of day and night (verses 20, 25). Of course, the *ultimate* fulfillment of both prophecies would come in the same time frame—when Christ comes to rule the earth.

Again, though, it should be clear that David's throne would be reestablished even before the coming of Christ. In fact, [Psalm 89](#) adds a very important detail in this regard. God there reveals that He promised to David, "Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne *to all generations*" (verse 4). So although there could be vacancies in the occupation of David's throne, a generation could not pass before that vacancy was filled. This means a generation could not have passed from the deposing of Zedekiah at the fall of Jerusalem until the reestablishment of the throne. But that throne was never reestablished in Judah. So what happened?

Notice that [Jeremiah 33:17](#) says that, from the time this prophecy was given, David would not lack a descendant to sit on the throne *not* of the house of Judah, but of the house of *Israel*. This makes sense when we recall from [Ezekiel 17:22-24](#) the prophecy of the transfer of the Davidic throne from Judah to Israel. Jeremiah himself would be instrumental in this transfer, with his curious commission "to root out and to pull down" and then "to build and to plant" ([Jeremiah 1:10](#)). God would use him to transplant the Davidic dynasty through a daughter of Zedekiah from Judah to the Israelites in ancient Ireland, from where it would later be transferred to Scotland and then to England—eventually becoming the British royal family of today. (For more details documenting this little-understood history, see our online publication [The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future](#))" [END]

Day 633 – TUESDAY: May 6th

Ezekiel 26

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Chapters 26-28 of Ezekiel contain a series of oracles against Tyre, the great Phoenician seaport and major trading center of the ancient world, located in what is now the country of Lebanon. The prophecy was given in the 11th year of Ezekiel's captivity on the first day of the month—but what month is not stated ([Ezekiel 26:1](#)). Perhaps the month was considered as a given, following what was probably the previous date reference before the chapters of this section were rearranged thematically—the 11th year, third month, first day ([Ezekiel 31:1](#)). This would mean the Tyre prophecies began later the same day—in the late spring of 587 B.C.

Tyre says of Jerusalem, "Aha! She is broken...she is laid waste" (verse 2). This could be a prophecy of what Tyre *would* say once Jerusalem had ultimately fallen to the Babylonians. Yet it could just as easily reflect what the Tyrians had already expressed when this prophecy was given. For with the siege against Jerusalem underway, onlookers from other countries no doubt said things like, "It's all over for Jerusalem."

Tyre says, "The gateway of the peoples...is turned over to me" (verse 2). "The people of Tyre were enthusiastic about the fall of Jerusalem, seeing it as an opportunity to further increase its own wealth. This was not only because Tyre expected to gain commissions from the sale of much of the Holy City's spoil, but also because Judah had controlled the important land trade routes in the area. Tyre, just 35 miles from the Sea of Galilee and 100 miles from Jerusalem, expected that more of the land routes' income would swell her own coffers" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on [Ezekiel 26](#)). And there may be more to this, as we will see.

The remainder of the prophecy deals with punishment to come on Tyre. Verses 3-7 give a summary, and the passage that follows provides details. Some historical background and information on the layout of the city makes it easier to understand aspects of the prophecy. "Tyre was in effect [originally] two islands (they were later made one) joined to the mainland by King Hiram I [in the days of King Solomon]... In doing so he created ideal harbors, endorsing a seafaring tradition" (Karen Farrington, *Historical Atlas of the Holy Land*, 2003, p. 94). "Under Hiram's reign, Tyre flourished. The original layout of the city was in two parts: an offshore island, which was the older part of the city, and the overspill on the mainland. Hiram developed the island-city and used landfill to connect it to the other small islands nearby, and to the mainland by a narrow causeway" (*Lonely Planet: Lebanon*, 2001, p. 231).

Tyre was later incorporated into the Assyrian Empire. After the fall of Assyria, the city submitted to Nebuchadnezzar's Neo-Babylonian Empire. At the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, Tyre plotted with Judah and other nations against Babylon, but nothing then came of it. But soon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., Tyre did rebel, leading to a siege by the Babylonians. The siege lasted for 13 long years, during which the Babylonian soldiers were worked very hard (see [Ezekiel 29:18](#)). "During the siege, the Tyrians destroyed a causeway which had connected the offshore islands to the mainland [the one Hiram had built], and retreated behind the [island] city's walls, said to be 50 metres (160 ft) high" (*Insight Guide: Syria & Lebanon*, 2000, p. 316). Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland part of the city but really had nothing to show for all his efforts, having failed to capture the city's vast wealth. Grudgingly, the island city did again acknowledge his sovereignty but remained semi-autonomous—though the Tyrian king and royal family were deported to Babylon, in line with what Jeremiah had foretold in [Jeremiah 27](#).

The Babylonian Empire fell to the Persians in 539 B.C. In 525, the Persians sent forces to exert their control over Western Asia and Egypt. Tyre then became a Persian vassal state.

"The next in Tyre's long line of strongman-conquerors was more successful than Nebuchadnezzar. Alexander the Great was able to conquer the known world following his defeat of the Persian army and, in 332 BC, he marched along coastal Phoenicia exacting tribute from all its city-states. In its time-honoured tradition, Tyre alone decided to resist. The city was thought to be impregnable, but upon arriving in 332 BC Alexander built a mole or breakwater in the sea to reach the city [essentially rebuilding Hiram's causeway from the rubble of the mainland city]. This impressive feat was carried out under a hail of missiles. At the same time on the mainland, Alexander's engineers were constructing huge mobile towers called *helepoleis*, which at 20-storeys high, were the tallest siege towers ever used in the history of war. After seven months these great war machines lumbered across the mole and lowered the drawbridge, unleashing archers and artillery on the city. Tyre fell after seven months and Alexander, enraged at the dogged resistance of the Tyrians which had caused heavy Greek losses, destroyed half the city. The city's 30,000 citizens were massacred or sold into slavery. This destruction heralded the domination of the Greeks in the Mediterranean" (*Lonely Planet: Lebanon*, pp. 231-232).

"The history of the city did not end there, however. Eighteen years after Alexander captured the city it was again besieged, this time by Antigonos, one of Alexander's generals. That the city was far from indefensible is demonstrated by the fact that it took 15 months for Antigonos to capture it. Far greater than the damage caused by Alexander's siege was the reopening of the canal connecting the Red Sea with the Egyptian port of Alexandria. This diverted much of the trade that had formerly passed through Tyre" (Robert Bradshaw, "Tyre," 1999, <http://www.robibrad.demon.co.uk/tyre.htm>).

"The city...after a period of Seleucid rule following Alexander's death, became autonomous in 126 BC. In 64 BC, Tyre became a Roman province and later became the capital of the Roman province of Syria-Phoenicia... By the 4th century AD it had recovered some of its former splendour and a basilica was built on the site of the former temple of Melkart... The city was taken by the Arabs in 635, and its prosperity continued... People from other coastal cities had fled to Tyre when the Crusaders started to take the Middle East in 1124. They felt safe behind Tyre's 'impregnable' walls. After a siege of five and a half months, Tyre's defenses collapsed and the Christian army occupied the city and the surrounding fertile land. The Crusaders built the defensive walls and Tyre remained in Crusader hands for 167 years until the Mamluk army...retook the city in 1291. Over time, the classical and early Christian remains were demolished and the worked stone reused in later buildings. The ports were silted up and the mole which connected the island to the mainland became a sand bar; the city of Tyre became a peninsula which is now covered in modern buildings"—the modern Lebanese city of Sor or Sour (*Lonely Planet: Lebanon*, pp. 232-233).

With this history in mind, let's look at some specifics of Ezekiel's prophecy. God said that He would bring "many nations" against Tyre as "waves" of the sea ([Ezekiel 26:3](#)). The plurality of nations could conceivably refer to the many peoples that made up the Babylonian Empire. Or they could refer to a succession of nations that would conquer Tyre over the centuries. Either interpretation fits Ezekiel's prophecy. Notice again that they come as *waves*. While this is a fitting metaphor for military forces assaulting a seaport or an island city, it may also signify successive conquests. Again, either interpretation fits.

Verses 7-11 refer specifically to the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar. Since the Babylonian ruler did not take the island citadel, the heart of the city, the destruction described in this passage must refer to what he would do to the mainland city and Tyre's "daughter villages in the

fields"—that is, outlying villages on the mainland. Nebuchadnezzar is denoted in these verses by name and then by the pronoun "he."

But in verse 12, the pronoun switches from "he" to "they"—perhaps referring back to the "they" of verse 4, denoting the many nations that would come against Tyre. In verses that follow, God uses the pronoun "I" to show that He is ultimately behind what is happening.

Notice the pronouncement of verse 12. God says that "they"—the nations to follow Nebuchadnezzar—would be successful in plundering Tyre. More remarkably, it is stated that they would lay the stones, timber and soil of Tyre "in the midst of the water." This must be, at least on some level, a reference to what Alexander's forces did. They dumped the rubble of the mainland city into the sea to rebuild the causeway out to the island fortress. It is surely no mere coincidence that Alexander's army conquered the city in this amazing way. Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the city, but he did not accomplish all that was prophesied for Tyre. Alexander went further, casting the rubble from Nebuchadnezzar's destruction into the sea and plundering the wealth of Tyre by capturing the island city.

But did Alexander, then, completely accomplish the prophesied ruin of Tyre? God said He would scrape the dust from Tyre, leaving it like the top of a rock (verses 4, 14). He also said it would be a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea, sunk in the deep (verses 5, 14, 19). In both cases, this could perhaps apply to what Alexander did to the mainland city area, scraping it bare for material to cast into the sea to construct his causeway. Yet nothing of the sort happened, or has ever happened, to the *main* city—the island city that was protected by 160-foot-high walls. Alexander did conquer it but obviously did not lay it waste as the prophecy would seem to imply. Some of the island city is now below water, but most of the ancient island remains a thriving city to this day.

God said of Tyre, "You shall never be rebuilt... so that you may never be inhabited... You shall be no more; though you are sought for, you will never be found again" (verses 14, 20-21). It is difficult to reconcile this with the history of Tyre up to the present time. It is possible that God was speaking exclusively of the mainland area. While there are Roman ruins on what used to be the mainland coast, seeming to indicate rebuilding, it may be that the original Phoenician city was located not here but somewhere nearby. Regrettably, if the original mainland city was completely scraped bare, we don't know exactly where it was located—which could conceivably fit the description of never being found again. (Curiously, an uninhabited area a bit south of the modern Tyrian peninsula surrounding several major freshwater springs has been declared a nature reserve, with construction forbidden by law—an interesting way to keep it from being rebuilt if this is the site of ancient mainland Tyre.)

Yet it seems odd that God's announcement of doom on Tyre would apply primarily to the mainland overspill of the city and not the main island city itself with its towering walls. Indeed, notice verse 13, where God says, "I will put an end to the sound of your songs, and the sound of your harps shall be heard no more." Consider that before the mainland city was destroyed, the people simply moved a half-mile out across the water to the island citadel—where singing and music could still be heard (and can still be heard today). So it seems likely that Alexander did not accomplish all that God had foretold for the city's destruction.

Notice again the summary of Tyre's judgment in verses 3-7, ending with the intended purpose in punishment: "Then they shall know that I am the LORD" (verse 7). Recall from chapters 25 and 29-30 that the same thing is said of the outcome of punishment on Judah's other national neighbors, which seems to signify that ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies will not come until the end time. Jeremiah had warned

Tyre's ruler that sword, famine, pestilence and slavery would come on those nations that failed to submit to Babylon ([Jeremiah 27](#))—but many of the Tyrians escaped destruction or captivity in Nebuchadnezzar's time, and it is likely that nothing of what Jeremiah said was recalled by anyone in Tyre at the time of Alexander. Indeed, the Tyrians as a people did not really come to know that the true God was God in either Nebuchadnezzar's or Alexander's invasions. Most of them probably did not even know that God had pronounced any judgment against them at all.

Indeed, there are other indications of duality in the prophecies of Tyre in chapters 26-28, pointing to fulfillment in ancient times *and* the end time. One is the similarity of the description of Tyre and its fall in chapter 27 to that of end-time Babylon in [Revelation 18](#). Another indication is the obvious parallel with other prophecies of Tyre that are apparently dual in nature, such as the one in [Amos 1:9-10](#) and [Isaiah 23](#).

Furthermore, we've already seen in [Isaiah 13](#) and [Jeremiah 50-51](#) another parallel: God's prophecies of *Babylon's* utter destruction and desolation, where He states that *it* would never be resettled or rebuilt—even though the site of ancient Babylon has been resettled and parts of it rebuilt over the centuries. As noted in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on those passages, the explanation is that God is speaking primarily there of *end-time* Babylon, a powerful global empire, religious system and trading bloc centered in Rome in the years just prior to Jesus Christ's return. In fact, God foretold of Babylon through Jeremiah: "How Babylon has become desolate among the nations! The sea has come up over Babylon; she is covered with the multitude of its waves" ([Jeremiah 51:41-42](#)). Is not this very close to what God foretold of Tyre through Ezekiel?

In the Bible Reading Program's comments on [Isaiah 13](#) and 23, it was explained that many people of Babylonian and Phoenician descent

eventually displaced the Romans and became spread across southern Europe. Thus, the European empire of the last days can logically be referred to as either Babylon or as Tyre, the chief Phoenician city. The end-time Babylonian capital, the city of Rome, is located close to the sea. And figuratively, the waters from which Babylon rises and over which it rules represent "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues" ([Revelation 17:15](#))—back into which this great power bloc will sink when it is at last overrun by those it has oppressed.

With this in mind, consider again Tyre's statement against Jerusalem in [Ezekiel 26:2](#): "She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled." In other prophecies in the book of Ezekiel, Jerusalem is often representative of all Israel in the end time. So this particular verse, besides the ancient application, may also portray a future "Tyre" or "Babylon" rejoicing over the fall of modern-day "Israel" (meaning the United States, Britain, the Jewish people, etc.), seeking to take over the Israelites' position as gatekeeper of world commerce and banking and to seize their wealth. In any case, we know from other prophecies that this *will* happen—and that it will bring God's judgment.

Finally, it is clear that the destructions of ancient Tyre under Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander did indeed fulfill important elements of God's prophecy in [Ezekiel 26](#). But these did not constitute *complete and final* fulfillment. They were, in fact, mere precursors to the ultimate fall of the latter-day "Tyre" at the time of Christ's second coming, when the whole Babylonian-Tyrian system will be plundered, stripped bare and destroyed forever—never to rise again." [END]

Day 634 – WEDNESDAY: May 7th

Ezekiel 27

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Ezekiel's prediction of the endless death of Tyre ([Ezekiel 26:1-21](#)) is followed by messages about the doomed city [in chapters 27 and 28]. First comes a funeral dirge, picturing the great commercial center as a merchant ship. The prophet describes her construction ([Ezekiel 27:1-11](#)) and then lists her trading partners (vv. 12-24)... The prophet completes his metaphor with a vivid description of the sinking of richly laden Tyre (vv. 25-36)" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, chapters 27-28 summary).

This great "ship of state" is made of the finest materials—including planks of fir trees from "Senir," another name for Mount Hermon or another peak in its range (see [Deuteronomy 3:9](#); [Song of Solomon 4:8](#); [1 Chronicles 5:23](#)).

For "merchant of the peoples on many coastlands" in verse 3, the New Living Translation has "trading center of the world." Like the previous chapter, this one is dual—applying to ancient Tyre as well as Tyre of the last days (modern Babylon), a global economic market and religious empire centered in Europe. The mourning of the participants in the system over the sinking of Tyre is quite similar to the mourning of participants in the Babylonian system of the end time (compare especially verses 29-33; [Revelation 18:17-19](#)). *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on [Revelation 18:9-19](#), "This section is framed like an ancient lament and is especially similar in content to Ezekiel's lament over the destruction of Tyre (see Ezekiel 27)." Moreover, as noted in our previous reading, many in southern Europe are descended from the ancient Babylonians and Phoenician Tyrians, strengthening the identification.

Many nations participated in the international marketplace of ancient Tyre, as their modern counterparts will participate in the Tyrian or Babylonian system of the end time. There was and will be Ashurite or Assyrian involvement (verses 6, 23). "Men of Gammad" in the watchtowers (verse 11) may be a mistranslation. *Jamieson, Fausset &*

Brown's Commentary offers: "Rather, as the Tyrians were Syro-Phoenician, from a Syriac root, meaning daring, 'men of daring'... It is not likely the keeping of watch 'in the towers' would have been entrusted to foreigners. Others take it from a Hebrew root, 'a dagger,' or short sword...'short-swordsmen'" (note on verse 11).

There is mention of Javan or Yavan (verse 13), the biblical Hebrew word used elsewhere for Greece. Javan is listed in the table of nations of [Genesis 10](#) as the son of Noah's son Japheth, father of the yellow-skinned Mongoloid peoples of the Far East but also of many white and olive-skinned people of the Mediterranean. Many southern Europeans, such as the Greeks, Cypriots, Italians and Spaniards, have traditionally been traced, at least in part, back to Javan's sons Elishah, Kittim and Tarshish—all mentioned in [Ezekiel 27](#) (verses 6-7, 12). (It may be that Japheth himself was Caucasian and his wife Oriental, allowing for offspring to take after either side of the family.)

It appears that the sons of Tarshish originally settled in southern Asia Minor, giving their name to the city of Tarsus. Some later migrated from here to Spain, giving their name to Tartessus, the city of Tarshish to which Jonah fled (and which gave its name to the famed Phoenician and Israelite "ships of Tarshish"). This western branch of Tarshish would today, then, seem to be a significant portion of the people of Spain, Portugal and Latin America. Yet there may well be an eastern branch of this family. The traditions of ancient Japan claim its people were led to the "Land of the Rising Sun" by a three-legged crow—the "sun crow" representing the sun deity in the ancient Far East. Surprisingly, the rare imagery of three-legged birds as sun symbols has also been found on coins of Asia Minor, where sat Tarsus. Might this region be the origin of some of the Japanese?

Interestingly, the Japanese traditionally trace themselves mainly through two peoples, known as the Yamato and the Kumaso. The Kumaso, from whom the lower class is predominantly descended, are

believed to be of Malay or Indonesian origin. But the Yamato, ancestors of the ruling class, appear to have come from far in the west. A.L. Sadler, a professor of Oriental Studies at the University of Sydney, wrote in his 1946 book *A Short History of Japan*: "Judging from the Caucasian and often Semitic physiognomy seen in the aristocratic type of Japanese, the Yamato were mainly of Caucasic, perhaps Iranian, origin. These were...modified to some extent by mingling with the Mongoloid rank and file... The colour of the Japanese does not differ at all from that of the South European races like Spain and Italy... The Alpine or Central European race...is of much the same type as the ordinary Japanese... Some Japanese ethnologists favour the theory that the Yamato came from Central Asia" (pp. xi-xii). Indeed, perhaps they came all the way from Asia Minor.

In the end time, the peoples of Tarshish—encompassing perhaps the Spanish-Latin American world in the west and Japan in the east (each of which has had a great commercial tradition in modern times in its own right)—will merely be merchants for the much greater system of Tyre or Babylon that will dominate the globe (see verse 12).

Tubal, Meshech and Togarmah (verses 13-14) in ancient times dwelt near the Black Sea. Today, as we will later see in our examination of [Ezekiel 38-39](#), these peoples may be found in central, western and eastern Russia respectively. The bartering of human lives mentioned in 27:13 parallels a similar statement about end-time slave trade in [Revelation 18:13](#).

Even Israel and Judah are shown participating in the Tyrian marketplace before their downfall ([Ezekiel 27:17](#)). This was true in the ancient world and will come to pass again at the end of this age.

In verse 19, the Israelite tribe of Dan is associated with Javan or Greece, likely because the Danites for a time settled in Greece and plied the seas with the ancient Phoenicians and Greeks (see [Appendix 2: Were](#)

[the Greeks Israelites?](#) of our online publication *The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future*). Dan today may be found in Ireland and Denmark. Yet, as part of the European Union, they are once more associated with Greece—"traversing back and forth" as they are located on opposite ends of the European continent.

Areas of the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Jordan, Mesopotamia (southeast Turkey and Iraq) and Iran are also shown as participating in this system (verses 15-18, 20-24).

Verse 26 shows the overloaded ship of Tyre broken by "the east wind." *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on this verse: "The east wind was often powerful and potentially destructive (see [Gen. 41:6](#); [Job 27:21](#); [Ps. 48:7](#) [where God says He breaks the merchant ships of Tarshish with an east wind]; Is. 27:8). Thus it symbolizes the destruction the [ancient] Babylonian army [from the east] would bring on Tyre. In 26:7, Babylon would come from the 'north.' This was the direction from which the army would invade Phoenicia." In the end time, a great wave of destruction will come on the European empire from forces from the east (see [Revelation 9:13-19](#)). And ultimate destruction will come when Jesus Christ returns "as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west" ([Matthew 24:27](#)).

As great as it is, the ship of Tyre will ultimately sink—meaning the demise of both ancient Tyre and the future global power bloc it represents. In the description of its finery and vast wealth along with what is to befall it is a lesson for everyone, especially when we consider that, in a broader sense, Babylon—and so Tyre as well—is representative of mankind's entire corrupt civilization. *The Bible Reader's Companion* states in its note on chapter 27: "The extended metaphor in this poetic description of Tyre and her fall is one of the most powerful to be found in ancient or modern literature. The funeral dirge sums up the world's preoccupation with material wealth and prosperity and the pride success breeds. The sudden sinking of the ship

not only portrays the demise of Tyre, but the vulnerability of all material possessions to destruction. The last two verses particularly display the anguish of those who pin their hopes on things—only to see them suddenly, irretrievably, gone." [END]

Day 635 – THURSDAY: May 8th

Ezekiel 28

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Having foretold, at God's direction, the destruction of Tyre in chapters 26 and proclaiming a lament or dirge over it in chapter 27, Ezekiel in chapter 28 now relays God's word concerning the "prince," or "ruler" (NIV), of Tyre (verses 1-10). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* suggests that the reference on one level is to "Ittobaal II of those days [of the Babylonian conquest], though the speech is in many ways not against any one particular king but Tyre's kings per se" (note on verses 1-5).

Expositor's goes on to comment in its note on the same passage: "Tyre's king is described as a very wise man. Through his wisdom and insight in commercial sea-trade, he was able to amass Tyre's great abundance of wealth (vv. 4-5; cf. ch. 27). However, the accumulation of riches and its accompanying splendor and importance created a haughty pride in this ruler (v. 5b; cf. 27:3). He was so impressed with himself that he actually began to think that he was a god—perhaps even El, the chief deity of the Canaanite pantheon (v. 2). Ancient Near Eastern thought often viewed the king as the embodiment of the god(s)... He was sitting on the 'throne of a god in the heart of the seas' [NIV]. Most likely Tyre's well-known, magnificent temple of Melkart, Tyre's patron deity, was in the prophet's mind. It was not uncommon for a city or a temple to be called the throne of a god, even in the O[ld] T[estament] (cf. [Ps 132:13-14](#); [Jer 3:17](#) et al.). On ancient bas-reliefs of Tyre, the city and its temple are seen projecting high out of the surrounding sea."

This kind of thinking will likely also characterize the ruler of *end-time* Tyre or Babylon, a powerful dictator referred to in the book of Revelation as "the Beast" (a name that also applies to his empire). Consider that Adolf Hitler, a ruler in this tradition and forerunner of the final dictator, saw himself as a superhuman messianic figure who would reign over a "Thousand-Year Reich."

Returning to the passage, mention is again made in Ezekiel's book of the prophet Daniel (28:3; compare 14:14), showing that Daniel was already famous for his wisdom while he lived. This, of course, helps support the authenticity of Daniel's book as a product of the sixth century B.C., a fact many now seek to deny. In the King James and New King James Versions of [Ezekiel 28:3](#), it is stated that the Tyrian ruler is wiser than Daniel. This could be a sarcastic statement. But notice the NIV translation, which gives this as a question: "Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hidden from you?"

Clearly this ruler is not as wise as he thinks. He sees himself as a god when he is, in fact, just a man—and a man who will be humbled for his supreme arrogance by the *true* God. Strangers will invade and devastate his land, and he will die at the hands of aliens or foreigners (verses 7, 10). This applied to the ruler of ancient time. But it is also the fate of the end-time Beast ruler. His European empire will be devastated by a ruthless wave of invasion from the east ([Revelation 9:13-19](#)). And he himself will be slain in the ultimate "alien" invasion—at the coming of Jesus Christ and His saints (verses 19-21), who were strangers and foreigners in this world and will certainly be seen as foreigners from the vantage point of this "uncircumcised" ruler (see [Ezekiel 28:10](#)).

God then tells Ezekiel to take up a lamentation for the "*king*" of Tyre (verses 11-19). Though a large number of scholars argue that the poetic imagery of this passage merely emphasizes the downfall of the Tyrian ruler given in the beginning of the chapter, "many take the shift from

'ruler' to 'king' to indicate a shift of prophetic focus from a literal [human] ruler to a being he typifies, Satan" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, chapters 27-28 summary).

The latter interpretation becomes especially compelling when we consider the specific descriptions in the lament. Notice these points from *The Bible Reader's Companion*:

"(1) The description 'model of perfection' [NIV], and 'blameless...from the day I created you' seems an inappropriate description of any human ruler.

"(2) 'Eden, the garden of God' is described as the gem-filled center of earthly rule, and is taken as the province of Satan before Adam's creation. [It could also refer to the heavenly paradise of God, especially given the mention of this being walking among the fiery gems 'on the holy mountain of God,' signifying the place of God's throne.]

"(3) 'A guardian cherub' [(NIV) or 'anointed cherub who covers' (NKJV)] again is hardly an appropriate description of a pagan king. But it would fit Satan's pre-fall role as an important angelic being [being evidently one of the two cherubim whose wings overshadowed the throne of God, as represented in the earthly copy of God's throne, the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant].

"(4) 'Till wickedness was found in you' does not fit the [fact that no human beings are sinless]...but seems to indicate a specific act of sin which corrupted the being described.

"(5) 'I expelled you...I threw you to earth' [NIV] seems to fit Christ's words about Satan's expulsion from heaven, as recorded in [Luke 10:18](#). While these same verses admit metaphorical and poetic interpretation references to the human rulers of Tyre, those who see Satan in this

passage believe they are more appropriately rooted to him" (note on verses 11-19).

It is most fascinating to consider that the patron God of ancient Tyre was Melkart. This name means "king of the city" (*Expositor's*, note on verse 13a). His great temple in Tyre was seen as his throne, as earlier mentioned. So the "king" of Tyre that God addresses would naturally seem to be the false god Melkart. Consider that a false god could represent an actual demonic power. The apostle Paul said of pagan temple sacrifices, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God" ([1 Corinthians 10:20](#)). And Scripture makes it clear that demonic forces are the real rulers of this world ([Ephesians 6:12](#); [Daniel 10:10-21](#)), with Satan the devil as the chief ruler or king of this world, the "god of this age" ([John 12:31](#); [John 14:30](#); [John 16:11](#); [2 Corinthians 4:4](#)).

Satan, then, is the real power behind the throne—of both ancient and future Tyre. [Ezekiel 28](#), then, is parallel to [Isaiah 14](#), which addresses the human ruler of Babylon (both ancient and future) as well as the ultimate *spirit* ruler of Babylon, Satan. (Readers may wish to review that passage and the Bible Reading Program's comments on it in context of the current reading.) The lament over the king of Tyre probably does refer to the human ruler in a metaphoric sense—but the primary reference is to Satan. Consider that Satan may actually possess the Beast dictator at times (as seems to have occurred on a few occasions with Hitler). So there could actually be a blending of personalities. Even short of actual possession, there will clearly be evil spiritual influence. The supreme arrogance and blasphemy of the human ruler, of both ancient and end-time Tyre, ultimately comes from Satan—"the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" ([Ephesians 2:2](#)). (To learn more about the powerful evil spirit who dominates the present age, request or download our free booklet [Is There Really a Devil?](#))

In the next section of [Ezekiel 28](#), God pronounces judgment on Sidon (verses 20-24). Sidon was a sister city to Tyre. In fact, Tyre began as a colony of Sidon. The name Sidon is mentioned in the table of nations in [Genesis 10](#) as the firstborn son of Canaan (verse 15). Thus, it may be that Sidon is used in [Ezekiel 28](#) to portray the Phoenician people generally—with Tyre as the political, economic and religious power that has sprung up from among them. Recall that many of the Phoenicians today, along with the modern Babylonians, are scattered throughout southern Europe. Sidon was also the origin of Canaanite idolatry, which so infected the Israelites over the centuries—and this could be another reason it is singled out for special mention.

The chapter ends with God's promise to return the Israelites to their land. *Expositor's* states in its note on verses 25-26: "The judgment of the nations around Israel was given to encourage the exiles that God would faithfully exercise his righteousness against the nations as well as Judah. Ezekiel encouraged the Judeans further with a reminder that the Lord would regather them from among all the nations where they had been scattered by God's judgment. This restoration to Palestine would take place when God executed his judgments on the nations, judgments that would not be completed fully till the end times. By regathering Israel God would demonstrate to all nations that he was the holy God, unique and distinct. None of man's proposed deities had ever been able to accomplish a restoration such as this, and they never would; for the Lord alone was God and none other." [END]

Day 636 – FRIDAY: May 9th

2 Kings 25:2-7, Jeremiah 39:2-7 & Jeremiah 52:5-11

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "In the summer of 586 B.C., when Jerusalem's food supply had run out, the Babylonians at last breached the walls of the city ([2 Kings 25:2-4](#); [Jeremiah 39:2](#); [Jeremiah 52:5-7](#)). The various rulers of the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar

then "sat in the Middle gate" ([Jeremiah 39:3](#)). "The 'Middle Gate' was probably between the upper and lower divisions of the city. The purpose of the officials' session at the Middle Gate was either to plan their military strategy or to establish their quarters there" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verses 1-3). *The Nelson Study Bible* suggests that it was "to assert their authority in the conquered city" (note on verse 3). At the beginning of his ministry, 40 years earlier, Jeremiah had prophesied, "'Out of the north calamity shall break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. For behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north,' says the Lord; 'They shall come and each one set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem...'" ([Jeremiah 1:15](#)).

"Jeremiah gives the Babylonian names of the Babylonian high officials ([[Jeremiah 39](#)] v. 3): Nergal-Sharezer was Nebuchadnezzar's son-in-law and succeeded him under the name Neriglissar [ruling Babylon from 560 to 556 B.C.]. The 'chief officer' [NIV] (*rab-saris*) was head of the eunuchs who served as chamberlains. 'A high official' [NIV] is literally 'chief magi' (*rab-mag*)" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verses 1-3).

Zedekiah, realizing Jerusalem was lost, sought to escape by night. "The two walls near the king's garden between which Zedekiah and his army slipped out of Jerusalem probably lay at the extreme southeastern corner of the city, giving direct access to the Kidron Valley (cf. [Nehemiah 3:15](#))" (footnote on [2 Kings 25:4](#)). They made their way "toward the Arabah" (verse 4; [Jeremiah 39:4](#); [Jeremiah 52:7, NIV](#))—"the great Jordan Rift Valley that extends throughout the length of the Holy Land from the Sea of Galilee to the Gulf of Aqabah" (same footnote). But Babylonian forces caught them in the plains south of Jericho.

They were taken to Nebuchadnezzar in "Riblah on the Orontes River in Syria, which was the field headquarters for Nebuchadnezzar's western

campaigns. Jehoahaz had been summoned there earlier by Pharaoh Necho ([2 Kings] 23:33)" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 25:6).

Nebuchadnezzar had no pity for those who had rebelled against him. He first killed the king's sons, followed by the nobles. "Only Zedekiah was spared for captivity after he saw with his own eyes the slaughter and then was blinded... By modern standards what Nebuchadnezzar did was unusually harsh, but was in accord with ancient pagan practices and is understandable in view of the trouble that Judah and especially Zedekiah had given Babylon. This kind of punishment, especially the blinding (v. 7), is mentioned in the Hammurabi Code... Thus two prophecies were fulfilled: (1) Zedekiah would see the king of Babylon and would be taken there (cf. 32:3-4), and (2) he would die in Babylon without ever seeing it (cf. [Ezekiel 12:13](#)). To add to his torture, Zedekiah had to witness the slaughter of his sons and the nobles... This kind of punishment was very ancient (cf. [Judges 16:21](#)). Assyrian sculptures show how kings delighted to put out, often with their own hands, the eyes of captive rulers" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on [Jeremiah 39:6-8](#)).

"The last thing Zedekiah saw was the reward of his sinful folly—the horrible spectacle of his own loved ones being put to death. He would carry this picture with him until his own death in a Babylonian prison (Jeremiah 52:11)" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on [2 Kings 25:7](#)).

Besides serving as a lesson to other nations, the killing of the princes and nobility was also to eliminate anyone who, as a possible successor ruler, might serve as a rallying point for the Jewish people. The Judean monarchy had indeed come to a brutal end. Yet, as explained in the comments on our previous reading, the dynasty of David would be transferred elsewhere and go on, just as God had promised." [END]

Day 637 – SATURDAY: May 10th

2 Kings 25:8-21, 2 Chronicles 36:17-21, Jeremiah 39:8-10 & Jeremiah 52:12-30

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “About a month after the captivity of Zedekiah, in the Hebrew fifth month of Ab or Av (corresponding to July-August), came the demolition of Solomon's temple, the palaces and buildings, the removal of all the valuable items to Babylon and the destruction of the city's walls. This was no easy task—as is born out by the use of the whole Babylonian army to tear down the walls.

As is often the case in Bible translation, the English does not truly convey the sense of the original language. *Mastering the Old Testament* comments regarding [2 Kings 25](#): "In Hebrew, the first twelve verses of the chapter are one long sentence, each verse beginning with 'and.' Clause is heaped upon clause in a kind of cadence, as if each one were another tick of the clock counting down Jerusalem's final hours" (Vol. 9: *1, 2 Kings* by Russell Dilday, 1987, p. 505).

A lot of detail is given concerning exactly what was taken from the temple. Many items had been taken in previous invasions. Now the temple was stripped bare before it was razed. Strikingly absent is any mention of the Ark of the Covenant, which has fueled suspicions that it was secreted away to some hiding place beforehand (though we cannot now know for sure). As mentioned in comments on a previous plundering of the temple, it is interesting to note that after the fall of Babylon to the Persians, the Jews who are permitted to return to Judah at that time are given temple items to go back with according to a detailed accounting ([Ezra 1:7-11](#))—perhaps made possible by the fact that Daniel was a high official of Babylon who could well have had a hand in this.

Concerning the temple, there appears to be a contradiction as to what day of the month Nebuzaradan, the Babylonian captain of the guard, arrived and destroyed it. In [2 Kings 25:8](#) the date given is the seventh

while [Jeremiah 52:12](#) says it was the tenth. *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* says that the difficulty may be solved "without supposing different copies, or any error: [Nebuzaradan] might [have] set out from Riblah on the seventh day, and come to Jerusalem on the tenth; or he might come thither on the seventh, and not set fire to the city till the tenth; or, if he set fire to it on the seventh, it might be burning to the tenth, before it was wholly consumed. The Jews account for it thus: 'strangers entered into the temple, and ate in it, and defiled it, the seventh and eighth days; and on the ninth, towards dark, they set fire to it; and it burned and continued all that whole day, as it is said, [Jeremiah 6:4](#)'" (note on [Jeremiah 52:12](#)). The Jewish oral tradition gives the ninth of Av as the date for the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians—as well as the date for the destruction of the second temple by the Romans more than 600 years later (Tosefta Ta'anit 4:10; Ta'an 29a). The anniversary of the destruction of Solomon's temple was commemorated as "the fast of the fifth month" ([Zechariah 8:19](#))—still observed by the Jews on the ninth of Av as the anniversary of the destruction of both temples. Indeed, a number of other great tragedies have befallen the Jewish people on this date over the centuries.

Another possible solution to the apparent discrepancy is that the date given in [Jeremiah 52:12](#), the tenth, actually applies to verse 15 regarding the deportation of the people—and that everything in between is a parenthetical inset explaining what *had already* happened up to this point.

Not everyone, we learn, was deported at this time. The Babylonians knew the value of the land and, rather than leaving it totally desolate, they allowed some of the poorer people to stay behind to care for the vineyards and fields.

Certain important people were chosen for execution, such as the high priest Seraiah, grandson of Hilkiah, the faithful high priest of Josiah's day. "Although Seraiah was executed at Riblah ([[2 Kings 25](#)] v. 21), his

son Jehozadak was simply deported (1 Chronicles 6:15). Through Jehozadak's line would come Ezra, the priest and great reformer, who one day would return to Jerusalem and take up Seraiah's work ([Ezra 7:1](#)). The second martyred priest Zephaniah may be the priest mentioned by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 21:1; Jeremiah 29:25). Jerusalem would be less prone to future rebellions with the chief religious and civil officials gone" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on [2 Kings 25:18](#)).

Of course, many were carried away at this time—though much less than had already been carried away more than a decade earlier. Bear in mind that the figures given in [Jeremiah 52:28-30](#) concern only the city of Jerusalem. Many more people were taken from the rest of Judah. Observe also that, according to verse 30, a final deportation would occur a few years after the current one.

The exile would continue "until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths" ([2 Chronicles 36:21](#)). "According to the Law of Moses the land was to lie fallow every seventh year (Leviticus 25:4). This became known as the sabbatical year. Judah's exile in Babylon allowed the land to enjoy the Sabbaths it had missed [because the people had failed to obey God's law] (see Leviticus 26:33-35)" (note on [2 Chronicles 36:21](#)).

Being driven into captivity was a hard plight. As one source explains: "It was indeed a subject for an artist to depict, the long march of the exiles on the way to their distant home. Delicate women and little children forced to travel day after day, irrespective of fatigue and suffering; prophets and priests mingled together in the overthrow they had done so much to bring about; rich and poor marching side by side, manacled, and urged forward by the spear-point or scourge. All along the valley of the Jordan, past Damascus, and then for thirty days through the inhospitable wilderness...whilst all the nations round clapped their hands" (F.B. Meyer, *Jeremiah*, 1980).

Mastering the Old Testament comments on [2 Kings 25](#): "The reader cannot help but be struck by the passionless tones of the narrative in this chapter. Not once does the author show his feelings, even though he is describing the tragic downfall of his country" (p. 505).

"Nor," the same source goes on to say, "can the reader help but be impressed with the revelation throughout these chapters of God's patience and His reluctance to punish. More than four hundred years had passed since Solomon first disobeyed God and introduced the children of Israel to pagan idolatry. Faithfully, through all those years, a steady stream of prophets clearly proclaimed the warnings of punishment. Varying disasters confirmed their messages, vividly previewing what was to come if the people did not repent and turn to God. With steadfast love, God tried again and again to seek and save His people, but they mocked His warnings, killed His prophets, and would not listen to His reproof. So finally the hour struck and the impending crash came. The harshness of the judgment is somehow softened by the recognition that the Lord is indeed long-suffering toward His people. But His patience and steadfast love are balanced with justice. The destruction is a reminder that we must not presume on His grace and mercy" (pp. 505-506).

This stands as a witness against those who would portray the God of the Old Testament as invariably harsh. It also serves as a warning that the God of love will extend His patience only so far. No one can dispute the fact that today's world blatantly disobeys and disregards God's laws. It can only be a matter of time before He says, "That's the end..."

Supplementary Reading: ["The Bible and Archaeology: The Downfall of Judah: Exile to Babylon,"](#) The Good News, January/February 1999, pp. 22-24, 28." [END]