

Memory Verse: Jeremiah 31:30

Reading: Ezekiel 2:9-3:11, 12,18, 24, 37

Ezekiel was a prophet and prisoner in Babylon. (1:1) The prophet Ezekiel wrote this book to Jewish exiles living in the Babylonian Empire.

Questions

Ez 2:9-3:11

1. Define the word lamentations.

God selects Ezekiel to become a prophet. He will deliver God's message to the Jews in exile.

2. What was handed to Ezekiel?

3. What was he to do with it? Why?

4. What did it taste like?

5. Why would the Israelites not listen to him?

Chapter 12

1. Explain how the Israelites had eyes, but could not see, and ears, but could not hear.

2. Explain what Ezekiel had to do in verses 13-16.

3. What did this mean?

4. Who would be left?

Chapter 18

1. What do you think the proverb in verse 2 means? (hint: v3-4)

2. Does the righteous man live? (v5-9)

3. What happens if the righteous man has a son that is wicked? (v10-13) Righteous son? (v14-17)

4. How were the people judged? (v20) Did they bear the iniquity of their fathers? Explain.

5. If the wicked repented of their sin would they live?

6. If the righteous sinned would they die?

Chapter 24

1. What was about to happen to the Israelites? (v2) Why? (v13-14)

2. How did Ezekiel feel about his wife? (v16)

3. What was going to happen to her?

4. What was Ezekiel not to do? (v16-17)

5. What was Ezekiel's answer to their questions in verse 19? What was their punishment? What would be destroyed?

Chapter 37

After the messages of doom come messages of comfort.

1. What does Ezekiel see in his vision? (v1-2)

2. What does God tell Ezekiel to say to the bones? (v3-6) Do they come back to life?

3. What do you think this means?

4. What do the two sticks represent? (v15-17)

5. _____ and _____ would be united as one again when the remnant returned. (v22)

Lesson 33

Jerusalem - Jerusalem

V11-13

Lebanon - Judah - Jerusalem

Ezekiel - Chebar River

The Captivity

Daniel, Ezekiel

Why was Judah devastated? Were these not God's chosen people? Isn't this the great nation God promised to Abraham? Did God not give them the land of Canaan for an inheritance? Has He not fought their battles for them through the years? Why not this time? Has He forgotten them? Is He breaking His promises?

Oh yes, God did indeed make a promise to Abraham that He would make a great nation through his seed (Gen. 12:2). That promise was fulfilled in Moses' day and this is the nation we have studied ever since (Exod. 19-24). He also promised Abraham He would give the land of Canaan to that nation (Gen. 12:7). That promise was fulfilled in Joshua's day (Josh. 21:43-45). Furthermore, He promised to treat this nation in a special way above all other nations on earth. He offered them a special covenant relationship with Him no other nation was ever offered. Turn to Exodus 19:3-6 to see the covenant God offered Israel:

... You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation ... (NIV).

The Israelites were delighted to accept God's covenant when it was offered because they wanted the blessings involved. But, do you notice there was a condition in the covenant? God said, *"If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then ... you will be mine."* The generation of Moses' day was sure they could keep God's commandments with no trouble, but they had built a golden calf to worship within six weeks of agreeing to worship no other gods (Exod. 19:8; 24:3, 7; 32:1-33:23). God forgave them on that occasion and let them continue in His grace.

As the years passed in the wilderness, the Israelites murmured many, many times. Moses warned them before his death that they would have God's blessings *only* if they remained faithful to Him.

The whole book of Deuteronomy sets forth the conditions under which they would be allowed to *keep* the land God was ready to give them at that time. If they would serve God faithfully, then they would be blessed on every hand. If not, they would be cursed on every hand. Read Deuteronomy 28 to see one of the most vivid descriptions of their destruction to be found in the entire Bible.

The choice was theirs — they could obey and have life and prosperity. Or they could disobey and face death and destruction. The permanent landmarks of the heavens and the earth were called as witnesses that Israel was warned and it was their choice (Deut. 30:15-20).

Moses died and the people went into the land and conquered every enemy that opposed them. Joshua warned them before his death that they would retain the land *only* if they were faithful (Josh. 23-24).

Now through all the intervening years, God has fought their battles for them when they were serving Him. When they were not faithful, He allowed an enemy to oppress them. Instead of learning the lessons as they should have, conditions only worsened in the land. The Lord sent prophet after prophet to warn of impending doom. The people would not listen, so the prophets wrote their messages as proof that God did warn. The time finally came when God's justice demanded that the wicked nation be punished. They made their choice to go their own way, and now the price must be paid.

The prophet Ezekiel was taken in the second group of captives when the craftsmen and other prominent people were taken. He lived in one of the Jewish colonies by the banks of the river _____ in Babylon (Ezek. 1:1). One day, the Spirit of the Lord came to him and lifted him up in a vision and took him back to the city of Jerusalem. God showed him all the corruption that was in the city. There was an idol by the gate of the city. He saw the elders of the city, the leaders, hiding in the dark and offering incense to idols. They were sure God could not see them. He saw the women of the city crying to false gods for help in their time of trouble. He saw men standing in the temple grounds with their backs toward the temple, bowing in worship to the sun god.

God said, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing — the utterly detestable things the house of Israel is doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary?" (Ezek. 8:6). As Ezekiel watched, the Spirit of God arose from His place above the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place in the temple and withdrew to the threshold of the temple. As the vision continued, God sent a messenger throughout the city to mark all those who grieved over the sins of the city. Then, He sent others to destroy all the wicked who were not marked. Ezekiel cried out in distress, "Ah, Sovereign Lord! Are You going to destroy the entire remnant of Israel in this outpouring of your wrath on Jerusalem?" (9:8). God answered, "The sin of Israel and Judah is exceeding great and the destruction will be correspondingly great, but no one who is set apart as serving God will be harmed" (9:5, 6, 9). The vision

continued as Ezekiel watched the glory of God leave the threshold of the temple, and move outside Jerusalem to the mountain east of the city (11:23). The city and temple were no more than an empty husk so far as God was concerned. He had rejected them. (Ezekiel 8:1-11:25.)

This was exactly what God predicted when Solomon built the temple. He promised to hear all prayers offered toward the temple if they served Him faithfully. But . . .

... if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you . . . then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. And though this temple is now imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, 'Why has the Lord done such a thing? . . . People will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the Lord their God . . . ' (1 Kings 9:3-9). NIV

The time has come. God's plan is on schedule. God can no more lie about His promises of punishment than He can lie about His promises of blessing (Heb. 6:18; 2 Pet. 3:9).

But wait! There was another promise to Abraham. God said all nations would be blessed through One who would come through Abraham's seed (Gen. 12:3). There is to be another prophet raised like Moses (Deut. 18:15-22). There is to be a King to reign forever on David's throne (2 Sam. 7:11-16; Psalms 89:19-37; 132:11-12). In all the years between the promise to Abraham and the fall of Judah, there have been many, many prophecies and promises about this One to come. Has God forgotten all these promises? Is God so disgusted with His people He has decided to destroy them and start all over with a new race of people through whom to fulfill His promises?

No. That promise is on schedule also. God could fulfill His plan for the redemption of mankind whether Israel was faithful or not. If they had served Him faithfully, He would have blessed them greatly. They would never have found themselves merely pawns in a pagan society. As it was, they must be punished, but God has not forgotten them.

There was a major difference between the way God chastised His chosen people and the way He destroyed the pagan nations. For example, Assyria fell never to rise again. Their capital, Nineveh, was so thoroughly destroyed, its ruins were not found for centuries. In contrast, God's people were taken captive, their city was burned, but God did not forget them. He knew where every individual was, and He heard every prayer offered by a faithful Israelite though he were a thousand miles from his homeland (see Dan. 6).

The threats of captivity for God's people were followed by a promise of a return of a remnant. We have already noted Moses' warning in Deuteronomy 28. Now look at chapter 30 of the same book. Moses says, "God will remember you and will bring you back to your homeland even if you are scattered to the most distant land under heaven."

Ezekiel's vision included the promise that the faithful would be spared and allowed to return home (Ezek. 9:6; 11:13, 16-21).

The prophet Amos declared God's eyes were on the sinful kingdom of Israel. It would be destroyed completely, but the whole house of Jacob would not be lost. God said He would shake the nation of Israel as if in a sieve, but not a kernel (righteous individual) would be lost (Amos 9:8-10).

Jeremiah made a similar prophecy about the kingdom of Judah. There would never again be a king of the royal line reigning in Jerusalem. Yet, a few verses later, he declared God would raise up a Righteous Branch to David who would be a King to judge righteously. His name would be "The Lord our Righteousness" (Jer. 22:28-23:6).

Jeremiah even specified the length of time the kingdom of Judah would be in captivity. It would be 70 years from the time the first ones were taken until a remnant would return (Jer. 29:10).

✓ Let us summarize the points in the prophecies: The people have been wicked. God demands they be chastised. There will never again be an independent nation of Israelites with a king of the line of David. Yet, God still loves His people. His promise of a Redeemer has not been fulfilled. Therefore, God will allow a group to return in exactly 70 years after the first captives were taken from Jerusalem. Through this remnant, God will finish His plan to bless all nations. This One will be a descendant of David and will reign in heaven forever.

It is now our task in this study to see how God's providence worked in the kingdoms of men to bring about His purpose.

-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-

No vast libraries have been found in the Babylonian ruins. The kings either did not keep detailed records the way the Assyrians had, or the records are still buried in the rubble time has left. We, therefore, do not know many details about their empire.

We do know Nebuchadnezzar was a powerful general and he succeeded in subduing most of the territory the Assyrians had taken centuries to conquer. Only Egypt was too strong for him to take.

Map #16 — The Babylonian Empire

Label and number your map.

Draw in the territory Babylon controlled. Color it orange.

Color all bodies of water.

Draw a dotted line around Canaan. Notice, none of God's people are living there now.

Label and color the Egyptian kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar was the most illustrious king of the empire. He was an able administrator and builder. He made Babylon the chief city of the world. It covered an area of about 200 square miles on both sides of the Euphrates River. It was beautiful with broad streets laid out, intersecting at right angles. Three imposing walls surrounded the city. At least part of the walls were wide enough for chariots to pass on top of them. The "Hanging Gardens" Nebuchadnezzar built for his Median wife became one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. (See Dan. 4:28-30.)

The Babylonians could be cruel as most conquering people of their day were. We have already seen how they utterly destroyed Jerusalem. It seems from the ruins of Judah that many walled cities fell at the same time. King Zedekiah was captured and taken before Nebuchadnezzar. There, before his eyes, his sons and the Jewish officials were killed. Then Zedekiah's eyes were put out and he was led away prisoner (2 Kings 25:4-7; Jer. 39:1-7).

Yet, it seems the Babylonians did not glory in cruelty the way the Assyrians had. They tended to leave all people exactly where they found them so long as they accepted Babylonian rule. A submissive city was left standing with only tribute to pay. The tribes of Israel already in exile from the days of the Assyrians remained so. The little kingdom of Judah was defeated and the people moved because they kept rebelling against the king.

Captive people were treated generously. Daniel and his companions were taken in the first group of captives, and they were trained to serve in the king's palace. They were given honored positions in the kingdom (see book of Daniel). Ezekiel had no direct contact with the king. He lived among the typical captives. There is evidence that the Jews were allowed to establish prosperous, comfortable colonies along an irrigation canal called the River Chebar that reached from the city of Babylon to Erech (see book of Ezekiel). Jeremiah wrote a letter to the captives telling them to build houses, plant gardens, allow their sons to marry, and to prosper (Jer. 29). Many Jews became quite rich during the period.

Label the River Chebar and Erech.

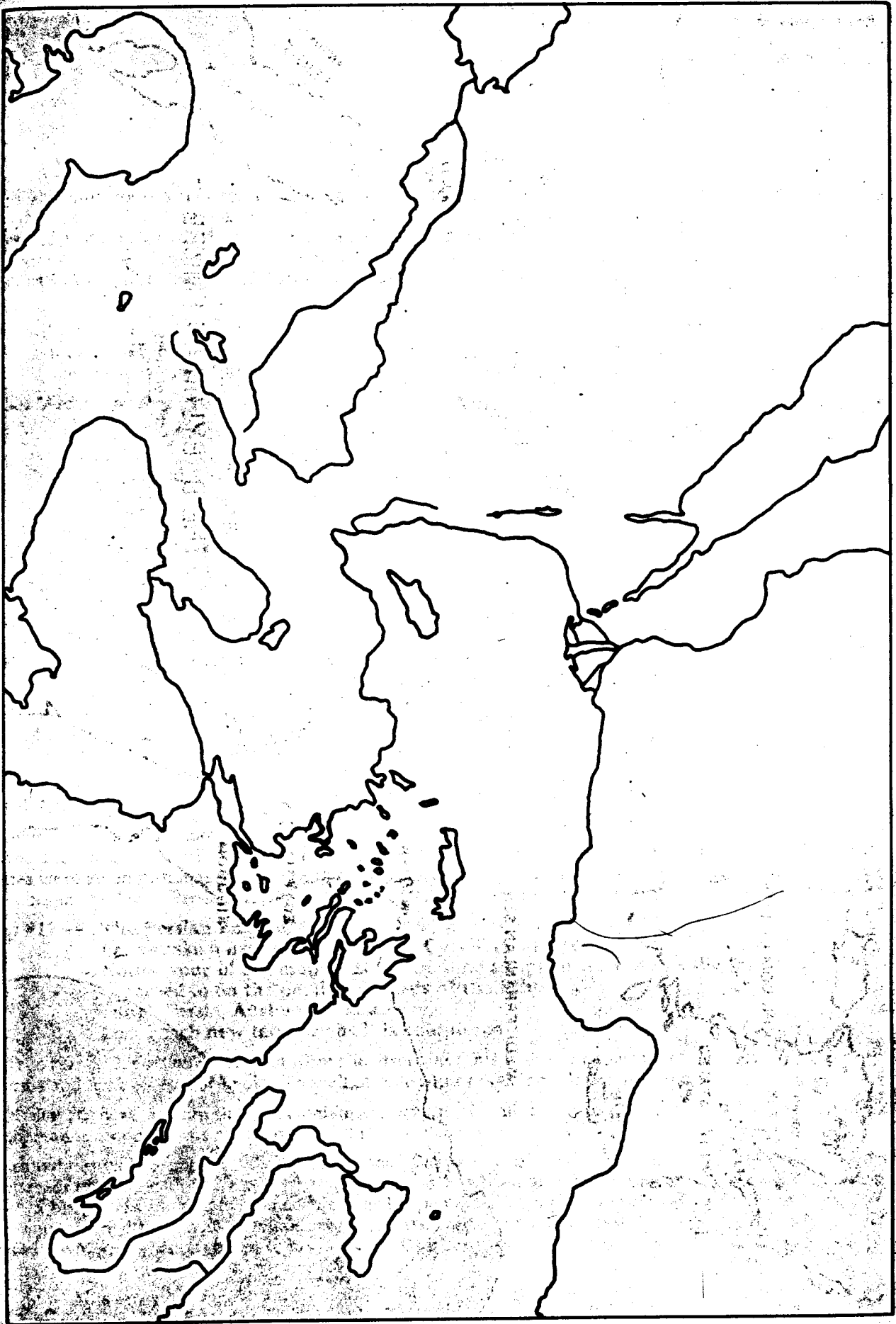
Still, the faithful Jew longed for the day he could return home. The warnings of the prophets had more meaning now than ever before. There was no doubt now that God would punish. Now they knew they must obey God's law if they wanted God's favor. The temple was destroyed, and there was no place for the sacrifices to be made so they began gathering on the Sabbath day to read and ponder their law and prophets. These assemblies were likely the beginning of their *synagogues* (a coming together). This was one institution that helped keep the Jews aware of their law and their distinct position before God.

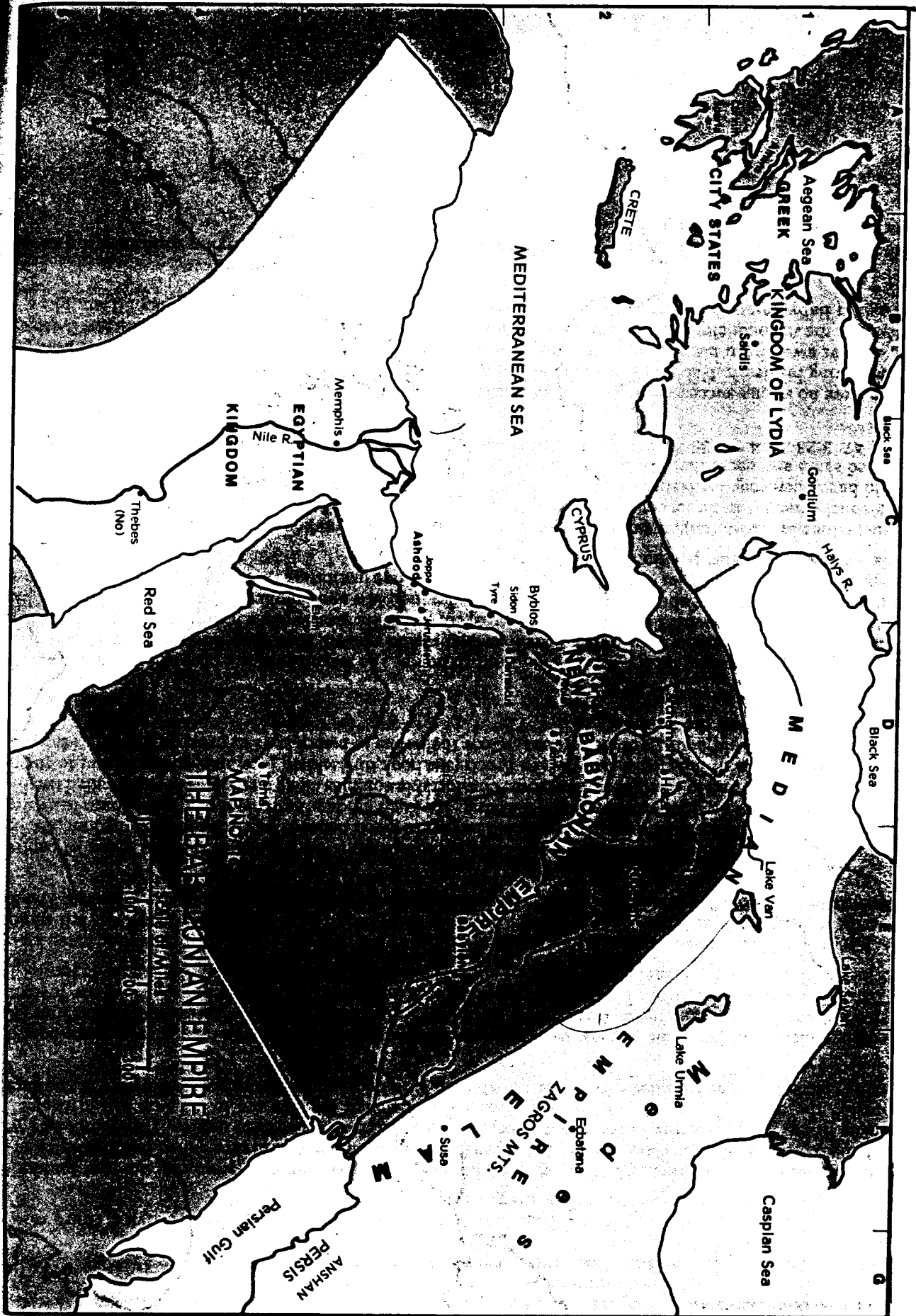
Nebuchadnezzar had a long, successful reign. There are some fascinating stories in the book of Daniel that show Nebuchadnezzar in direct confrontation with Jehovah. No other king had ever destroyed Jehovah's temple. It would have been easy for Nebuchadnezzar to decide he was greater than the "God of the Israelites." Instead, he learned again and again that "God rules in the kingdoms of men and sets up whomsoever He chooses" (Dan. 2:37-38, 47; 3:28-29; 4:17, 25-26, 32, 34-37). The mighty king was merely a tool in the hand of the Omnipotent God.

There were no strong successors to Nebuchadnezzar's throne. Four kings reigned in rapid succession in the 22 years following his death. Nabonidus was the last one on the throne. He seems to have had very little ability as a ruler. He was away from his capital most of the time in some study of antiquities. He built himself a new royal residence in the Arabian city of Tema and stayed there a great portion of the time. He had left his son Belshazzar in charge in Babylon on the night God's handwriting on the wall pronounced Babylon's doom (Dan. 5).

Label Tema in Arabia.

That very night the city was invaded, and it fell without a battle. The people of Babylon welcomed the invaders almost as if they were deliverers.





Text: Ezekiel 2:9-3:11; 12; 18; 24; 37 Teacher: Keith Pierce

Memory Verse: Jeremiah 31:30

Concept development

Inspired Scripture - Guiding through the prophets

Lesson

Words to define:

Body:

Ch 2:9-3:11

Ezekiel saw a roll of a book that was full of Lamentations and mourning and woe

He was told to eat the book and then go tell the people

In his mouth it tasted sweet as honey

The house of Israel would not hear the words of God because they had a hard forehead and stiff heart

Ch 12

Israel was a rebellious people

They have eyes but see not

They have ears but hear not

> quoted in NT

Captivity by Babylon was foretold

Take stuff for removing and dig into the wall and remove it by night and cover your face

Babylon would come and dig into the wall and take the prince back to Babylon

The prince would not see Babylon but he would die there

That they know that I am Jehovah

Proverb: The days are prolonged and every vision faileth - prophets at 16 time speaking against

Ch 18

Proverb: The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge - spoken during this time

The soul that sinneth it shall die

The righteous man shall surely live

If his son is wicked he shall die

If his son is righteous he shall live

* If the wicked repent they shall live

His transgressions shall not be remembered

His righteousness shall be remembered

If the righteous sin they shall die

His righteousness shall not be remembered

His transgressions shall be remembered

18:20 judged for what they have done, not what their fathers had done

What you do, not what someone else does. It was their own actions they should look at - Israel

Ch 24

Ezekiel's wife died (the desire of his eye)

God told him not to mourn for her, nor weep, nor shed a tear

When Jerusalem was taken, the temple profaned and their children killed

The people were not to mourn, nor weep, nor shed a tear

That they know that I am Jehovah

try to impress on people how the situation was. We killed etc. No one should cry for Jerusalem. They were getting a right just punishment.

Ch 37 Vision Ezekiel has on a field of dry bones

The valley full of bones that came to life

God will bring Israel back to life

Two sticks with the name of Joseph on one and Judah on the other

Judah and Israel would be united as one again when the remnant returned

The coming Messiah and the Gospel

symbolizes northern and southern kingdoms

Joseph always stood up for Jehovah, Judah

was one of the wicked brothers, led in selling their brother Joseph

into slavery. Sozon married a Canaanite woman, had a wife (Tamar)

God will bring remnant back, living, breathing, etc.

people were looking at this as they were suffering for Manasse's sin God looking at it in a different way. Bearing punishment of their fathers. They also had sins, they need to take care of their sins

Kingdoms brought back together - Remnant of Israelites, Jews both Kingdoms re-united as one Kingdom - Remnant

① Manasse - people carried away because of his great sin