

THE SECOND EXODUS

The Kingdom of BABYLON

Daniel and **Hananiah**, **Mishael**, and **Azariah** (also known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were exiled to Babylon in 605 BC to serve in the court of **Nebuchadnezzar**. Because of their faithfulness, they were blessed by God with wisdom but also experienced persecution—the fiery furnace and the lions’ den—yet God protected them.

In 597 BC, **Jehoiachin** was exiled and imprisoned in Babylon. In the 37th year of his exile, **Evil-merodach** pardoned him, released him from prison, and elevated him to a throne in Babylon. He ate at the table of the king for the rest of his life. Thus, the Davidic line, from which would come the promised Messiah, was preserved.

The Kingdom of BABYLON

KINGS	REIGN
Nebuchadnezzar	605–562 BC
Evil-merodach	562–560
Neriglissar	560–556
Labashi-marduk	556
Nabonidus, with his son Belshazzar as regent	556–539

BABYLON CONQUERED BY MEDO-PERSIA (539 BC)



REBUILDING THE TEMPLE AND JERUSALEM		
YEAR	EVENT	SCRIPTURE
538 BC	Cyrus’s decree	Ezra 1:1-4
537	Altar rebuilt	Ezra 3:2-3
536	Temple reconstruction began	Ezra 3:8-9
536	Dedication for temple foundation	Ezra 3:10-13
536–520	Opposition to rebuilding the temple	Ezra 4:1-5,24
520	Temple rebuilding resumed	Ezra 5:1-2
515	Temple completed and dedicated	Ezra 6:14-18
458	Ezra arrived in Jerusalem	Ezra 7:8-10
445	Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem	Nehemiah 2:11
445	Wall around Jerusalem rebuilt	Nehemiah 6:15
445	Ezra publicly read the book of the Law	Nehemiah 8:1-12

For the sin of God’s people of chasing other gods and forsaking the one true God who brought them out of Egypt and settled them in the promised land, Jeremiah prophesied a seventy-year exile in the land of Babylon. Reflecting on this prophecy and praying for its fulfillment, Daniel received understanding from God that “seventy weeks” (or seventy sevens) were decreed before the full restoration of God’s people and city and the end of rebellion and sin. Cyrus’s decree, and subsequent ones from other kings, began the second exodus, the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon. Yet Ezra and Nehemiah both recognized their continued slavery even after returning to the land of Judah. Only the Messiah—cut off for the sin of His people and given the authority to rule a kingdom of those from every people, nation, and language—only Jesus can end this exile and lead His people out of slavery to sin and death and into the promised land of eternal life in the kingdom of God.

“The days are coming”—the Lord’s declaration—“when it will no longer be said, ‘As the Lord lives who brought the Israelites from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘As the Lord lives, who brought and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the land of the north and from all the other countries where I had banished them.’ They will dwell once more in their own land” (Jeremiah 23:7-8).

The Southern Kingdom of

JUDAH

KINGS	REIGN
Eliakim (Jehoiakim)	609–598 BC
Jehoiachin (Jeconiah)	598–597
Mattaniah (Zedekiah)	597–586

Babylon invaded and exerted control over Judah during the reigns of **Jehoiakim** (605 BC), **Jehoiachin** (597), and **Zedekiah** (586). King **Nebuchadnezzar** deported people to Babylon on these occasions, but finally, he destroyed the wall around Jerusalem as well as the Lord’s temple.

JUDAH CONQUERED BY BABYLON (586 BC)

The Kingdom of

MEDO-PERSIA

KINGS	REIGN
Cyrus the Persian (Darius the Mede)	559–530 BC
Cambyses	530–522
Darius	521–486
Xerxes (Ahasuerus)	486–465
Artaxerxes	465–423

Cyrus the Persian (also known as Darius the Mede) conquered the city of Babylon on the night **Belshazzar** witnessed the handwriting on the wall. In the first year of Cyrus’s victory (538 BC), the Lord put it into his mind to decree the return of the exiles from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem, fulfilling prophecies from both Isaiah and Jeremiah. Thus began “the second exodus.”

Zerubbabel and **Jeshua** were among the first Jews to return to the promised land from their exile in Babylon. Zerubbabel was a descendant of Jehoiachin and an ancestor in the lineage of Jesus. Jeshua (also known as Joshua) served as the high priest for the renewed community in Jerusalem. These two leaders, along with **Haggai** and **Zechariah**—and with the support of King **Darius**—oversaw the construction and completion of the second temple.

Esther and **Mordecai** lived in Susa, a capital city of Persia, during the reign of **Ahasuerus** (also known as Xerxes). While the book of Esther nowhere mentions God, He is clearly orchestrating events in order to bring judgment upon the enemies of His people and to preserve and bless His people in a foreign land. The Jewish festival of Purim has its origin in the story of Esther.

Ezra was a priest and scribe skilled in the law of Moses and a descendant of Aaron through Eleazar and Phinehas. With the blessing of King **Artaxerxes**, he traveled from Babylon to the promised land for the purpose of restoring the worship of the Lord and obedience to the law of God. He had determined in his heart to study the law of the Lord, to obey it, and to teach it in Israel.

Nehemiah served as the cupbearer for King **Artaxerxes**. Upon hearing the news of disgrace for the Jewish remnant in Jerusalem, he prayed for the favor of the Lord and of the king, which he received. He traveled from Susa to Jerusalem and led the efforts to rebuild the wall around the city, despite much opposition. He was appointed governor of Judah for twelve years before returning to the service of the king.