

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 1 - Study 19 **Old Testament Prophets point to the End Times, and a short History.**
C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: It seems for the time being in my studies that the Lord is dealing regarding the present conditions in the world and specifically in the USA, even more so regarding the church, and even more so regarding the evangelical part of the church in its varied splintered parts.

Studies - Old Testament Prophets point to the End Times, and a short History.

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These are brief studies, not
“teachings” or “doctrines”.

Volume 1, Study 19

For the time being, the Lord is dealing with me about the present conditions in the world and specifically in the USA...and even more specifically regarding the church...and even more specifically regarding the evangelical part of the church in its varied splintered parts.

I have been struggling with a cold, and with daylight savings time that started a few days ago, and so again I lingered in bed and looking over at my little Bible I picked it up to spend some more time in bed. I turned on the light and opened and it fell to Zechariah 8. It was not long before I was into another study along the same lines as previous studies, and in this case it was in the historic time when the remnant of exiled Judaists from Babylon was returned to the land and was in the struggling process of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

Over a couple of hours, I was into chapter 8 and then chapter 7 and then part of chapter 6. The majority of the study as usual will be in these chapters, which I shall insert in the study. Now it is after lunch and sitting in front of this page, and realizing that the study shall be longer than the typical study (I do try to keep them short), I have decided to put off this study until the next, which will be Volume 1, Study 20.

Therefore, in facing this page I have decided to make this Study 19 about the Old Testament prophets which God used as He pointed toward the End Times. Several years ago I had worked a personal study of the end times (as covered or referred to by God) in the prophets. I had wanted to go through each prophet in sequence as the Lord God had brought them out upon His stage in His ongoing saga of Israel...which as you know points forward to the end of the age when Christ will come again and Jesus will take his throne for 1000 years.

In the studies I have been sharing on the website, I have included small bits of history (perhaps not enough history) dealing with Israel, its breakup, and what God was doing to the northern tribes and to the southern tribes, etc. Study 20 will be a continuation of this.

But back to my study of the prophets regarding the End Times: I needed to come up with an accurate list of the prophets, dates of when they appeared on the scene, and something of the history of each period before I could actually begin to study them. I accomplished this (it took a while) and then dove into my study of the prophets.

Below I have placed that list. For my purposes at the time, I had completed some brief historical notes, which you will see, heading down towards the time of Jesus. As this Study 19 is relatively short compared to what the length will be for Study 20, I suggest that you spend some time studying the list and its bits of history. You can print it out and refer to it in the next study, but you can also use it going back to those previous studies on the website that deal with the Old Testament Scriptures. I have made some corrections and expanded it slightly.

You can see this list expanded as a Chronology in Appendix VI in my book, God’s Rock, which you can access at Christian Wilderness Press. (Click on the website above.)

Prophets of End Times (i.e. used of God as He pointed to the End Times)

Psalms: David begins rule 1010 BC (many Psalms and parts of them deal with the End Times)

The nation of Israel splits into Judah and Israel shortly after Solomon’s death 930 BC

Obadiah 887 BC, deals with Judah.

Jonah 862 BC, deals with Israel.

In 870-860 BC Syria took several cities in the north

part of the northern kingdom (i.e. Israel, the northern tribes which split off from Judah after the death of Solomon). And, with God still having mercy on Israel, He spoke through the prophet Jonah that should Israel take back the cities. This was in the days when the Assyrians were yet only threatening the Syrians (2Kings14:23-29). Israel was successful in taking back the cities.

Then in 841 BC when Assyria had conquered Syria, Shalmansere III of Assyria, for the first time, intruded into Israel, and Israel paid tribute to him.

Joel 800 BC, deals with Judah

Amos 787 BC, deals with Israel

Hosea 785-725 BC, deals with Israel

Isaiah 760-698 BC, deals with Judah

Micah 750-710 BC, deals with Judah

In 741 BC, Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria came and defeated King Azaiah of Israel taking captive many nobles, officers, and businessmen and their families - some 20,000 or so in the north on both sides of the river (see 2Kings 15:27-31).

And then some powerful families in that region of Israel made a pact (association) with the Assyrians that gave them power over the entire northern region. They stole from and terrorized the remaining Israelites in the north.

In 721 BC, Israel finally became totally subjugated and most of the people were taken off captive into Assyria and elsewhere. And peoples from other of Assyria's conquests were relocated to Israel. Thus, the northern kingdom as a nation would never again become a nation.

(See 2Kings 17:1-6 and 18:9-12. Then read all of 2Kings located between the two passages to see why Yahweh was doing what He was doing and see what was happening to the lands of the northern kingdom.)

Nahum 663-612 BC, deals with Judah

Zephaniah 625-630 BC, deals with Judah

also Habakkuk deals with Judah

Around 632 BC the Assyrians rebuilt Babylon, which they had mostly destroyed in 689 BC in their victory over Shinar (southern Mesopotamia). However, soon afterward Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was destroyed by the Medes which came in from the east. And in 612 BC the Assyrian empire was wholly crushed by the Medes and the Scythians (fierce nomads of the area near and between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea).

Habakkuk prophesied about the Chaldeans who would again rise up in Shinar (its capital city was Babylon). The Chaldeans would subject the Medes who would join them (together they would soon come and take Judah away captive).

Jeremiah 626-587 BC, deals with Judah

Assyria had rebuilt Babylon because from ancient times it had been the very long lasting and great religious city of Mesopotamia. Yet (as mentioned

above and according to Yahweh), Assyria where so many of Israel's exiles presently lived soon was crushed by the Medes... which Jeremiah observed from afar in Judah.

Moreover, Jeremiah in his long tenure as prophet observed the rebuilding of Babylon from afar in Israel and he observed and commented on her rebuilding power within Mesopotamia.

Before the growing empire of Babylon gained preeminence enough to fill the power vacuum left within the lands of the defunct Assyrian empire, Nebuchadnezzar, son of Babylon's king, in 607 BC attacked and defeated King Necho of Egypt. Necho had marched his forces through Palestine (now devoid of Assyrian power) to the Euphrates river attempting to fill that same void.

Although Nebuchadnezzar would soon lose to Necho in another battle, eventually he would become victorious over the Medes and Scythians and in all of Mesopotamia. Thus, in the process he became king of the new Babylonian empire.

Moreover, Nebuchadnezzar would take from Necho all of both Syria and Palestine which Necho had only recently taken.

Eventually the nations (around Israel: Philistine, Syria, Ammon, Moab, Edom, etc.) would be chastised by Yahweh in His use of Nebuchadnezzar, but not until those nations had been given the opportunity to join (associate with) Nebuchadnezzar in coming against Jerusalem, which they did.

This happened when King Zedekiah of Judah (against Jeremiah's prophetic warning) broke the truce-covenant between Jerusalem and Babylon for protection of Jerusalem.

A quick reference to this can be found in Jeremiah 1:1-15. The story of Judah during the years of Jeremiah's tenure as prophet is found in 2Kings 22-25. Jeremiah's prophetic work began in the reign of King Josiah, the last *good* king in the lineage of David that was to sit on the throne in Judah.

In 607 BC an initial exile of Judah's cream of society occurred when Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho. This, then, means that Judah had become completely subjected under Babylon, resulting in several sons of Josiah successively being appointed by Nebuchadnezzar to Judah's throne. Also much treasure was carried to Babylon (see the 2Kings account).

Twelve years later, in 597 BC, the main body of people marched into exile. Yet, Jeremiah continued writing until a little after the death of Gedaliah (who

had been assigned as governor of impoverished Judah).

In 582 BC a final purge was made of Judah to squash some of the small rebellious bands.

Jeremiah also prophesied regarding Babylon's eventual end...to be accomplished by Cyrus the Persian in association with the Medes.

Ezekiel 595-574, deals with Judah and with exiled Israelites of the northern tribes

From 588-572 BC, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the fortified city of Tyre, whereupon finally Tyre capitulated to the authority of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar turned toward Egypt and confronted its king and army and inflicted his chastisement upon them.

In the fifth year after that Nebuchadnezzar took King Jehoiachin of Judah captive to Babylon, Ezekiel began prophesying for Yahweh even as Jeremiah continued prophesying in Judah.

God moved Ezekiel back and forth from Jerusalem (i.e. not yet totally captured and exiled to Babylon) to the exiled captivity of Israelites amid the lands where the Assyrians had put them...where at the present their conditions under the Chaldeans had become much improved.

Four years after Ezekiel first prophesied, he began prophesying about the nations (in chapter 24-39: Ammon, Philistine, Edom, Judah, etc). Then he began prophesying about the End Times.

It was at this time that Yahweh again began informing about all that would happen to the nations (including Judah and Egypt) by His chosen sword - the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar died in his forty-third year upon Babylon's throne. (Other kings followed upon the throne, but not for long.)

Daniel 607-534(?) BC, deals with Judah

Young Daniel had been in Judah's first exiled group, well before the bulk of the people had been exiled to Babylon. And eventually he had risen to a powerful position in the Chaldean (Babylonian) kingdom, which at the time had been expanding throughout all of Mesopotamia, west to the Mediterranean Sea, and south into Egypt.

In 539 BC, with the Babylonian empire waning, Cyrus the Persian was in the process of conquering nations and he took the city of Babylon.

Cyrus had had a dream from Yahweh, which ordered him to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem for its normal priestly operations of service unto Yahweh. Thus, in 536 BC, Cyrus began sending men of Judah back to the Land of Promise for the express purpose of rebuilding the temple.

Haggai 520 BC, deals with Judah

(Judah would now be called Judaea). In 525 BC,

Zechariah 520- ? BC, deals with Judah
Malachi 397 BC, deals with Judah

the surging Persians captured Egypt. God's exiles within Babylon and in other regions of the new Persian empire continued flowing into Jerusalem and Judaea, having been set free to do so by the Persians and the Medes.

Also, the wall would eventually be rebuilt around Jerusalem and the city would be financially supported by the Persian and Mede empire. Even so, the non-Israelite peoples in the region would continually object and they sent opposing envoys to the Persian kings.

In 490 BC, the Persian/Mede empire launched an expedition against Athens which controlled Greece and Macedonia. However, the Persians were defeated at the Battle of Marathon.

In 340 BC, Alexander of Macedonia (who became 'Alexander the Great') began his retaliatory expedition into Persian controlled territory. Leaving Macedonia he entered what is modern day Turkey and headed east through Syria toward Mesopotamia. In every battle his forces won over the Persians, and in 331 BC he crossed the Euphrates River into Mesopotamia. In 330 BC he took the city of Babylon, whereupon a long Hellenistic period began in all the lands previously ruled by the Persians...including Egypt and, of course, including the lands of the Mediterranean Sea already dominated at that time in history by Greece.

Upon the death of Alexander the Great, the empire (so quickly taken from the Persians and thus owned by the Greeks) became divided into four major regions: Two generals divided up the formerly ruled territory of Greece (i.e. the European part of the vast empire). Antigonus, to be followed by Ptolemy, received Egypt. Seleucus received the lands of modern Turkey, Palestine, and all of Mesopotamia. He placed his capital in Syria so as not to be so distant from his beloved homeland.

However, Palestine was fought over by the latter mentioned two generals between 319-302 BC...with Jerusalem, the Holy City, changing hands seven times in those years.

The truly worn out residents of Judaea became bitter against the Greeks, even though the Greeks never forced them to worship other gods. In fact, the Greeks treated the sanctity of Jerusalem and its temple with the same respect as did the Persians.

Even so, all of the previous conquerors of Israel and Judah had been Easterners (as opposed to Westerners like the Greeks and then the Romans). The Israelites of Judaea by this time were called "Jews" because of their fierce allegiance to Jerusalem, to the temple, and to the Yahweh religion. Upon gaining knowledge about Greek gods and the openness to homosexuality of the Greek people, as well as witnessing nude wrestling matches and other sports in their (holy) land, the Jews experienced a revival of their initial bitterness toward the Greeks, who had fought over and throughout their land. Now their bitterness had turned into outright revulsion.

For some reason, it was at this point in 168 BC that Antiochus IV of Syria...going against the normal Greek methodology within their conquered nations...desecrated the temple in Jerusalem. This led to nearly instant revolt under the Maccabees, which in turn resulted in Judaea becoming an independent state for a short season.

Moreover, it so happened that the Greeks had become weakened in this period of history and the

surging Romans took over all that the Greeks had owned, including all of Palestine. However, the Romans with their Western inclinations experienced trouble in maintaining their rule over the lands of Mesopotamia with their Eastern inclinations. And the residents of Judaea, in their Eastern orientation and inclinations, continued resentful and rebellious as the Western Romans took them over. The Jews saw little difference between the Western Greeks and the Western Romans, with their many gods and sports and baths, etc.

It had happened that the Persians and the Greeks, in their rule over Judaea, had allowed it to be a state that worshipped Yahweh exclusively, with pilgrims from all the nations coming there to worship. (And the Romans were doing so as well.)

However, the Greeks in their empire had introduced something new in all of their provinces (that later became taken over by Rome). The Greeks had instituted rule of localities in the conquered lands similar to the rule of localities in Greece. That is, districts were set up under Greek rulers or under local men loyal to the Greek empire, and within such districts every resident (regardless of a person's ethnicity) was encouraged to become a citizen of the state (i.e. within that district). Therefore, the exiles of Israel and of Judah, yet scattered and settled in those lands (though more than a few were returning to Judaea), became citizens. These Israelites were more attached to their growing prosperity of home and family where they were than to the distant holy land.

Out in these nations where the majority of scattered Israelites had settled down, they normally collected together (the same occurring among many of the people groups displaced much earlier by the Assyrians and the Babylonians). Therefore, out in the nations such neighborhoods were not uncommon and God's people usually lived in peace for a relatively long time.. But always there were exceptions, as they were very different, particularly in their worship of Yahweh. At that period in history, under the Romans in their widespread empire, things in such outlying districts remained much the same as under the Greeks. The exception was in the farther outlying eastern districts in Mesopotamia where the Romans had never held tight control; and in time they began losing control in some places and losing their rather Roman-tough influence as well. It had so happened that miscellaneous collections of Roman gods, Greek gods, and ancient gods had been being worshipped and, as the local rule of Rome waned, local authorities began exercising their power. Such local rulers often demanded that all citizens (now subjects) worship the local deities. The result in such locations was persecution to God's people the Israelites and to many converts to the Yahweh religion.

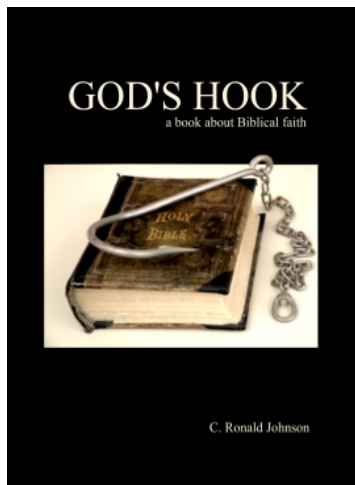
As Roman rule continued over the centuries, some of types of this forced-worship began making its way westward through the empire. In Judaea it had arrived in some degree, but only as an influence and was not mandatory. Yet, even the tendency of such influence to the Jews became wickedness and it often resulted in small local revolts quickly squashed. And so it was in Jesus' day. Indeed, the underlying unrest of some two hundred years or so under the Greeks and now the Romans had fermented into a rebellious attitude, with the religious ruling Jews all the more rebellious in their protectionist mode toward the holy city, the temple, and the Yahweh religion. How dare a man from lowly and insignificant Nazareth walk throughout the country as the very "son of God" teaching such things like "the kingdom of God has drawn nigh". No matter that One's miracles unexplained...everything that had been given of God to the Jews and to their care must be protected.

In Egypt, too, under the rules of the Greeks and now the Romans, many variant people groups over the many centuries had come into existence; and they were held in relative respect by normal inhabitants. In the course of time, Jews became scholastic and otherwise influential in many vocations such that between 300 and 200 BC with funding from the government the

Septuagint became written (i.e. a Greek translation of the Jews' Holy Literature, including the Apocrypha).

The Septuagint today remains essentially the same as our English Bible (having very slight differences) and it is the Old Testament for most Greek speaking Christians. In fact, it had been used extensively by early Christians (along with letters of the apostles and other important leaders) even as the Church was developing in its early age.

These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson at Christian Wilderness Press



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