



# Episode 6: God Judges Rebellion

## The Old Testament Prophets

### Key Verse:

***“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13–14)***

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By the late summer of 597 B.C., Jerusalem lay in smoldering ruins. The temple had been ransacked and destroyed by the Babylonian army. And God’s people? Many had already been taken into captivity and forced into exile. Great numbers died during the siege of the city. Another wave of people became captives and were marched across the land to Babylon, while others were left behind to serve the conquering empire.

How did we get here? How did we go from the highs of last week’s episode, where we saw King David reigning over a prosperous nation, to a barbarous invasion by a hostile empire and a forced exile away from the promised land?

Way back in episode 2 we learned that exile is a consequence of sin. Adam and Eve had been exiled from the garden when they rebelled against God. In this week’s episode, we’ll see the Israelites relive that exile. But God still does not give up on his people. We’ll be reminded that God is faithful to his word, and every promise that he made will one day come to pass.

# Day 1

Our story has been quite a roller coaster, hasn't it? We've witnessed some incredible acts of God, and we've seen people respond in faith to God's goodness and love. But we've also seen a seemingly endless cycle of defiance and rebellion.

Last week we focused on David, Israel's greatest king. David desired to build a house for the Lord, but the Lord promised to build David's house — a great dynasty where his descendants would occupy Israel's throne. David's son Solomon becomes king after his father's death and rules over a flourishing kingdom. He supervises the construction of the temple and Jerusalem becomes the center for Israel's formal worship. But during Solomon's reign, cracks form in the nation's foundation.

Solomon used forced labor in his building projects, sowing the seeds of resentment among the people. The king also married many foreign women who brought their gods with them to Israel. Solomon allows the worship of these gods and even participated. God is so angered by the king's actions that near the end of his reign, God tells Solomon that much of the kingdom will be ripped away from his heirs (1Kings 11:33). And that's precisely what happens.

The nation is split in two with ten tribes forming the northern kingdom (Israel) and two tribes, ruled by Solomon's heir forming the southern kingdom (Judah). A divided Israel not only is in conflict with itself, but both kingdoms are now far more vulnerable to their enemies.

A series of kings come and go. Some of them try to rule according to God's ways, but others reject God and use their power to exploit the people. So during this period of Israel's history, prophets play an increasingly important role. The prophets provide a much needed check on the power of the kings. They are a prominent voice, beholden to no one, coming from outside the throne room. We might say today that the prophets "spoke truth to power." Specifically God's truth, coming from the Lord himself.

The prophets reminded the kings and all the people of the covenant they had with Yahweh. They called Israel to repent of their sin and return to the god who loved them, formed them into a nation, rescued them from slavery in Egypt, and brought them to the promised land. They also warn of God's judgment if the people do not change their ways. God is patient and merciful, but he is also just. He must hold the nation accountable.

The Bible records many of Israel's prophets, and this week, we're going to pay close attention to their words. Today we'll consider what sins the prophets call out, then tomorrow we'll consider warnings that the prophets give. We'll finish the week on a hopeful note by considering the promises of restoration that God gives to Israel that ultimately bless the world.

The following verses come from several of Israel's prophetic books. Although these proclamations span more than a century, they are frustratingly similar. What kinds of sins do you see being called out?

## Read the Word

### Isaiah 1:16–17 (NIV)

<sup>16</sup> *Wash and make yourselves clean.  
Take your evil deeds out of my sight;  
stop doing wrong.*  
<sup>17</sup> *Learn to do right; seek justice.  
Defend the oppressed.  
Take up the cause of the fatherless;  
plead the case of the widow.*

### Isaiah 65:1–3 (NIV)

**65** *“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me;  
I was found by those who did not seek me.  
To a nation that did not call on my name,  
I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’  
<sup>2</sup> All day long I have held out my hands  
to an obstinate people,  
who walk in ways not good,  
pursuing their own imaginations—  
<sup>3</sup> a people who continually provoke me  
to my very face,  
offering sacrifices in gardens  
and burning incense on altars of brick;*

### Micah 3:9–11 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> *Hear this, you leaders of Jacob,  
you rulers of Israel,  
who despise justice  
and distort all that is right;  
<sup>10</sup> who build Zion with bloodshed,  
and Jerusalem with wickedness.  
<sup>11</sup> Her leaders judge for a bribe,  
her priests teach for a price,  
and her prophets tell fortunes for money.  
Yet they look for the Lord's support and say,  
“Is not the Lord among us?  
No disaster will come upon us.”*

## Hosea 4:1–3 (NIV)

*4 Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites,  
because the Lord has a charge to bring  
against you who live in the land:*

*“There is no faithfulness, no love,  
no acknowledgment of God in the land.*

*<sup>2</sup> There is only cursing, lying and murder,  
stealing and adultery;  
they break all bounds,*

*and bloodshed follows bloodshed.*

*<sup>3</sup> Because of this the land dries up,  
and all who live in it waste away;  
the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky  
and the fish in the sea are swept away.*

## Jeremiah 32:32–35 (NIV)

*<sup>32</sup> The people of Israel and Judah have provoked me by all the evil they have done—they, their kings and officials, their priests and prophets, the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem. <sup>33</sup> They turned their backs to me and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline. <sup>34</sup> They set up their vile images in the house that bears my Name and defiled it. <sup>35</sup> They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molek, though I never commanded—nor did it enter my mind—that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.*

- What are the sins of the Israelites that God is calling out? List them.
- Think back on the covenant God made with Israel during the time of Moses (Exodus 20). How have the Israelites broken that covenant?

## Reflect

Think back to how our story began, and it becomes clear why these sins are so offensive to God. God created humanity in his image, to reflect his goodness and love. He designed people to live in a relationship with him and in community with one another. In the fall, humanity rejected God’s guidance and provision. Rebellion against God became humanity’s default setting, and distrust, selfishness, and fear invaded human relationships.

Yet God chose the descendants of Abraham and made a covenant with them. He offered them his guidance and provision, and had them build a temple where he would dwell with them.

But like their ancient ancestors, they rejected and defied God. Yet God was patient and merciful.

The sampling of prophets quoted above come from different places and times in Israel's history. In the eighth century B.C., Hosea prophesied to the northern kingdom, while Isaiah and Micah spoke to the southern kingdom. Jeremiah was a prophet in the seventh century during the time when the southern kingdom was carried into exile. Yet all of these prophets spoke of the same kinds of sins: idolatry, injustice, exploitation, and violence. The same kinds of sins that were committed by the Israelites throughout their history, and by all people everywhere.

God sent the prophets to call his people back to him. These prophets called them to repentance so they could be right with God. If Israel walked in God's ways, they could be a shining example of God's goodness to the other nations, so that those people would come to know him too.

For the most part, the people ignored the prophets. Some of Israel's kings even tried to have them killed. It's remarkably easy for humans to justify their sin. They do so as individuals and as nations. People can delude themselves into thinking that they know what's best, not God. We've been doing it since the Garden of Eden.

Yet, God still calls people to come to him. He calls us to turn away from the sin that will destroy us, and accept his grace and forgiveness. Because of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, we escape God's judgment, but often still face the devastating consequences of our idolatry, injustice, exploitation, and violence. Sins that hurt us and those around us. Let's not ignore his calls to repentance. Let's answer them today.

## Pray

If it's helpful, use the following to begin your own prayer time with God.

*Almighty God, thank you that I can turn to you and seek your forgiveness. I don't want to be obstinate and defiant. I want to respond to your mercy and grace with repentance. Holy Spirit, please work in me.*

## Day 2

Yesterday we heard the cry of the prophets. Speaking on behalf of God, they repeatedly called Israel to turn back to the God who loved them. Yet, generation after generation, they betrayed God and turned to idols. They oppressed the poor and ignored the needy. Instead of creating a nation that reflected the justice and goodness of God, those in power selfishly exploited those who weren't.

There were a few kings in Israel's history who remembered Israel's covenant with Yahweh, and tried to return to walking in his ways. But their reforms never lasted long. And so the prophets would return and warn that God's judgment would come.

Today we're going to focus on a warning that comes from the prophet Amos. Amos was called by God to proclaim his message to the northern kingdom. Notice the pattern of Amos' warnings. He begins with the nations that surround Israel, before moving closer with his indictment.

## Read the Word

### Amos 1:9–12 (NIV)

*<sup>9</sup> This is what the Lord says:*

*“For three sins of Tyre,  
even for four, I will not relent.  
Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom,  
disregarding a treaty of brotherhood,  
<sup>10</sup> I will send fire on the walls of Tyre  
that will consume her fortresses.”*

*<sup>11</sup> This is what the Lord says:*

*“For three sins of Edom,  
even for four, I will not relent.  
Because he pursued his brother with a sword  
and slaughtered the women of the land,  
because his anger raged continually  
and his fury flamed unchecked,  
<sup>12</sup> I will send fire on Teman  
that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah.”*

- For what is the Lord condemning the nations surrounding Israel? What are their sins? What is the consequence? Why do you think the Lord starts with these nations?

We can imagine the Israelites nodding their heads at Amos' indictment of neighboring nations. But then the prophet turns his attention to Judah and then Israel itself.

### Amos 2:4–8;13 (NIV)

*<sup>4</sup> This is what the Lord says:*

*“For three sins of Judah,  
even for four, I will not relent.  
Because they have rejected the law of the Lord  
and have not kept his decrees,*

*because they have been led astray by false gods,  
the gods their ancestors followed,  
5 I will send fire on Judah  
that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem.”*

*6 This is what the Lord says:*

*“For three sins of Israel,  
even for four, I will not relent.  
They sell the innocent for silver,  
and the needy for a pair of sandals.*

*7 They trample on the heads of the poor  
as on the dust of the ground  
and deny justice to the oppressed.*

*Father and son use the same girl  
and so profane my holy name.*

*8 They lie down beside every altar  
on garments taken in pledge.*

*In the house of their god  
they drink wine taken as fines...*

*13 “Now then, I will crush you  
as a cart crushes when loaded with grain.*

- What sins has Judah committed? What about Israel? What will be the consequence?

## Reflect

The people of Israel and Judah had been complacent, and no one took the warnings of the prophets seriously. Their complacency is shattered when the northern kingdom is invaded by Assyria in 722 B.C. and taken into exile. These tribes will not return home. Judah stands alone until it is invaded by the Babylonians. Jerusalem is destroyed and the people of Judah are taken into exile in two waves, in 597 B.C. and 586 B.C. The prophets insist that these events are not accidents, but God’s judgment on the nation.

The Lord had been patient, but ultimately, the wickedness of Israel became an intolerable stench. He could not turn a blind eye to their sin forever. They had ignored all the warnings they’d been given, and judgment had come.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple were devastating for the Jewish people. Only a remnant in Judah remained from the once great nation. Their forced exile into Babylon was difficult as they fought to maintain their identity as a people. But their exile wasn’t forever. While the northern tribes remained scattered, Judah’s fate was different.

God always preserves a remnant. After all, he has promises to fulfill through the offspring of Abraham, and the line of David. Eventually, the people are allowed to return to the land and

rebuild, but not as a sovereign, independent nation. They will be occupied by the Persians, and then the Greeks, and finally the Romans. And even though the temple is rebuilt, the glory of the Lord never returns to it. And while at first the people dedicate themselves to renewing the covenant, it isn't too long before another generation of prophets have to issue warnings that sound all too familiar.

For example, the prophet Malachi comes a century after the first wave of people returns from exile. Yet through him the Lord says he will put Israel and its rulers on trial and will testify against them himself: "So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty" (Malachi 3:5). The same old sins were being committed by a new generation. The same ones are being committed today.

For Israel, judgment had come through the exile. Yet the cycle of sin had not been broken. There must be something more.

The prophets, including earlier ones like Isaiah, Joel, Amos, and Zephaniah, and later ones like Malachi spoke of an awful and terrifying "Day of the Lord." Jewish scribes in the centuries immediately before Jesus' arrival looked to the future for the ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies. While some aspects had found fulfillment in the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests, others hadn't. They saw the Day of the Lord as the final and complete judgment of God and coming at the very end of the age. One day, everyone will stand before their Creator and give an account. Will you be ready?

So we find that not all of the prophets' words have come to pass. But then, neither have all God's promises, and we'll discuss those for the rest of the week.

## Pray

If it's helpful, use the following to begin your own prayer time with God.

*Almighty God, I praise you for being righteous and just. I am relieved that you do not let evil reign, but that ultimately justice will be done. Show me how to be an instrument of your justice here and now. Thank you Jesus for paying the penalty for my sins so that I am forgiven. I want to follow you.*

## Day 3

This week we're considering the role of the prophets in Israel. God appointed these prophets to proclaim his word to the people and their leaders. They condemned defiance and disobedience and warned of coming judgment. But they also offered hope.

Even in exile, there is hope. God would never abandon his covenant people. Not ever. While they were experiencing his judgment while in exile, because of his mercy, he sent his prophets to give words of encouragement.

We're going to hear from two prophets who both experienced the exile, Ezekiel and Daniel. In their visions we will find comfort and hope for Israel, and for us.

## Read the Word

The people had been in exile for ten years when Ezekiel receives this vision from the Lord. It's not hard to imagine that they were discouraged, even despondent. Would God's favor ever return to the nation? Ezekiel is able to give them hope that it would.

### Ezekiel 37:1–14 (NIV)

*37 The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. <sup>3</sup> He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"*

*I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."*

*<sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!' <sup>5</sup> This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. <sup>6</sup> I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'*"

*<sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup> I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.*

*<sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'"<sup>10</sup> So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.*

*<sup>11</sup> Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.'"<sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy and say to them: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. <sup>14</sup> I will put my Spirit in*

*you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.’”*

- Ultimately, what brings these bones back to life?
- Why would this vision be an encouragement to Israel while in exile?

First Ezekiel prophesies to these dead skeletons and commands that they hear the word of the Lord. The scattered bones come together and flesh covers them, but they are still not alive. Then the prophet speaks to the “breath” and the “wind,” both of which are the Hebrew word “*ruah*” which can also be translated as spirit. After this proclamation, the once dry bones come back to life.

God explains this vision to Ezekiel. He would do a miracle and bring new life to Israel. Though they must have questioned the future of their people, God promises that they would return to the land and live again. And in this prophecy, we see a hint of what God wishes to do for the whole world. If the Lord could bring new life to Israel in a metaphorical sense, could he not breathe life into all the people of the earth in a literal one? Could he not put his Spirit in people so that they might live?

While Ezekiel may not have seen beyond the future restoration of Israel, we know that the Lord of all creation promises to bring life from both spiritual and physical death. Those who are in Christ have received the Spirit, and they will live.

When he comes, Jesus will speak of a new birth, and insist that all those who enter the kingdom of God must be born again by the Spirit (John 3). The New Testament authors will anticipate a physical resurrection (1 Corinthians 15). Christ is called the firstborn of the dead because his resurrection is a foretaste of our own (Colossians 1:18).

Another prophet who gave hope during the exile was Daniel. We’ll take a quick look at one scene from Daniel’s larger vision. It takes place in the throne room of heaven, where God, the Ancient of Days sits on his throne. While war is being waged against God’s holy people, victory is assured.

#### **Daniel 7:13–14 (NIV)**

*<sup>13</sup> “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup> He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

- What is “one like a son of man” given? By whom?

Daniel’s vision does not just give hope for a restored Israel, it gives hope for a fully restored world. God’s kingdom will come, and the king who sits on its throne will be victorious. His

reign will be uncontested and eternal. He will be worshipped by all. Of course, we now know this king's name, and it's Jesus.

What can Christians take from these ancient prophecies? In some ways, we are living in exile right now. We are far from home, but we have hope that we will get there. We can trust in the promises of God because we can trust in his power and his goodness. He will bring life from death, and he will defeat all those who oppose him. Take some time to praise God that you will one day experience all of those victories.

## Pray

If it's helpful, use the following to begin your own prayer time with God.

*God almighty. Thank you for giving me hope. No matter what my circumstances, I trust in your promises. There will be new life and there will be victory over all sin and death. I love you, Lord. I praise your name.*

## Day 4

The nation of Israel were God's chosen people. The Creator of the universe bound himself to them in a covenant. Yet, even after enduring God's judgment through the exile, the nation still repeats the same sinful patterns that brought judgment upon them in the first place. Is there any way to break this cycle?

The answer is of course, yes! The Lord has a plan, but it's an unexpected one. He will make a New Covenant unlike the old one.

The Prophet Jeremiah writes:

*<sup>31</sup> "The days are coming," declares the LORD,  
"when I will make a new covenant  
with the people of Israel  
and with the people of Judah.  
<sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant  
I made with their ancestors  
when I took them by the hand  
to lead them out of Egypt,  
because they broke my covenant,  
though I was a husband to them,"  
declares the LORD.*

*<sup>33</sup> "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel  
after that time," declares the LORD.  
"I will put my law in their minds*

*and write it on their hearts.  
I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.  
34 No longer will they teach their neighbor,  
or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,'  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest,"  
declares the LORD.  
"For I will forgive their wickedness  
and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:31–34)*

As Hebrews 8:8-13 described it, the New Covenant comes through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

God's plan also involves an unexpected person. The victorious figure that we saw yesterday in Daniel's vision is who the Jewish people expected. They were looking for a Messiah like that. But other words spoken by the prophets paint a different picture of the Messiah. He is not only a glorious king, he is a suffering servant who will take away their sin. He will break the cycle, not only for the people of Israel, but for anyone who puts their trust in him.

Read Isaiah 53, slowly and carefully. Make note of every way the servant it describes reminds you of Jesus.

## Read the Word

### Isaiah 53 (NIV)

**53** *Who has believed our message  
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?  
2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot,  
and like a root out of dry ground.  
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.  
3 He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.  
4 Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.  
5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.*

*<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.*

*<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.*

*<sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment he was taken away.  
Yet who of his generation protested?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
for the transgression of my people he was punished.*

*<sup>9</sup> He was assigned a grave with the wicked,  
and with the rich in his death,  
though he had done no violence,  
nor was any deceit in his mouth.*

*<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,  
and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,  
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,  
and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.*

*<sup>11</sup> After he has suffered,  
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,  
and he will bear their iniquities.*

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,  
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,  
because he poured out his life unto death,  
and was numbered with the transgressors.  
For he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.*

- Where do you see Jesus in this prophecy?
- Where do you see yourself in this prophecy?

## **Reflect**

Too often in our world it seems like “might makes right.” We’re constantly tempted to fight fire with fire. If someone hits us, we’ll just hit back harder.

The way of Jesus is so very different. Who would have thought that the way to power was through service? The way to win was to suffer? The way to victory was death?

Who would have imagined that the Creator of the universe would suffer and die for his creation?

Our story has had many twists and turns, but this is perhaps the most shocking of all.

## Pray

Take some time to reflect in prayer on what it means that your Messiah came as a suffering servant. What does it mean that Jesus was willing to suffer all of this for you? Invite the Lord to show you how you should be living in light of how Jesus lived?

# Day 5

It's Friday, our day to reflect and worship! Let's review, so we can put the pieces of our story together. We'll also think about our place in God's story.

## The Story

### Episode 1: God Creates

- **Key Verse:** So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)
- **Key Passages:** Genesis 1–2
- **Key Figures:** Adam and Eve

### Episode 2: God is rejected

- **Key Verse:** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15)
- **Key Passages:** Genesis 3–11
- **Key Figures:** Adam, Eve, and Noah

### Episode 3: God creates a family

- **Key Verse:** "He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" (Genesis 15:5)
- **Key Passages:** Genesis 12–21
- **Key Figures:** Abraham and Sarah

### Episode 4: God rescues his people.

- The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them..." (Exodus 3:7–8)
- Key Book: Exodus
- Key Figure: Moses

### Episode 5: God reigns

- Key Verse: "The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." 2 Samuel 7:11b–13
- Key Books: 1–2 Kings
- Key Figure: David

### Episode 6: God Judges Rebellion.

You have to wonder if they looked back, or if it was too painful. The once great city of David lay in smoldering ruins. The Temple had been ransacked and destroyed. The mighty Babylonian empire had conquered Jerusalem and killed a great number of its people. Now many of the survivors were gathered up and forced to march away from their home to an uncertain future in a distant foreign land. As they crested the first hill on their way to exile in Babylon, how many looked back?

It's been well over three centuries since our last episode, but you might be wondering, how did we get here? We left King David ruling over a prosperous Israel. How did things go so wrong?

David's son Solomon succeeded him, just as God had promised, and David's line was off to a promising start. Solomon was granted great wisdom and he supervised the building of God's temple. But also during his reign, cracks began to form in Israel's foundation, and after Solomon's death, Israel breaks in two.

As the years go on, the kings of both kingdoms differ wildly in their loyalty to God and his ways. Some love the Lord and lead their people to keep the covenant, while others actively participate in and encourage sin.

The voice of the prophet becomes an important one. God calls on the prophets to, as we might say today, "speak truth to power." And they do. The prophets of God such as Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jerimiah, and Ezekiel call out the leaders and the people, and call them back to the God who loves them. The prophets condemn them for their betrayal of Yahweh and their worship of other gods. They indict the wealthy and powerful for exploiting the poor and abandoning those in need. God sees all their idolatry, deceit, oppression, and violence. Though God is merciful and has been patient, the prophets warn that his judgment is coming. And for the most part, they are ignored or even despised for their message.

Of course, judgment does come – in the form of invasion and exile. First the northern kingdom of Israel is defeated by the Assyrians and carried off into captivity. Decades later the southern kingdom, Judah, falls to Babylon and is also forced into exile.

Yet the prophets never leave the people without hope. God will remain faithful to his promises. A remnant from Judah will return and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

But unfortunately the same sad pattern is repeated. Even after the people are restored to their land and promise to faithfully keep the covenant, the cycle of rebellion repeats itself. So God appoints a new generation of prophets to once again call the people *out* for their sin and call them *back* to their loving God.

Will this cycle ever end? Clearly something more is needed. And the prophets do promise something huge, a new covenant. Something transformational in which God will give people new hearts. Something that will break the cycle of sin and death.

Or maybe it's not just *something* that's needed, but some *one*. The promised one. The Messiah. The King. The Savior. At last it's time for him to burst into our story and begin making everything right. Just a few more pages need to be turned and we'll see Jesus over the next hill.

## Key Verse

Meditate on our key verse for the week. Read each phrase slowly and prayerfully. Allow the Spirit to speak to you through God's Word.

***“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13–14)***

## Finding your place in God's story

Ask the Spirit to guide you, then consider these questions. Ponder the ones that speak to you:

- As you reflect on what you've read this week, what's your biggest takeaway? For example, what did you learn about the role of the prophets? How did they call the people out for their sin and back to God? How is Jesus both a victorious ruler and a suffering servant? How does God promise a New Covenant?

- How did you see yourself reflected in the stories we read this week? For example, do you recognize any of your own sin habits in the sins that Israel is condemned for? As you reflect, seek his forgiveness and ask for his power to change. But also consider where you find hope in what the prophets proclaim. How do they point you to your personal need for a victorious king (Daniel 7) and a suffering servant (Isaiah 53)?
- For what do you want to praise and thank God?
- What requests do you want to bring to your Lord?

**Tune in Next Week:**

At last we'll get to see Jesus! Our Messiah, Savior, and King makes his appearance next week! You don't want to miss it.