

## **Chronological Bible Study**

Week 32:

### **Comfort and Hope for the Future**

Ezekiel 29-30

2 Kings 25:37-30

Jeremiah 52:31-34

Isaiah 13:1-14:23; 21:1-17;  
33:1-35:10; 40-51

Daniel 5:1-31

# Prayer of Exile

[Video Link](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaxYfZsM858>





## **Introductions**

How did you spend your free time over the break?

# Questions?

# Comments?

## **Summary of This Week's Readings**

- Nebuchadneaar's Siege of Tyre
- Hope for the Future
- Isaiah and the Fall of Babylon
- Daniel and Belshazzar
- Isaiah and Cyrus the Persian
- Babylon and her idols
- The Servant of the Lord

# Exile

[Video Link](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=858945124868530>



## Prophecy Against Egypt

- One of a series of prophecies Ezekiel has condemning the seven nations surrounding Israel.
- The prophecy relates to Egypt during King Hophra's reign (589-570 BC).
- Prophecy addresses why God is against Egypt and king Hophra: Egypt is prideful and does not know the true God.
- Egypt's desolation and exile will last 40 years. Egypt will be humiliated as a warning to others who do not know God.
- God will transfer power from Egypt to Babylon.

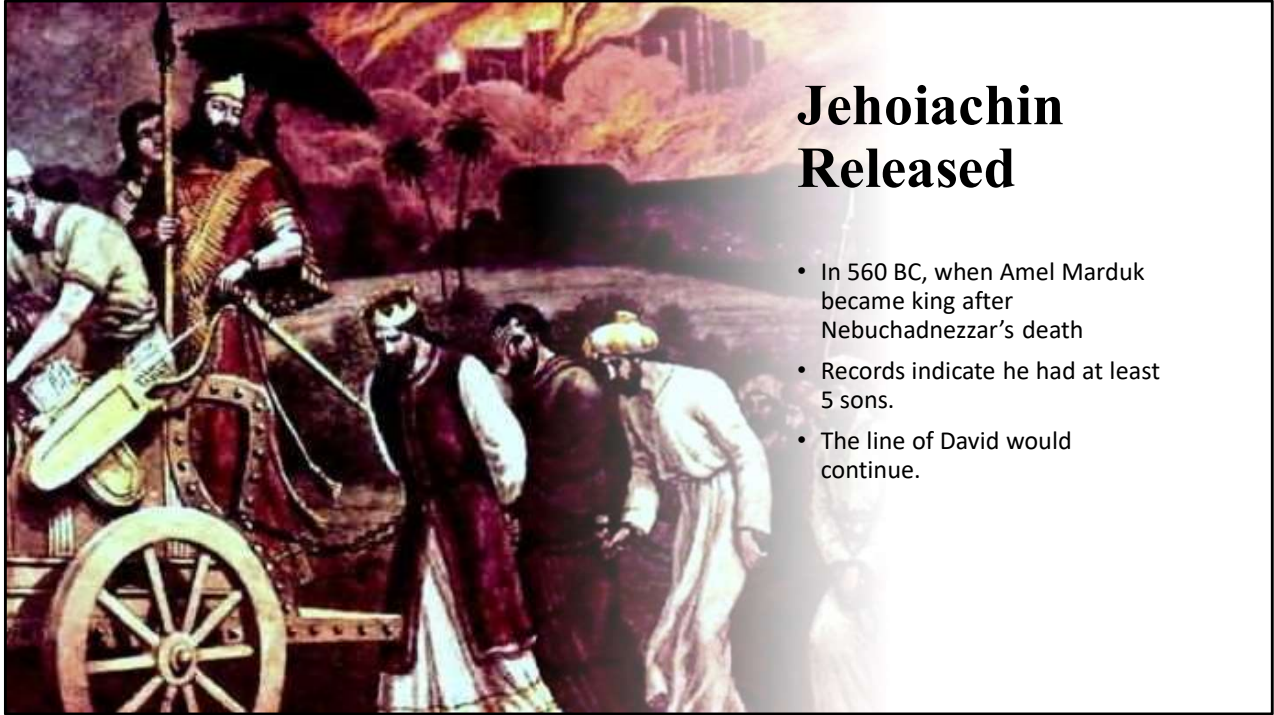


One of a series of prophecies Ezekiel has condemning the 7 nations surrounding Israel. All of Israel's neighbors acted as enemies. The prophecies are a reminder that a day is coming when God will confront all those who oppose him and his people. This is the longest of those prophecies.

As a military superpower Egypt flexed its muscles to control Canaan, as did Babylon. Israel was landlocked between these two powers fighting for international control on their soil. This is why Israel repeatedly appealed to Egypt for either military or economic help against the Babylonians, which displeased God. Egypt's military power gave it a deep-seated national pride.

The prophecy relates to Egypt during the reign of King Hophra (589-570 BC). The duration of Egypt's desolation and exile is reminiscent of Israel's wandering in the wilderness; it symbolizes a long period of hardship to counter rebellion, but Egypt will be a weak nation unable to rule again. This occurs under Cyrus in 539 BC. Egypt will be restored to be humiliated, warning others and recognizing God's sovereign hand over the nations.

God will transfer power from Egypt to Babylon



## Jehoiachin Released

- In 560 BC, when Amel Marduk became king after Nebuchadnezzar's death
- Records indicate he had at least 5 sons.
- The line of David would continue.

Remember that Jehoiachan was 18 when he became king of Judah and he reigned 3 months before captured by Nebuchadnezzar. Jehoiachan was the son of Jehoiakim and succeeded him as king. Jehoiachin, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and were taken prisoner to Babylon.

Jehoiachin was released when Amel-Marduk became king, after his father [Nebuchadnezzar](#) had died, 40 years after his capture. Why Amel-Marduk released the former king of Judah is not known, but a recent theory is that as a crown prince, the Babylonian had fallen victim to a court intrigue and had been sent to prison. There, he may have met Jehoiachin.

He was apparently treated well as a captive, better than other captive kings. He lived in a minimum security prison conditions and ate regularly the food provided for him. **The positive note on which 2 Kings ends reveals again the Lord's mercy, which stands out repeatedly in 1 and 2 Kings. This notation also points to the continuation of the Davidic dynasty which God had promised would lead His people forever (2 Sam. 7:16). Evil-Merodach's attitude toward Jehoiachin was followed by policies that allowed the Israelites more freedom. When Cyrus overthrew Babylonia, he allowed the Jews to return to their land (Ezra 1:1-4).**

Early in the twentieth century a basket of tablets from Babylon sat neglected in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin. Dull records of supply issues, they had lain there many years, seemingly of no great interest to scholars, nor of high value. In 1933 E.F. Weidner undertook their translation. In those unexciting clay marks he discovered a rare treasure—references that confirmed the statement that appeared in the closing paragraph of the book of Jeremiah. Suddenly the world was electrified to learn that among the goods issued by the keeper of the royal stores was sesame oil—to none other than King Jehoiachin. Not only was he mentioned by name, but he was called “the King of Judah.” Five of his sons were mentioned with him.





## Judgment Against the Nations

- Where should trust be placed? Nations or Yahweh?
- Edom symbolizes the judgment that falls on the entire cosmos. To trust the nations is to share in their fate.
- A day of vengeance will come when God will right the wrongs done to his people
- Isaiah 35 expresses the blessed results of trust in God.
- God will transform the desert into a fertile garden, full of gladness and rejoicing. A highway of holiness is available for those who walk in the Way.
- Chapter 34 speaks of anti-creation and Chapter 35 speaks of re-creation.

Isaiah 34-35 is about God's judgment against nations, his governance of nature, and his assurance of salvation. Isaiah dramatically contrasts the opposite results of trusting human nations (ch 34) or Yahweh (Ch 35). Those who trust the nations will become a desert, but trusting Yahweh will transform one's desert into a garden.

Most of ch. [34](#) is a message of judgment against Edom (vv. [5-15](#)), but Edom symbolizes the judgment that falls on the entire cosmos (vv. [1-4](#)). Edom and Judah have a long history of hostility that climaxed when the Edomites helped the Babylonians sack Jerusalem. Edom came to represent the evil of the world opposed to God

To trust the nations and their gods ("the starry host," v. [4](#)) is to share in their fate. Isaiah uses hyperbole to indicate just how devastating the wrath of God against the nations will be. The hyperbole may convey that the destruction is total, but it may also express that Yahweh alone rules the universe. God will destroy not only the military power of the nations but also what they call gods (starry hosts). It is also possible that the language may speak literally of the end of the world. The destruction is certain: it is written in a scroll, spoken by God, and fulfilled through his Spirit. This is an anti-creation (reference Gen 1:2).

Isaiah 35 is a poem that highlights the blessed results of trust in God. Those who trust in the Lord find themselves on a highway leading home through a transformed desert, a

garden. This poem expresses spiritual truth that should not be pressed too literally in any one direction. It might describe the return from exile, the millennial kingdom, the new heaven and earth, or all of them, but that is not the poem's main purpose. Its purpose is to highlight the blessed results of trust.

God has no desire for humanity to stay in the desert of trusting in humanity rather than God. He means to transform the desert into a garden of fertility, gladness and rejoicing. A highway of holiness is available for those who walk in the Way. The glory of the Lord will once more be seen on earth. Where Chapter 34 spoke of the anti-creation, Chapter 35 speaks of re-creation. Redemption and homecoming are causes for singing and joy. Israel's return from captivity anticipates the final ingathering of God's people to the new Jerusalem.



## Discussion

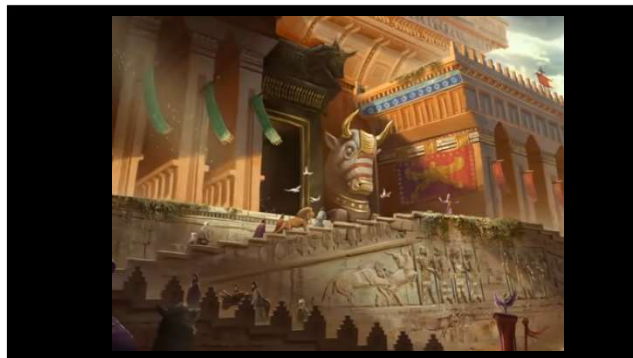
In today's context, how can Christians work towards fostering a society that aligns with God's principles and avoids His wrath?

How does God provide refuge for His people today?

# The Fall of Babylon

[Video Link](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdxmjW17p8Q>



## Belshazzar

- Belshazzar (580 – 539 BC) was the son and crown prince of Nabonidus, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian empire.
- He may have been the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar II through his mother.
- Played key role in overthrow of king Labashi-Marduk, bringing his father Nabonidus to power
- Belshazzar served as regent when his father went into self-exile, but he never became king



Belshazzar was the son and crown prince of Nabonidus, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Through his mother, he might have been a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar II, though this is not certain and the claims to kinship with Nebuchadnezzar may have originated from royal propaganda.

Belshazzar played a pivotal role in the [coup d'état](#) that overthrew the king [Labashi-Marduk](#) (r. 556 BC) and brought Nabonidus to power in 556 BC. Since Belshazzar was the main beneficiary of the coup, through confiscating and inheriting Labashi-Marduk's estates and wealth, it is likely that he was the chief orchestrator. Through proclaiming his father as the new king, Belshazzar also made himself the first-in-line to the throne. As Nabonidus was relatively old at the time, Belshazzar could expect to become king within a few years. He never became king.

Nabonidus was absent from [Babylon](#) from 553 BC to 543 or 542 BC, in self-imposed "exile" at [Tayma](#) in Arabia, for unknown reasons. While Babylonian records list Nabonidus as the final king of Babylon (556–539 BC), other historical texts report that he ruled from Teima in what is today Saudi Arabia, setting his son Belshazzar up as coregent in Babylon. For the duration of the decade-long absence of his father, Belshazzar served as regent in Babylon. Belshazzar was entrusted with many typically royal prerogatives, such as granting privileges, commanding portions of the army, and

receiving offerings and oaths, though he continued to be styled as the crown prince (*mār šarri*, literally meaning "son of the king"), never assuming the title of king (*šarru*). Belshazzar also lacked many of the prerogatives of kingship, most importantly he was not allowed to preside over and officiate the Babylonian [New Year's festival](#), which was the exclusive right of the king himself. Belshazzar's fate is not known, but is often assumed that he was killed during [Cyrus the Great](#)'s Persian invasion of Babylonia in 539 BC, presumably at the fall of the capital Babylon on 12 October 539 BC.



## Belshazzar's Feast

- Occurred in 539 BC after Nebuchadnezzar's death
- Belshazzar uses the goblets from the temple to toast his gods.
- God brings judgment on Belshazzar's blasphemy in the story of the writing on the wall.
- Belshazzar tries to reward Daneil, but Daniel rebukes the him.

Nebuchadnezzar has died (in 562 BC) and the story now shifts forward to the very end of the Babylonian period when Belshazzar is ruling in Babylon (the year is now 539 BC). Belshazzar demonstrates his blasphemous arrogance by toasting his gods using the sacred vessels taken from the temple. While Nebuchadnezzar stole the goblets from the temple, he never appears to have gone as far as Belshazzar, who actually used them. God will not let Belshazzar go unchallenged.

Greek historians (Herodotus and Xenophon) mention drinking parties that took place on the eve of the fall of Babylon to the Persians. During one such party, God announces his judgment against Belshazzar's blasphemy. The hand that writes the message on the wall is likely the hand of God himself. Though God does not have a body, his actions are often metaphorically described as accomplished by his "hand" ([Pss 37:24](#); [95:4](#); [Isa 5:25](#)). Indeed, the "finger" of God wrote the Ten Commandments on the stone tablets ([Exod 31:18](#)).

Belshazzar tries to reward Daniel with purple clothing and gold chains, but Daniel refuses the reward and instead rebukes the king. Despite his refusal, Daniel is promoted to third most important ruler in the kingdom. Unlike Nebuchadnezzar, who repented from his pride before Daniel, Belshazzar does not humble himself. He expresses his immense arrogance by using the goblets from the Jerusalem temple for a drinking party and to praise his false gods. He thus combines arrogance, idolatry, and blasphemy.

The queen mentioned in this story is likely the queen mother since Belshazzar's wives are already present (v. [2](#)) and she vividly remembers Nebuchadnezzar's reign (vv. [11–12](#)). She is perhaps Adad-guppi, the long-lived mother of Nabonidus, known from extrabiblical historical records. The queen mother's description of David from her pagan point of view is that he "has the spirit of the holy gods in him." The reader knows Daniel's wisdom comes from the true God. Daniel's ability to interpret the writing on the wall shows Daniel succeeding where Babylonian wise men fail.

The identity of Darius the Mede in the story remains a mystery. Historical records indicate that Babylon fell to Cyrus the Persian in October 539 BC. Cyrus had earlier incorporated the kingdom of the Medes into his empire. Perhaps Darius was a Median ruler who ruled Babylon for a short period of time under the greater authority of Cyrus; perhaps Darius was the man known as Gubaru, the governor of Babylon. Alternatively, Darius could be another name for Cyrus ([6:28](#)).



# Writing on the Wall

[Video Link](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1NKkMTtVzA>



## DANIEL

- Daniel was one of the captives from Judah brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.
- Daniel had a reputation for being able to hear from God & interpret puzzles.



## Cyrus the Great

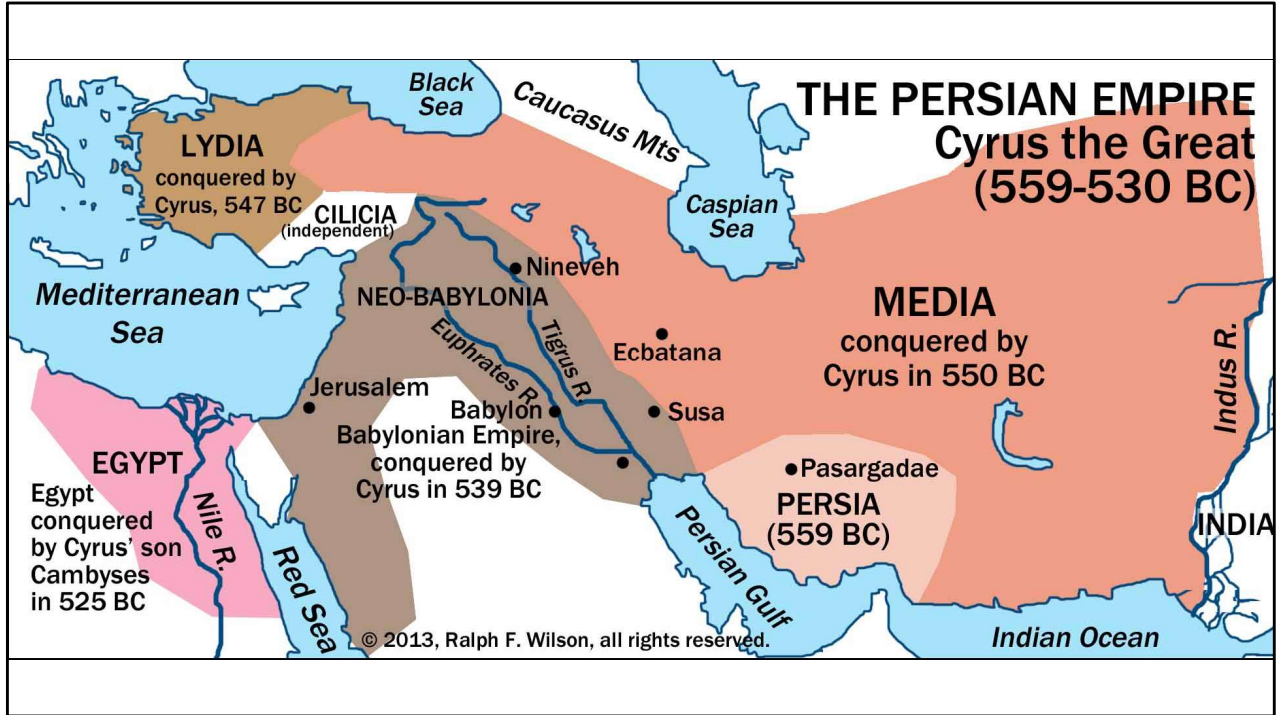
- Founder of the Achaemenid Persian Empire
- Defeated the Median Empire
- Conquered entire region
- After conquering Babylon issued Edict of Restoration, encouraging Jewish people to return to Judah and ending Babylonian Captivity

**Cyrus II of Persia** commonly known as **Cyrus the Great**, was the founder of the Achaemenid Persian Empire. Hailing from Persis, he brought the Achaemenid dynasty to power by defeating the Median Empire and embracing all of the previous civilized states of the ancient Near East, expanding vastly and eventually conquering most of West Asia and much of Central Asia to create what would soon become the largest polity in human history at the time. The Achaemenid Empire's largest territorial extent was achieved under Darius the Great, whose rule stretched from the Balkans (Eastern Bulgaria–Paeonia and Thrace–Macedonia) and the rest of Southeast Europe in the west to the Indus Valley in the east.

After conquering the Median empire, Cyrus led the Achaemenids to conquer the Lydian Empire and eventually the Neo-Babylonian Empire. He also led an expedition into Central Asia, which resulted in major military campaigns that were described as having brought "into subjection every nation without exception." Cyrus allegedly died in battle with the Massagetae, a nomadic Eastern Iranian tribal confederation, along the Syr Darya in December 530 BC. However, Xenophon of Athens claimed that Cyrus did not die fighting and had instead returned to the city of Pasargadae, which served as the Achaemenid ceremonial capital. He was succeeded by his son Cambyses II, whose campaigns into North Africa led to the conquests of Egypt, Nubia, and Cyrenaica during his short rule.

Following the Achaemenid conquest of Babylon, Cyrus issued the Edict of Restoration, in which he authorized and encouraged the return of the Jewish people to what had been the Kingdom of Judah, officially ending the Babylonian captivity. He left a lasting legacy on Judaism due to his role in facilitating the return to Zion, a migratory event in which the Jews returned to the Land of Israel and subsequently rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem, which had been destroyed by the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. Cyrus was anointed by the Jewish God for this task as a biblical messiah; he is the only non-Jewish figure to be revered in this capacity.

In addition to his influence on the traditions of both the Eastern world and the Western world, Cyrus is also recognized for his achievements in human rights, politics, and military strategy. The Achaemenid Empire's prestige in the ancient world would eventually extend as far west as Athens, where upper-class Greeks adopted aspects of the culture of the ruling Persian class as their own. As the founder of the first Persian empire, Cyrus played a crucial role in defining the national identity of the Iranian nation; the Achaemenid Empire was instrumental in spreading the ideals of Zoroastrianism as far east as China. He remains a cult figure in Iran, with the Tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae serving as a spot of reverence for millions of the country's citizens.<sup>[19]</sup>



## The Cylinder of Cyrus



- Ancient clay cylinder dating from 6<sup>th</sup> c BC in the ruins of Babylon in 1879.
- Now in the British Museum
- Describes Persian conquest of Babylon in 539 BC
- Cyrus welcomed by the people of Babylon
- Corroborates the Biblical text about Cyrus' policy for repatriating the Jewish People to Judea and about the historical reality of Belshazzar ruling Babylon

The **Cyrus Cylinder** is an ancient clay cylinder, now broken into several pieces, on which is written an [Achaemenid royal inscription](#) in [Akkadian cuneiform](#) script in the name of the [Persian](#) king [Cyrus the Great](#).<sup>[2][3]</sup> It dates from the 6th century BC and was discovered in the ruins of the ancient [Mesopotamian](#) city of [Babylon](#) (now in modern [Iraq](#)) in 1879.<sup>[2]</sup> It is currently in the possession of the [British Museum](#). It was created and used as a [foundation deposit](#) following the [Persian conquest of Babylon](#) in 539 BC, when the [Neo-Babylonian Empire](#) was invaded by Cyrus and incorporated into his [Persian Empire](#).

The text on the Cylinder praises Cyrus, sets out his genealogy and portrays him as a king from a line of kings. The Babylonian king [Nabonidus](#), who was defeated and deposed by Cyrus, is denounced as an impious oppressor of the people of Babylonia and his low-born origins are implicitly contrasted to Cyrus' kingly heritage. The victorious Cyrus is portrayed as having been chosen by the chief Babylonian god [Marduk](#) to restore peace and order to the Babylonians. The text states that Cyrus was welcomed by the people of Babylon as their new ruler and entered the city in peace. It appeals to Marduk to protect and help Cyrus and his son [Cambyses](#). It extols Cyrus as a benefactor of the citizens of Babylonia who improved their lives, repatriated displaced people and restored temples and cult sanctuaries across [Mesopotamia](#) and elsewhere in the region. It concludes with a

description of how Cyrus repaired the city wall of Babylon and found a similar inscription placed there by an earlier king.

The Cylinder's text has traditionally been seen by biblical scholars as corroborative evidence of Cyrus' policy of the [repatriation](#) of the [Jewish people](#) following their [Babylonian captivity](#)<sup>[4]</sup> (an act that the [Book of Ezra](#) attributes to Cyrus<sup>[5]</sup>), as the text refers to the restoration of cult sanctuaries and repatriation of deported peoples.<sup>[6]</sup> This interpretation has been disputed, as the text identifies only Mesopotamian sanctuaries, and makes no mention of Jews, Jerusalem, or Judea.<sup>[7]</sup> Nonetheless, it has been seen as a sign of Cyrus's relatively enlightened approach towards cultural and religious diversity. The former Director of the [British Museum](#), [Neil MacGregor](#), said that the cylinder was "the first attempt we know about running a society, a state with different nationalities and faiths – a new kind of statecraft".<sup>[8]</sup>

In modern times, the Cylinder was adopted as a [national symbol](#) of Iran by the ruling [Pahlavi dynasty](#), which put it on display in [Tehran](#) in 1971 to commemorate the [2,500-year celebration of the Persian Empire](#).<sup>[9]</sup> Princess [Ashraf Pahlavi](#) presented [United Nations Secretary General U Thant](#) with a replica of the Cylinder. The princess asserted that "the heritage of Cyrus was the heritage of human understanding, tolerance, courage, compassion and, above all, human liberty".<sup>[10]</sup> Her brother, [Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi](#), promoted the Cylinder as the "first charter of human rights", though this interpretation has been described by various historians as "rather [anachronistic](#)" and controversial.

## Cylinder of Cyrus

[Video Link](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTAgTCXja4Q>





## **Discussion**

In Daniel 5, God again demonstrates his control over kings and kingdoms and that His plan will not be thwarted. How does this encourage you? How does this challenge you?

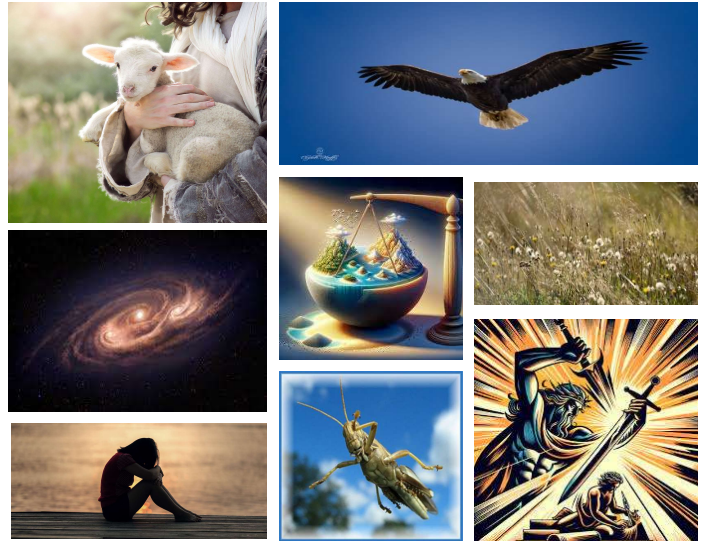
How should the reality of God's control over history challenge our actions and attitudes, priorities and personal contacts on a daily basis?



## A Comforting God: Isaiah 40

- a shepherd with lambs ([Is 40:11](#)),
- stars ([Is 40:26](#)),
- nations ([Is 40:15–17](#)),
- grass and flowers ([Is 40:6–8](#)),
- scales and measurements ([Is 40:12](#)),
- grasshoppers ([Is 40:22](#)),
- craftsmen ([Is 40:19–20](#)),
- eagles ([Is 40:31](#)),
- youth ([Is 40:30](#)).

*those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*



In Isaiah 40, God is described as a transcendent, creative, and powerful being who is unlike any other god. God is so otherworldly that people seem like insects in comparison. God's power and creativity are so great that God has no equal, either on Earth or in Heaven. God is also all-knowing,

with a mind that is beyond human comprehension. God's wisdom and understanding are complete, and God sees and knows everything.

God is cosmic in scope and universal in significance. *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is bigger, and stronger, and more impossible to comprehend than you can possibly imagine!* God, as described here seems to embody absolute power. This is the way most of us imagine God: as BIG. Yet He is not above caring for us as individuals. This powerful, creative God cares about the Judeans will provide

the energy the people need for their journey back to Jerusalem  
Isaiah uses many images to teach about God and his people and to turn God's creation into reminders about God's character.

a shepherd with lambs ([Is 40:11](#)),  
stars ([Is 40:26](#)),  
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## Jewish Life in Exile

[Video Link](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jv7uvnPD5c8>



## Divine Grace

- Yahweh is trustworthy and will deliver his servants when they trust him.
- Only divine grace will cause Israel to trust God and become holy
- God has chosen Israel as his servant and grace makes it possible for Israel to serve God (Isaiah 41-48)
- God's grace is the means to cleanse sinful Israel (Isaiah 49-55)
- Chapters 40-48 likely written before returning to Jerusalem and Chapters 49-55 written in the early restoration period.

Isaiah Chapters 7-39 establish that Yahweh is trustworthy and will deliver his servants when they trust him. They also demonstrate Yahweh's absolute holiness, which provides the foundation of the vision in ch. [6](#): he *is* the Holy One of Israel. But what will move Israel, the nation of unclean lips, to actually trust him and become the messengers of his unique saviorhood to a lost world? Furthermore, assuming that they do trust him and are willing to become his servants, what will make it possible for sinful Israel to become holy Israel? The answer to both questions is divine grace.

Divine grace has been defined as the divine influence that operates in humans to regenerate and sanctify, to inspire virtuous impulses and to impart strength to endure trial and resist temptation. The five elements of grace include generosity, respect, action, compassion and energy.

Grace will motivate Israel to trust God, and then grace will make it possible for them to actually serve him. Ch. [40](#) introduces these ideas. Chs. [41-48](#) present the grace of God in its motivating light: Yahweh has not cast Israel off but has chosen Israel as his servant. Chs. [49-55](#) show how God's grace is the means whereby he cleanses sinful Israel to serve him. In order to make these points that are essential to the total theological vision that the exile (beginning with Samaria's exile in Isaiah's own day) will make necessary, the Holy Spirit gives Isaiah a vision of the distant future that encompasses Judah's exile and return.

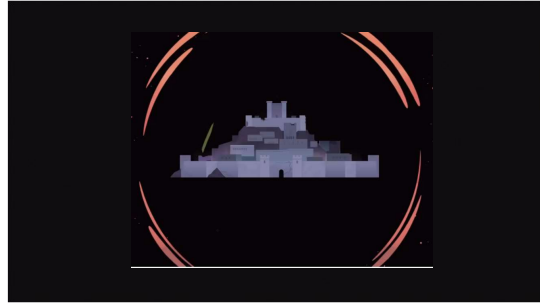
Isaiah 40-48 is addressed to the Israelites in Babylon before their return and 49-55 may have been composed in Jerusalem during the early restoration period. This was not a prosperous time -- The city had not been rebuilt since its destruction by the Babylonians fifty years earlier, social and economic structures were weak, and there were struggles for the most desirable land between the returnees and those who had been in the land in the meantime. Later, in the fifth century, Nehemiah would report that common farming families were having to borrow money and grain to pay their taxes, and even selling their children into debt slavery (Nehemiah 5:1-12). If this in some way reflects sixth-century conditions earlier as well, then the invitation to eat and drink without paying would have been both gracious and exceedingly welcome.

Chs. [40-55](#) represent a high point, both in Hebrew poetic expression and in theological revelation. The language has a lyrical beauty unmatched elsewhere in the OT, and the concepts of transcendent monotheism and creation as something completely new are developed here as nowhere else in the Bible.

## Divine Grace

[Video Link](#)

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/character-of-god-grace/>



## Servant of the Lord

- A servant carries out the will of another
- The Servant of the Lord fulfills God's will
- Applied in the Bible to individual people, groups of peoples, the nation of Israel, and the Messiah
- In Isaiah it refers to the nation of Israel.
- In New Testament it identifies Jesus



A servant is someone who carries out the will of another. The Servant of the Lord fulfills God's will and is often presented in Scripture as someone chosen by God to hold a leadership position, to represent Him, and to accomplish a certain divine work. In the Bible, the term *Servant of the Lord* has been applied to individual people, certain groups of people, the nation of Israel, and the Messiah, who is identified as Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

The book of Isaiah contains four "[Servant Songs](#)" describing the Servant of the Lord. The first is found in [Isaiah 42:1–9](#); the second in [Isaiah 49:1–13](#); the third in [Isaiah 50:4–11](#); and the fourth in [Isaiah 52:13](#) through 53:12. In Jewish tradition, the Servant of the Lord in all four passages refers to the nation of Israel. In the final Servant Song of [Isaiah 53](#), a singular pronoun *he* is used for the Servant of the Lord. Rabbis understand this singular pronoun to be a collective reference to a faithful remnant of Israel, a personification treating the group as one person.

The New Testament clearly identifies the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah as our Savior, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This unique Servant takes a preeminent place above all others in Scripture. This perfect Servant never fails to accomplish the will of the Lord and the purposes of God ([John 17:5](#)). The final Servant Song ([Isaiah 53](#)), which we read next week, is about an innocent [Suffering Servant](#) who dies in place of the guilty. That passage foretells



the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[Isaiah 53:3](#) says about the Servant of the Lord, “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.” Jesus was despised by the religious people of His day and rejected as their [Messiah](#).

Jesus Christ, the Servant of the Lord, 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” ([Isaiah 53:5](#)). In giving His life for us, “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” (verse 7). At His trial, Jesus did not defend Himself but remained silent against His accusers. He suffered and died in the place of guilty sinners. The sins of all people were placed upon Him, the sacrificial Lamb of God. Jesus paid the price for our salvation. These are just a few of many details in [Isaiah 53](#) that point to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of messianic prophecy ([Matthew 8:17](#); [Luke 22:37](#); [John 12:38](#); [Acts 8:32–33](#); [Romans 10:16](#); [1 Peter 2:22, 24–25](#)).

When God the Son came to earth, He took on the role of a servant. The Creator chose to serve His creatures. Jesus said that He had come “to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” ([Matthew 20:28](#)). In the book of Acts, the word *servant* is applied to Jesus four times in connection with His death ([Acts 3:13, 26](#); [4:27, 30](#)). The humility of Jesus, the Servant of the Lord, is unmistakably seen in [Philippians 2:7–8](#): “He gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross” (NLT).

While Jesus the Messiah is the ultimate fulfillment of prophecies concerning the Servant of the Lord, the Bible also applies the title to others. In the Old Testament, God describes about fifteen different individuals as “My servant” or “the servant of the Lord.”

The patriarchs are often named as servants of the Lord: “Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever’” ([Exodus 32:13](#); see also [Genesis 18:3](#); [32:10](#); [Deuteronomy 9:27](#); [1 Chronicles 16:13](#); [Psalm 105:6](#)). God called Job His servant: “Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job?’” ([Job 1:8](#); cf. [2:3](#) and [42:7–8](#)).

[Moses](#) is repeatedly called the servant of the Lord: “And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said” ([Deuteronomy 34:5](#); see also [Exodus 14:31](#); [Numbers 12:7–8](#); [Joshua 1:1–2](#); [Nehemiah 1:7–8](#); [Malachi 4:4](#)). Significantly, Moses told the people that “the LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him” ([Deuteronomy 18:15](#)). This messianic prophecy was

fulfilled in Jesus, who, like Moses, was “the servant of the Lord” but in an even greater way (see [Acts 3:22](#) and [Hebrews 3:3](#)).

The Bible describes leaders like Caleb, Joshua, and Samson as servants of the Lord ([Numbers 14:24](#); [Joshua 5:14](#); [24:29](#); [Judges 2:8](#); [15:18](#)). David, Solomon, and Hezekiah are kings referred to as the Lord’s servants ([Psalm 89:20](#); [1 Samuel 23:11](#); [2 Samuel 7:5](#); [1 Chronicles 17:4](#); [1 Kings 3:7–9](#); [14:8](#); [2 Chronicles 32:16](#)). Prophets such as Ahijah, Elijah, Jonah, and Isaiah are also called servants of the Lord ([1 Kings 14:18](#); [18:36](#); [2 Kings 14:25](#); [Isaiah 20:3](#)).

Samuel’s mother, [Hannah](#), describes herself as a servant of the Lord in [1 Samuel 1:11](#). Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, is described as a servant of the Lord in [Haggai 2:23](#). Even the pagan kings Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus are named among the servants of the Lord in that they fulfilled the purposes of God ([Jeremiah 25:9](#); [43:10](#); [Isaiah 45:1](#)).

Groups referred to as servants of the Lord in the Bible are the people of Israel ([Isaiah 41:8–9](#); [43:10](#); [Leviticus 25:42,55](#); [Nehemiah 1:6,10](#); [Jeremiah 30:10–11](#); [46:27–28](#); [Luke 1:54](#)), the priests ([Exodus 28:1](#), [41](#); [Leviticus 7:35](#); [Numbers 18:7](#)), the Levites ([Deuteronomy 18:7](#); [1 Chronicles 23:28–31](#); [Ezra 6:18](#); [Ezekiel 44:11](#)), and the prophets ([Jeremiah 7:25](#); [29:19](#); [44:4](#); [Ezekiel 38:17](#); [Daniel 9:6](#); [Amos 3:7](#); [Zechariah 1:6](#); [Matthew 21:34–36](#); [Mark 12:2–5](#); [Luke 20:10–12](#); [Revelation 10:7](#)). Other nations are also called the Lord’s servants on occasion ([Psalm 72:11](#); [Isaiah 56:6](#); [Zephaniah 3:9](#)).

In the New Testament, several believers define themselves or are named by God as servants of the Lord. They include Mary the mother of Jesus ([Luke 1:38](#), [48](#)), Simeon ([Luke 2:29](#)), Paul ([Acts 27:2](#); [Romans 1:1](#); [Ephesians 3:1](#)), James ([James 1:1](#)), Simon Peter ([2 Peter 1:1](#)), Jude ([Jude 1](#)), and John ([Revelation 1:1](#)). All of these servants are simply following the example of the ultimate Servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ.



**Discussion**      In what ways does confidence in the divine grace of God help transform our daily lives?

Grace isn't merely a theological concept to be studied; it's a transformative force that should permeate every aspect of our lives. It influences our attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with others.

Consider your daily life. When we allow grace to guide our actions, we approach challenges with a spirit of cooperation rather than competition. We extend patience and understanding to those struggling and learn to value the process over the pursuit of perfection.

Grace also helps us deal with failure and setbacks. It reminds us that our worth isn't defined by our performance or achievements but by God's unchanging love for us. Internalizing this truth frees us from the pressure to be perfect and allows us to embrace the freedom, peace, and joy of knowing we are loved unconditionally.

Moreover, grace fosters a sense of humility within us. Recognizing that everything we have is a gift from our gracious God prevents us from falling into sin or the trap of pride or self-sufficiency. It encourages us to remain thankful, acknowledging God's hand in every success and achievement.

Finally, living under the grace of God means we're called to forgive as we've been forgiven. Just as God extends His grace to us unconditionally, we are to extend grace to others, even

when they hurt us. This can be challenging, but it's an integral part of living a life characterized by the grace of God.

Grace transforms our daily lives through these ways, forever shaping us into individuals who reflect God's love and mercy in our thoughts, words, and actions. It's a continuous journey to find grace, bringing us closer to God and aligning us more with His will.



**Even in Suffering, God is Sovereign**

Isaiah 52-55:13

2 Chronicles 36:22-23

Proverbs 22:17-24:34; 30-31

Job 1-21

## Closing Hymn

[Video Link](#)

[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=r6U8O\\_WnPZY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6U8O_WnPZY)



# Comfort and Hope for the Future

June 10 – June 17, 2024

EZE 29-30; 2 KI 25; JER 52, ISA 13-14, 21, 33-35, 40-51; DA 5

Week 32

Ezekiel and Isaiah both prophesize that God would not only judge his own people, but will also judge foreign nations for their sinful behavior. God is sovereign and has absolute autonomy over world history. Despite appearances, God is in control over global events, kingdoms and governments. The good news for Jerusalem centers on a God who restores and redeems his people. When we hope in the Lord – trusting his promises and timing—we have strength and energy in our most difficult times. God is more than we can imagine and no one and nothing is equal to God. He makes us strong and supports us. He is always with us.

## Weekly Reading Plan (pg. 870-898)

Day 1: EZE29:17-21; 30:1-19  
Day 2: 2 KI 25:27-30; JER 52:31-34  
Day 3: ISA 13:1-14:23; 21:1-17;  
ISA 33:1-35:10  
Day 4: DA 5:1-31  
Day 5: ISA 40:1-45:25  
Day 6: ISA 46:1-48:22  
Day 7: ISA 49:1-51:23

## Outline

Nebuchadnezzar’s Siege of Tyre [Day 1]  
Prophetic Account: Hope for the Future [Day 2]  
Isaiah and the Fall of Babylon [Day 3]  
Daniel and Belshazzar [Day 4]  
Isaiah and Cyrus the Persian [Day 5]  
Babylon and Her Idols [Day 6]  
The Servant of the Lord [Day 7]

## Key Characters

Nebuchadnezzar	Ezekiel
Awel-Marduk	Jehoiachin
Daniel	Belshazzar
Isaiah	Cyrus

## Key Locations

Tyre	Babylon
Egypt	Edom
Arabia	Jerusalem

## Key Terms

Judgment  
Redeemed  
Mercy  
Savior  
Restoration

## Key Verses

Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress. [ISA 33:2]

Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you. [ISA 35:4]

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. [ISA 40:28-31]

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. [ISA 41:10]

But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail. [ISA 51:6]

EPOCH 6  
(586-322 BC)

## Chapter Summaries (from @biblesummary)

**Eze29:** "I am against you, Pharaoh, the great dragon. Egypt will never again rule the nations. Nebuchadnezzar will carry off its wealth."

**Eze30:** "A sword will come upon Egypt. Those who support her will fall. Nebuchadnezzar will destroy the land. I will break Pharaoh's arms."

**2Ki25:** Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan burned the temple and took the people into exile. Evil-merodach released Jehoiachin.

**Jer52:** Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan burned the temple and took the people into exile. Evil-merodach released Jehoiachin.

**Isa13:** The oracle concerning Babylon: Listen! The LORD is calling an army. I will punish the world for its evil. Babylon will be overthrown.

**Isa14:** The LORD will again choose Israel. How you are fallen, O Lucifer! You will be cast away like a trampled corpse. Wail, O Philistia!

**Isa21:** The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea: I set a watchman. He said, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon!" The glory of Kedar will end.

**Isa33:** Woe to you, O destroyer! The fear of the LORD is Zion's treasure. "I will arise," says the LORD. You will see the king in his beauty.

**Isa34:** The LORD is enraged against the nations. His sword is filled with blood. He has a day of vengeance for Zion. Edom shall lie waste.

**Isa35:** The desert shall rejoice and bloom. The eyes of the blind shall be opened. The ransomed of the LORD shall return to Zion with songs.

**Da5:** Belshazzar drank from the temple vessels. A hand wrote on the wall. Daniel said, "Your kingdom is given to the Medes and Persians."

**Isa40:** Comfort, comfort my people. A voice cries: Prepare the way of the LORD! He is the everlasting God. He gives strength to the weary.

**Isa41:** Let the nations meet for judgement. Do not fear, O Israel. I will help you. Idols are nothing. I will give a messenger of good news.



## Chapter Summaries (from @biblesummary)

Isa42: Behold, my Servant! He will bring justice to the nations. Sing to the LORD a new song. Hear, you deaf! The LORD gave Israel as spoil.

Isa43: But I am with you, O Jacob. I am the LORD. There is no other savior. Behold, I will do a new thing! Yet you have not called upon me.

Isa44: I will pour my Spirit on your offspring. Who makes an idol? A carpenter prays to a block of wood. I am the LORD who made all things.

Isa45: The LORD says to Cyrus: For the sake of Jacob I have called you. I am the LORD. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!

Isa46: The idols of Bel and Nebo are burdens to be carried. O Jacob, I have made you and I will carry you. I am God and there is no other.

Isa47: Sit in the dust, O daughter of Babylon. You showed no mercy. You trusted in sorcery. Evil shall fall upon you. No one shall save you.

Isa48: Hear this, O Jacob: I have refined you for my own sake. I am the First and the Last. Thus says your Redeemer: Go out from Babylon!

Isa49: The LORD formed me in the womb to restore Jacob and to bring salvation. Can a mother forget her nursing baby? I will not forget Zion.

Isa50: Have I no power to deliver? The LORD has given me a learned tongue. I gave my back to those who beat me. He who justifies me is near.

Isa51: Listen, the LORD will comfort Zion. Awake, O arm of the LORD! The ransomed shall return. You will drink the cup of my wrath no more.

## Teachings About God

- Praising the Babylonian gods meant blaspheming the God of the Jews.
- God’s goal is to save humanity, but we should not disregard his will.
- The day of the Lord will come.
- ISA 33 describes the intimate fellowship with God intended for Israel.
- There is no other savior for Israel except for Yahweh
- God is trustworthy and will deliver his people when they trust in him.
- God is unique and totally “other.” We cannot compare him to anything else.

## Teachings About Humanity

- This section of Daniel was written in Aramaic, the international trade language of the day and deals with the kingdoms of the world as they carry on apart from acknowledging the true God.
- Daniel 5 retells a story about Daniel and his ability to interpret signs. He could interpret what the wise men of Babylon could not.
- People oppose God and separate from him.
- Some people live only for pleasure.
- Before Christ, the prophets were God’s watchman; today every believer has the responsibility to share the Gospel.

## Teachings About Salvation

- Isaiah’s oracle against Judah are prophecies of coming judgment against the surrounding nations.
- You can escape judgment by committing your life in faith to God.
- Unbelief and disobedience bring judgment.
- Zion is depicted as the New Jerusalem where God and man will dwell together in perfect unity and harmony.
- God’s salvation brings everlasting joy.

## Reflections of Christ/Holy Spirit

- Christ is seen (ISA 33:17-24) as the king who blesses the righteous.
- The everlasting joy described in Isaiah 35:10 is realized in Jesus.

## Literary Genres/Techniques

- The reading from Ezekiel is primarily poetry.
- The reading from Jeremiah is prose.

## Author/Date of Writing/Audience

- Ezekiel continued his prophecies for 15 years after the temple was destroyed. Ezekiel was compiled c 570 BC. In these readings he was addressing the people living in exile in Babylon.
- Jeremiah compiled around 585 BC.
- Isaiah compiled around 680 BC
- Daniel prophesied during the reign of the Babylonian kings and one Persian king (605-530 BC)

## What did I learn about God?

- What does God promise to do for His people in Isaiah 14:32? How does God provide refuge for His people today?
- In Daniel 5, God again demonstrates His control over kings and kingdoms and that His plan will not be thwarted. How does this encourage you? How does this challenge you?
- How is God's strength found through His word? Through worship? Through fellowship with others?
- Isaiah tells us that God is the creator of everything [ISA 40:12, 22] and the ruler over the nations [ISA 40:15-17]. When are you likely to forget that God is the creator and ruler? How can you remind yourself?
- Isaiah uses images to teach about God and turn God's creation into reminders about God's character. (a shepherd with lambs ([Is 40:11](#)), stars ([Is 40:26](#)), nations ([Is 40:15–17](#)), grass and flowers ([Is 40:6–8](#)), scales and measurements ([Is 40:12](#)), grasshoppers ([Is 40:22](#)), craftsmen ([Is 40:19–20](#)), eagles ([Is 40:31](#)), youth ([Is 40:30](#)).) What are some modern images that could be used to describe God and His character?

## What did I learn about human nature?

- What are some “broken reeds” [EZE 29-30) upon which the people of God trust even now?
- What contemporary examples come to mind of people mocking God by demeaning sacred things as Belshazzar did with the temple goblets in Daniel 5? Why would Balshazzar have chosen those goblets versus something that belonged to some pagan deity? Then, and now, does it seem that God is quick or slow to judge such sacrilegious behavior?
- Why do people often fail, as Belshazzar did, to learn from the past?
- What does it mean for God's people to be “a light for the Gentiles”? In what ways do you see people “letting their light shine”? How do you see people representing God's covenant in their everyday life? [ISA 42:6-7]

## What did I learn about my life/relationship with God?

- How do you deal with the unknowns of the future? What practical things do you do? What role does God play in your view of the future and how you plan for it?
- How should God's control over history challenge our actions and attitudes, priorities and personal contacts? How should it impact us this week?
- What does it look like for you to “wait for the Lord” ([Is 40:31](#))? In what circumstances is it difficult for you to wait for the Lord? Why?
- What do you rely on for strength or energy? Do you depend on caffeine, sleep, “comfort food,” or something else? Where do you get Biblical strength and energy?
- When do you desire comfort? How do you train yourself to seek Biblical comfort? Do you desire that all of God's children know his comfort? Are there some you would rather not be comforted?