

WEEK 37 — THE RETURN FROM EXILE

Date: ca. 553 to 516 BC

The Story: God, who sent his people into exile, never leaves them, but reveals hints of their future to Daniel. Then, as God had foretold, the king of Persia conquers Babylon and decrees that the Jews in Babylonian captivity may return to their homeland and rebuild God's temple. Life is still difficult: Daniel's life is threatened and the temple rebuilding is stalled. But Daniel is saved, and at the encouragement of two prophets, the Jews overcome their opposition and complete the rebuilding of God's temple.

* Kids' readings may not align with the daily full readings. Parents, see the content ratings on the back page.

SEPTEMBER 11 DANIEL 7-8 • DANIEL 5

Today's reading begins with two strange visions God gave Daniel to foretell the rise and fall of empires. In Daniel 7, four great beasts represent kings/kingdoms that will control the Jewish homeland in turn. These kingdoms will be Babylon (the lion), Persia (the bear), Greece (the leopard), and Syria (the fourth beast). The rulers of Syria, the Seleucids, were descended from the remnants of the Greek Empire. One of their kings, Antiochus IV (ruled 175-163 BC), is the boastful horn of 7:8 and the "different" king of 7:24. He tried to end the Jewish religion, but the Jews revolted in 169-167 BC and gained some independence. Daniel's vision foretells God's victory over all these empires and even this cruel king. In Daniel 8, his vision focuses on the empires of Persia and Greece (8:20-21), including the breakup of the Greek Empire into four parts (8:22, including the Seleucid Empire) and a "fierce-looking king" (8:23), who is again Antiochus IV. This cruel king will not be able to overcome God and his people. Daniel 5 tells about Babylon's fall from inside the royal court, where the king's idolatrous drinking party ends with a last-minute prophecy of the fall of the Babylonian Empire to Persia. It happens that very night (5:30), on October 12, 539 BC: a powerful Persian advance culminated in the sudden and relatively bloodless capture of the city of Babylon.

Date: maybe around 553 BC (Daniel 7) • maybe around 551 BC (Daniel 8) • October 12, 539 BC (Daniel 5)

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Daniel 5 • Daniel 7

Kids' Reading*: Daniel 5

SEPTEMBER 12 DANIEL 9 • 2 CHRONICLES 36:22-23 • EZRA 1

Today's reading starts with a prayer of Daniel in response to a prophecy of Jeremiah (recall Jeremiah 25:11-12). In response to the prayer, an angel foretells that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, but in difficult times. The climax of this prophecy probably foretells (again) Antiochus IV's wickedness, especially his defilement of God's temple when, on December 25, 167 BC, he offered a pig on an altar he had set up for Zeus there. The second part of the reading brings happier news: In fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy, Persia's King Cyrus decrees that those Jews who wish may return to Judah and build a new temple for God there. In the third part of the reading, they prepare to do so.

Date: 539 BC

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Daniel 9 • 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 • Ezra 1

Kids' Reading*: 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 • Ezra 1-2

SEPTEMBER 13 EZRA 2 • DANIEL 6 • PSALM 126

Today's reading lists the first Jews who returned from exile to Judah, tells the famous story of Daniel in the lions' den, and shares a psalm that might come from the time of the return from exile.

Date: 539-537 BC (date uncertain for Psalm 126)

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Ezra 2 • Daniel 6

Kids' Reading*: Daniel 6

DAILY BIBLE READINGS — Summit View Church of Christ

SEPTEMBER 14 DANIEL 10-12

Today's reading shares Daniel's final vision. It tells of a great war (10:1)—actually a conflict covering 300 years, especially the second half of that period, during which rulers of Egypt ("the South") and Syria ("the North") will fight over "the Beautiful Land," Israel. As in Daniel 7-9, this vision climaxes with the atrocities of Antiochus IV around 167 BC. In spite of him, God's people will endure and, after resurrection, be glorified.

Date: 537 BC

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Daniel 11-12

Kids' Reading*: Ezra 3:1 to 4:5 • Ezra 4:24

SEPTEMBER 15 EZRA 3:1 to 4:5 • EZRA 4:24 • HAGGAI

Today's reading reports how the Jews, newly returned to Jerusalem, rebuild the altar of God and begin to rebuild his temple. Opponents stall their efforts, though, and so God sends the prophet Haggai to urge them to resume the rebuilding process, which they do. (Ezra 4:6-23 flashes forward to a later time when opponents stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem's fortifications.)

Date: 537-520 BC — September/October 537 BC (Ezra 3:1-6) • August 29, 520 BC (Haggai 1:1-13) • September 21, 520 BC (Haggai 1:14-15a) • October 17, 520 BC (Haggai 1:15b to 2:9) • December 18, 520 BC (Haggai 2:10-23)

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Ezra 3:1 to 4:5 • Ezra 4:24 • Haggai

Kids' Reading*: Haggai

SEPTEMBER 16 ZECHARIAH 1-6

Today's reading opens the prophecies of Zechariah, who prophesies alongside Haggai. His first vision is made up of several scenes that encourage the Jews rebuilding God's temple, particularly Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest. The vision also predicts God's protection, cleansing, and renewal of his people.

Date: 520-516 BC — October/November 520 BC (Zechariah 1:1-6) • February 15, 519 BC (Zechariah 1:7 to 6:8) • probably between 519 and 516 BC (Zechariah 6:9-15)

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Zechariah 1-5

Kids' Reading*: Zechariah 1

SEPTEMBER 17 ZECHARIAH 7-8 • EZRA 5-6

Today's reading starts with a question from the Jews about the fasting they've practiced since the exile. God responds, calling his people to conduct themselves with godliness—and God will bless them. In Ezra, opposition to the rebuilding of the temple is overcome, and God's new temple in Jerusalem is completed.

Date: 520-516 BC — 520 BC (Ezra 5:1) • September 21, 520 BC (Ezra 5:2) • maybe 520 BC (Ezra 5:3 to 6:14a) • December 7, 518 BC (Zechariah 7-8) • March 12, 516 (Ezra 6:14b-18) • April 21, 516 BC (Ezra 6:19-22)

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Ezra 5-6

Kids' Reading*: Zechariah 3-5

Parents' Guide

PG preview for young children

Dan 5:1-4 (T), 30 (V)

Dan 6:16-17 (V)

Dan 7:7 (T, V), 11 (V), 19-26 (T, V)

Dan 8:6-7 (V), 10-13 (T), 23-25 (T, V)

Dan 9:11-14 (T), 25-27 (T, V)

Dan 10:7-11 (T), 20 (V)

Dan 11:7-20 (V), 21-45 (T, V)

Dan 12:1 (T)

Hag 2:13 (T), 22 (V)

PG-13 preview for under age 13

Dan 6:24 (V)

C = Circumcision
N = Nudity
S = Sexuality
T = Dark/Sensitive Themes
V = Violence

R shocking, graphic, or disturbing
none