

Handouts

Including

Notes, Questions

Infographic Timeline



How do you feel if someone keeps a long-time promise?

- What if that someone is God?
- It feels pretty good doesn't it?
- What about us, do we keep our promises to God?
- In today's lesson, we'll take an in-depth look both how God keeps His promises and some challenges to us in our lesson.....

Story of the Return to the Promised Land God keeps his promises & so should we

Yvon Prehn, Bible805.com

Introduction

- When someone makes a promise to you, do they always keep it?
- What about God? Does He always keep his promises?
- In our lesson today we'll see how God kept his promise to return people to their homeland from Babylon back to Israel after they'd been taken captive for 70 years.
- But as for the people of God, we'll see how well they kept their promises to God and then we'll end with some applications on how we might all get better at making the changes in our lives to keep our promises to God.

First a reminder of how to read, interpret, and apply the Historical books of the Bible

- What follows is condensed advice from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth--*
- ***The Old Testament narratives record what happened,***
- ***Not necessarily what should or ought to have happened.***
- ***They do not teach doctrine and frequently do not state applications.***
- ***WE are supposed to be able to do that from explicit teaching passages – and in this lesson I'll make suggestions of applications.***
- In the stories leading up to the exile, we saw how the people broke their covenant with God and the Bible assumes that we have read the specifics of it in the books that record God's Law and that we understand why God did what He did.
- ***"In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives."***
- ***The central characters always have flaws (some more obvious than others), but God's plan and His grace prevails.***

Story of the return told in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther and this isn't in historical order

- And it can be confusing.
- Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book.
- Main author Ezra, though obviously parts of Nehemiah were first written by Nehemiah.
- Book of Ezra starts before Ezra is personally involved and later as the book of Nehemiah shows, he and Nehemiah worked together.
- ***What we don't see in our English Bible is that Esther takes place in the middle of the book of Ezra (we'll discuss the details later).***
- ***And the prophets who preached at that time are at the very END of the Old Testament.***
- Here is a chart that will help you place the events in their historical order.

Let's look at the history in more details

- First punishment was promised for disobedience, but a limit.
 - *This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for **seventy years.***

- *“But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,” declares the Lord, “and will make it desolate forever. Jeremiah 25:11-12*
- And after the 70 years were over (which Daniel realized reading Jeremiah), Babylon’s power was destroyed, and conqueror allowed the people to return to their land.

But the prophecies were even more exact

- **150 years earlier,**
the Prophet Isaiah said: I am the Lord, the Maker of all things,
who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited,’
of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be rebuilt,’
and of their ruins, ‘I will restore them,’
- ²⁸**who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd
and will accomplish all that I please;
he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,”
and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.”’**
- The fulfillment of this prophecy shows us the power and knowledge of our God who exists outside of time and under whose control is all of history.

Precisely on schedule, as Ezra tells us

- *In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing: ²“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:*
- ***“The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. ⁴And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.” Ezra 1:1-4***
- Freedom to go back and the money to do it
- Plus, he gave them the items from the Temple that had been taken.

Not only in the Biblical account

Cyrus cylinder

Records his decree to rebuild

The people return (but not all)

- Leadership:
- Zerubbabel—descendant of David, would have been king.
- See him mentioned later in the lineage of Joseph in Matt. 1:13.
- Priestly leader Jeshua.
- Much more about both of them in Haggai and Zechariah.

They get to the land

- And soon after beginning to build the Temple.
- It was a scary situation, still surrounded by enemies.
- They started to build, worshipped, reinstated sacrifices
“Despite their fear of the people around them.”
- But when the foundations were laid “. . . all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. ¹²**But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. ¹³No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because**

the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

Ezra 3:11-13 (NIV)

Application moment

- REALLY.....????
- God did an extraordinary work in bringing them back to the land, prophesied 150 years earlier—never had such a thing happened!
- People allowed to return to their land and given silver, gold, all that had been robbed from them.
- Still had legitimate leaders—from the line of David.
- And what is their response of some—whine and complain!
- How often do we miss the extraordinary thing God might be doing in our lives when we were expecting something else?

DON'T do that! Train yourself to be thankful

- Decide ahead of time you will say **Thank you** when you are tempted to complain.
- Obey the command “In everything give thanks,” 1 Thes. 5:18
- Shake your fist at the enemy and affirm that you serve a good God.
- Pray you will do well and do His will in whatever challenge He has put you in.
- Cry, scream, pray, pour out your heart to God if you need to.
- But continue to do whatever is clear He has called you to do and to be obedient to what you know you should do.

Perhaps in part because of that ingratitude

- Their enemies’ threats get the best of them, and the work stops.
- Remember from other lessons of Daniel and Ezekiel—troubles, challenges are NEVER a reason to stop the work God calls you to do.
- Enemies write to the king to get the work to stop.
- And not only does Darius respond and remind the enemies of Israel that the Kings decree to rebuild stands, but he requires them to pay for it!
- And yet 15 years go by.... the people get distracted.....
- Haggai and Zechariah begin to preach (we’ll cover their messages in the following lessons and they are good ones)and the people get back to work.

And now, like a movie the scene shifts in the historical timeline

- Though you wouldn’t know it from the order of the books in our Bibles.
- We are now back with the people who have been taken captive, but the scene shifts (in the historical timeline) back to Susa capitol of Empire of the Medes & Persians.
- The Jewish people had scattered throughout the empire, settled, and were quite comfortable.
- Many did not go back to the land of Israel and didn’t want to.
- But God didn’t forget them as we see in the book of Esther.

Esther opens with an extravagant banquet

- *This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: ²At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa,⁴For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. ⁵When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king’s palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa. Esther 1:1-5*
- The king orders Queen Vashti to appear, she refuses and loses her position as queen.
- The king’s attendants then suggest that a search for “beautiful young virgins” be undertaken and that the one who pleases the king most will be made queen.

Time for reality check, not only in the timeline

- The story of Esther **is not a romance or fairy tale**.
- The Ruler Xerxes, incredibly powerful, would have had a large harem of wives, concubines, taken whenever and from wherever he wanted.
- Esther not a modern-day woman with a freedom of choice—she was taken captive no less than Daniel and his friends, in modern day language, she was trafficked.
- Some very bad commentaries on this ignore this reality.
- Shows how in the most challenging and demeaning and powerlessness of circumstances, one still has opportunities to obey and be used of God.

Her story

- **She is an orphan**, raised by her uncle Mordecai
- ⁵Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, ⁶who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. ⁷Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died. Esther 2:5-7
- **Esther is seized as part of the round up of beautiful woman, she didn't volunteer—it was no beauty contest of willing participants.**
- *When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. ⁹She pleased him and won his favor. Esther 2:8-9*
- **Favor—reminds us of Daniel; She also found favor with the King and he made her Queen.**
- Royal women of the time would have had their own living area, servants, wealth—but no freedom—all dependent on the whims of the king.

Esther is now Queen, and a Villain comes on the scene

- Even though Esther is queen Mordecai, the uncle who raised her stays close and overhears a plot against the king.
- He tells Esther, who gets a message to the king, whose life is saved, while giving credit to Mordecai
- Now.....the Villain—
- *Haman was an Agagite and the son of Hammedatha. Haman was likely a descendent of Agag, king of the Amalekites, long-time enemies of the Jewish people. God had told King Saul to destroy the Amalekites centuries earlier (1 Samuel 15:3), but Saul failed to obey the command. His disobedience led to the loss of his kingdom and, in Esther's time, the threat of annihilation for all Jews. (from Got Questions)*
- **Application note:** the results of incomplete obedience can be greater than we can imagine—take time to complete what has been left undone if you can because it will often affect more than you personally.

Haman hates it that Mordecai won't bow to him

- So he decides to not only kill him, but all his people.
- He goes in to talk to the king about it, falsely accuses the Jews, suggests they all be killed. The king foolishly agrees, and the decree cannot be changed (like throwing Daniel to the lions).
- Mordecai tells Esther and gives her a challenge, knowing the seriousness of it is that if you approach the King when he didn't ask for you, unless he holds out

the golden scepter you will be killed.

- *“Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. **And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”***

God determines the time and places of our lives

- *From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. Acts 17:26*
- We are living where we are and at the time we are for God’s reasons.
- Our challenge, what does He want us (YOU) to do here and now?
- You are in a place with gifts, talents, and opportunities no one else has and no matter how constrained you might feel (remember Esther) God has a calling for you.
- ***You have come to (whatever your) position for such a time as this?—is a challenge to all of us.***

Her response

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” (Esther 4:16).

- She goes to the king, and he holds out his golden scepter.
- She invites him and Haman to a banquet.

Haman’s plot foiled

- At a second banquet Haman’s plot is disclosed.
- He is executed.
- The Jews can fight for their lives and are victorious.
- Origin of the festival of Purim for Jewish people.

After this another group returns to Israel under Ezra

- Perhaps some realized they weren’t as safe as they thought they were in Persia.
- Ezra leads a group back—why him, we have no idea—he was the descendant of Aaron the high priest.
- Ezra was sent by Artaxerxes (Ruler after Xerxes and the king of the book of Nehemiah also) with silver, gold, provisions to govern and to teach.
- *And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which you possess, appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people of Trans-Euphrates—all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach any who do not know them. ²⁶Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king must surely be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment. Ezra 7:25-26*

Goes to Jerusalem

- Finds that the people had sinned by intermarriage with pagans.
- The same sin that got them in trouble in the first place.
- Needed to be made right.....
- But before that—
- Another leader comes on the scene—again a shift back to Susa.....

Nehemiah

- Cupbearer to the king Artaxerxes.
- Hears that the people in Jerusalem are in “great trouble and distress.”
- His heart is touched and after prayer and fasting, he asks the king to do something about it.
- He then goes there after getting permission and checks for himself.

- The walls of the city are broken down and rubble is everywhere.

Application

- He was comfortable.
- He was far away from the problem.
- But he felt he had to personally do something about the situation he heard about.
- And he did.
- Prayed, asked and then took specific actions.
- *Application: it isn't enough to simply feel bad about situations. Though we can't personally do something about every situation, we can always pray and do something more actively if God asks us to.*

He did so much more than rebuild the walls

- For 12 years served as governor.
- Fearless in the sight of continuous opposition, physical threats.
- Rebuilt the wall in 52 days but stayed.
- Rebuilt the spiritual and social lives of the people.
- Made sure there was social justice and economic equality among the people.
- He personally modeled care for the people and did not benefit from his position.
- Encouraged revival with the teaching of Ezra.
- Over saw the dissolution of the marriages to pagan wives.

Many great lessons, one of my favorites

- In the process of rebuilding the wall, lists different people doing different things and then this:
- *Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house. Nehemiah 3:28*
- ***Application: as we work to build up the Kingdom of God, we can each do work on what is right in front of us.***
- Don't worry about winning the world but work hard to win your neighbor—do the ministry God called you to do.
- Your neighbor these days might be digital—your digital neighborhood—New slide and resources on his****

Joins with Ezra and the people hear the words of the law

- Chapters 8 & 9 they confess their sins
- Among the sins they promise to forsake are intermarriage with pagan nations.
- Promise to support the temple with tithes and offerings
- They then make a corporate promise to obey these commands and others
- *“The rest of the people—priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand— all these now join their fellow Israelites the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord our Lord. Nehemiah 10:28-29*
- Nehemiah returns to Susa—great work accomplished—both in physical and spiritual ways.

Sometime later, he returns

- Finds the people had neglected the Temple, priests had to go back to farming because the people no longer supported them.
- People were again intermarrying with pagan nations—reminds them that this is what caused Solomon to fall from his position of God's greatest king and in many ways started the cascade of disobedience that destroyed the nation

- When he sees them committed again, he is horrified, furious, and forces them to repent.
- We will see the preaching of the Prophet Malachi is from this time and on this topic. *“Bring the titles into the storehouse (Malachi 3:10)”* is a reference to this situation.

Most important lessons from these books

- God keeps his promises
- His faithfulness is not dependent on our unfaithfulness
- People tend to repeat sins or sinful patterns.
- Israel did with marriage to pagan women and with being selfish with supporting the Temple and the ministries associated with it.
- We must take their failure as a warning and learn from it.

Application Challenge to us—this issue of “besetting Sins”

- ***Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, (just finished talking about the heroes of the faith in Heb. 11—a comment we might also make after studying Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther)let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us”*** Hebrews 12:1 (KJV)
- “Lay aside” these sins that slow us down or make us less effective in living a life of discipleship— known as “besetting sins.”
- Many commentators remind us that these aren’t always major sins, nobody was killing or sacrificing babies anymore after the return to the land; and we most likely aren’t either.

Yet, the question is: what sins hold us down?

- What keeps us from being, doing our best for the sake of the Kingdom?
- Often these are sins of “omission” of NOT doing what we ought to be doing—for Israel it was not supporting the Temple and then it followed from that, they had no teaching of God’s Word and also, because it was the source of the welfare system of the day, the poor and needy were not cared for.
- It is easy without thinking or planning to fall into sins
- **Remember definition of sin=missing the mark**
- Of not becoming all Jesus wants us to be
- Search heart and define sin—where do I fall short without even thinking about it?

Suggestions to change, two helpful books

- *Atomic Habits*— “All habits follow a similar trajectory from effortful practice to automaticity.”
- Summary, pick habit, and do it bit by bit until it becomes automatic.
- Spiritual Disciplines book by Donald Whitney—many habits to cultivate as you grow in your Christian life but here is one you ARE DOING and making important progress in it....
- ***You are all readers, learners of God’s Word—if you are following the schedule...this is becoming part of your life, part of who you are—celebrate that!***
- Coming up, New Testament, both easier to understand and yet more challenging because the commands in it are much clearer also.

Four foundational Discipleship Habits

- **God’s Word**—read, listen to, think about, study it.
- **Prayer**—talk to God about everything, all the time.
- **Fellowship**—be around other believers in Jesus, make them your “referent others.”
- **Giving**—not just money, but giving of yourself, your time, serve others in love and care.

As we look at the lives of those who returned to the land

- We can't take God's faithfulness to us for granted.
- In response, we need to consciously take responsibility for our Christian growth.
- Return to where God wants us to be.
- Rebuilt what has been broken.
- And celebrate God's work in us, remembering as the Apostle Paul said,
There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.

Phil. 1:6, MSG

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- **Links to:**
- Podcasts, blogs, and eBooks
- Printables & merch of Bible verses & encouraging sayings
- Chronological Bible-reading schedules

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Story of the Return to the Promised Land, God keeps His Promises & so should we

1. What are some guidelines we need to keep in mind when we read the historical passages in the Bible?
2. What is the overall historical timeline of the history of the return of the Jews to Israel? Specifically, when does Esther fit in?
3. What did the people complain about when they got back into the land? Why is complaining so wrong and what can we do to stop it in our lives?
4. How were Ezra and Nehemiah alike? How were they different and what did each contribute to the rebuilding of the people and the nation?
5. How was Esther like Daniel? What can we learn from her situation and how she allowed God to use her? In what ways in your life do you think God may have called you “for such a time as this?”
6. APPLICATION— What are some ways we can develop spiritual habits that will help us be all God wants us to be? What is one area you want to work on?

TIMELINE

History

from the Return to the close
of the Old Testament

538 BC
1ST RETURN UNDER
ZERUBABEL

Return of the first group of exiles under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, they begin to build the Temple but soon quit from a combination of fear and distraction.

520-518 BC
PROPHETS HAGGAI AND
ZECHARIAH PREACH

Haggai and Zechariah preach and remind the people that building God's house is the most important thing they are supposed to do and that He will protect them. They finish the Temple.

483-473 BC
ESTHER

The book of Esther takes place back in Persia. She is Queen and is used by God to rescue her people from threatened destruction; challenged by her uncle Mordecai. Purim commemorates this.

458-456 BC
2ND RETURN UNDER EZRA

Ezra the priest, (a descendant of Aaron, the high priest) leads a much smaller group back. His goal is to teach and spiritually restore the people, who were returning to sinful ways, particularly in marrying heathen women.

444-432 BC
NEHEMIAH'S 1ST TRIP

Nehemiah goes to rebuild the wall, which he does in 52 days. Stays as governor for 12 years; various reforms in partnership with Ezra, including spiritual revival, and economic justice. He also stands up to Israel's enemies.

432-430 BC
NEHEMIAH BRIEFLY
LEAVES AND RETURNS

Upon Nehemiah's return, he finds people had resumed neglect of the Temple, marriage to pagan women, and economic sins. Harsh words and discipline follow.

435 BC
PROPHET MALACHI
PREACHES

Prophet Malachi preaches against the same sins Ezra and Nehemiah pointed out. The people not following God in marriage or Temple observances, rob God by not giving as they should. The book ends with challenges.

430 BC
OLD TESTAMENT
ENDS, BEGINNING OF
400 SILENT YEARS

Promise for those who followed God through it all, *"Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name. 'They will be mine,' says the Lord Almighty, (Mal. 3:16-17)"*

TIMELINE of the Return from Exile to the Close of the Old Testament

The timeline of events when the Jews return from exile in Babylon can be confusing in that the books that describe them in our Bibles are not in historical order and the prophets who preached during this time are at the end of the Old Testament.

In the historical timeline, the book of Esther takes place near the beginning of the book of Ezra. An initial return to the land took place before her story and another return to the land takes place after it.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah preach approximately 18 years after the first return to encourage the people to finish building the Temple. They had become discouraged and distracted and the prophet's preaching encouraged them to finish the Temple.

Though the Temple was rebuilt, the people needed spiritual rebuilding and God calls Ezra to take a much smaller group back to do that.

His preaching challenges the people, but the walls are not rebuilt, and the city is filled with rubble. God calls Nehemiah to rebuild and clean up the city of Jerusalem which he does.

The prophet Malachi is preaching either somewhat earlier or at the same time Nehemiah is working and challenging the people.

The Old Testament ends with the people never again serving pagan Gods, though as a nation they are not totally committed to worshipping the God who has cared for them through thousands of years.

Old Testament Prophets' Timeline

AUDIENCE COLOR KEY: green=Israel; blue=Judah; pink=Exiles in Babylon; tan=misc. nations

note: exact dates approximate as many reputable sources vary, though general history and timeline valid.

Historical setting: After division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah, recorded in 1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 17

Prophet	Audience	Kings who ruled at the same time	Approximate Dates, all BC	Historical happenings at the time of the prophet, plus comments on the content of their books
Elijah	Israel	Ahab, Ahaziah, Joram	870-845	Kingdom split about 930, all sinful kings in Israel through Israel's history, kings a mixture of good and bad in Judah.
Elisha	Israel	Joram, Jehu, Jehoahaz	845-800	Disciple of Elijah. Preaches to a sinful people who worshipped idols, not Jehovah God. Some individual (e.g. Naaman) success, no national repentance.
Jonah	Nineveh	Jeroboam II	760-753	Jonah first a prophet of victory to Israel; then called to preach to Nineveh capital of Assyria, a violent and cruel enemy. Finally obeys and Nineveh repents, though it doesn't last.
Amos	Israel	Jeroboam II	765-754	Israel powerful and complacent, pagan worship, neglect of the poor, calls for justice. Resotoration after judgement promised which is a pattern in many prophets.
Hosea	Israel	Jeroboam II	758-725	Though his message is of love and forgiveness, Israel does not repent, continues in spiritual decline. Though materially prosperous and religiously active, Israel goes into captivity in 722, conquered by Assyria.

Historical setting: Israel conquered by Assyria, prophecies now warning Judah, recorded 2 Kings 18-2 Kings 25

Additional history of Judah primarily in 1-2 Chronicles; fall of Jerusalem and edict to return in 2 Chron. 36

Isaiah	Judah	Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh	760-673	Begins preaching to Judah before Israel falls. Assyria threatens but does not conquer Judah. Book reflects God's eternal view.
Micah	Judah	Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh	738-698	Preaches same time as Isaiah, warns of judgement if no repentance. Defines what God requires in Micah 6:8.
Nahum	Nineveh	Manasseh, Amon, Josiah	658-615	Assyrian repentance under Jonah doesn't last. Final destruction of Assyria/Nineveh by Babylonians.
Zephaniah	Judah	Josiah	640-609	Last revival in Judah under Josiah, but not enough.
Habakkuk	Judah	Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin	608-598	Babylon conquered Assyria; Judah in process of its downfall. Questions why God uses pagan nations for His purposes.
Jeremiah	Judah	Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah	650-582	Messages not in order. Records the last days of Judah, the prior series of deportations before final destruction in 587 BC. Wrote at the same time as Ezekiel and Daniel who were deported early on. Writes Lamentations after fall of Judah.
Obediah	Edom	uncertain	?	Judgement of Edom. Date not certain, message timeless. Do not rejoice over or take advantage of the fall of others.

Historical setting: Babylon conquers Judah, a series of deportations, final destruction 607 BC, recorded in 2 Kings 24, 25

Ezekiel	Exiles in Babylon	Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, in Judah; Babylonian rulers there	620-570	Under captivity, God continues speaking to his people; obedience still required, he was a priest and spoke to the people in Babylon. Also numerous future, end-time prophecies.
Daniel	Exiles in Babylon	Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah in Judah; Babylonian rulers there	620-540	One of the earliest deported to Babylon, lived there during the destruction, deportation, and return of the people. His prophecies span human history.

Historical setting: Israel allowed to return & rebuild, recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah, captives who stayed in Esther

Joel	Judah	Governor Zerubbabel?	?	Date not certain, message timeless. Restoration promised.
Haggai	Judah	Governor Zerubbabel	520	Returned to the land, Temple rebuilding stalled, preached priority of finishing God's work. Preached with Zechariah.
Zechariah	Judah	Governor Zerubbabel	522-509	Messages, challenges to complete the tasks of God.
Malachi	Judah	not certain, perhaps some overlap with Nehemiah	435	People back in the land, Temple rebuilt. The people persisted in sin. Challenges to repent. Blessings for obedience.

After these books 400 "Silent years" No written word from God, but God at work in history preparing for the Messiah.

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