

Study Aids
Discussion Questions & Suggested Reading
For “What’s the Message?” Lessons

Lesson 78

Questions:

How big a blow do you think it was to the Israelite psyche to realize that Jerusalem had been destroyed and the people were now captives in Babylon? What had their expectations been? What was the reality they faced? How realistic was the danger that many might fall away from the worship of Yahweh?

How could they continue to follow God’s law and bring their sacrifices to the temple when they no longer had a temple? How could they conduct any kind of worship service, and where would they study God’s word? Have you ever wondered where and when the synagogues began? Yes, it was right there in Babylon, and it has continued ever since.

What do you think they expected to see when they arrived in Babylon? A city on a wind-swept plain, with narrow, curved streets like Jerusalem? Do you have any idea what Babylon looked like in its glory days? Have you ever heard of the beautiful hanging gardens of Babylon? What would be required to sustain such a garden?

We have previously talked about Jeremiah saying that the Lord would write His law on their hearts (Jer. 31:31-34). Now we hear Ezekiel echoing that idea in 18:31, when he says “get yourself a new heart and a new spirit.” Jesus quotes Isaiah in Matthew 13: 14-17 with a message about the importance of a heart turned to God, and the writer to the Hebrews (3:12) warns his readers that an unbelieving heart would lead them astray. How important is this concept to you?

Suggested reading:

Go to pages 90-94 of Story of the Bible World, published by Reader’s Digest to see drawings of what Babylon looked like in its heyday, and read more about the Israelite experiences there.