

# Chapter 8

## Turning Point in the Journey

### Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 8, “Turning Point in the Journey: The Destruction of Judah, Exile and Return,” p. 176–199.
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 7 “Review and Reflection” questions from pages 156, 162, 169, and 171.

### Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Play a CD or cassette tape of the song “Here I Am, Lord.” Students will likely be familiar with this liturgical standard. Repeat the song lyrics and ask: “Which prophet should be getting credit for this song’s lyrics?” (*The song is based on Isaiah 6:8*) Note that “Here I Am, Lord” could be a theme song for all the Old Testament prophets. Have students do a quick chapter survey. How and where does Yahweh send the prophets presented in this chapter (Isaiah, Micah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Jonah)?
- Refocus attention on the political and psychological climate during this era. Write on the board or ask: “What was it like for Jews living in Judah or Israel during the sixth, seventh, and eighth century B.C.?”
- Ask: “What events led to this awful state of affairs?” (*The end of the independent states of Judah and Israel, the exile and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.*) Have students generate a quick list of descriptive adjectives to paint the picture. ( *i.e. terrifying, unsettling, tragic, confusing, disruptive, dangerous, etc.*) Challenge students to put this ancient tragedy into modern terms: “If a crisis like this happened in our country today, it would mean . . .?”
- Before collecting the Review and Reflection questions from Chapter 7, ask several students to read their answers for question three on page 171 which sums up much of the chapter: “What new ideas did each of the four prophets introduce to the religion of Yahweh?”

### Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

*Text Reference: Introduction, Judah Before the Exile, The Exile of Judah (176–182)*

- Using a regional map of the ancient kingdoms of Judah and Israel, summarize the first few paragraphs of “Judah before the Exile.” Make sure that students see how these tiny kingdoms were surrounded by “super-powers”—Egypt, Babylon, Assyria. (*Solomon’s son Rehoboam caused the split into two kingdoms and was succeeded by his son Abijah. The next two kings of Judah—Asa and Jehoshaphat—battled with the northern kingdom, Israel, while attempting some reforms. After Jehoshaphat, however, idolatry and injustice infected Judah, as well* )
- Ask: “What strange mystery in the book of Isaiah have Scripture scholars resolved?” (*Historical events referred to span more than 200 years. One prophet could not have lived that long. Scholars say that Isaiah probably has three different authors.* )
- Supply Bibles and divide into small groups. Have students use Isaiah or Micah and their natural “marketing” savvy to write a sixty-second public service style radio ad. The ads should summarize the basic messages in Isaiah or Micah. This project should take fifteen to twenty minutes. (*Have stopwatches and several sample radio ad scripts available for student use.*)
- Have students deliver their ads and tape them. (*Allow students to briefly critique and react to the ads – content and delivery.*)
- Refocus attention on the text, suggesting that if radio news correspondents could return to Judah in the sixth century B.C., they would report a massive tragedy—the conquest of Judea, the total destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., and the exile of the people into bondage in Babylon.
- Summarize the chain of events (including events and dates on pages 179–182) in an NPR-style news summary. Assume the viewpoint of a reporter who travels back in time to cover the most tragic event in the history of Israel. Add drama to oral summary with verses from the Book of Lamentations.

### Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Assign students to do the journal assignment on page 182 in which students imagine themselves as exiled Jews in Babylon. The assignment is to write a prayer describing their sufferings and feelings.

## Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

*Text Reference: Prophets of the Exile, The Exiles Return to Judah, Major Themes of Writing Before, During and After the Exile, Further Reflection (pages 182–199)*

- Refer again to the regional map of ancient Judah and Babylon. Say: “You wrote prayers about the Exile and agonies of the Jews. The prophets Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Second Isaiah also suffered as they shared God’s word. Ezekiel was deported to Babylon while Jeremiah was left behind for a time in Jerusalem’s ruins. Although his identity remains a mystery, Second Isaiah also witnessed the horrors of captivity and enslavement.”
- Have students review pages 183–184 and write “Five Facts about Ezekiel” on five 3” X 5” index cards. Students should also do Jeremiah and Second Isaiah cards in the same way. When completed, students can exchange the fifteen-card “decks.” Have students share selected facts aloud with the whole group. (*Plan about fifteen minutes for this activity.*)
- Sum up the visions and symbolic acts of Ezekiel (pages 184–187) and sample student opinion: “Was Ezekiel mentally unstable? Or, was this prophet just severely traumatized by the tragic exile, slavery and sins of Israel?”
- Discuss the terms “post-exilic” and “remnant” in the context of the Jewish return to Israel. It was a mixed blessing. Though many Jews returned home, things were not the same. Many Jews longed to see the Temple rebuilt but were grieved that it was not as glorious or impressive. Others longed to seek revenge on those who had destroyed their Temple, capital, and way of life. The Jews were still enslaved—in their own homeland. Neo-Babylonian control was replaced by Persian control. The Jews were under foreign control for nearly 600 years before Christ, and for several centuries, under the Romans, after Christ.
- To conclude the Part II Lesson, have students re-gather in small groups to read and discuss “Jonah: The Reluctant Missionary of Peace” (pages 196–197). Remind students that this material presents the book of Jonah as a parable—a symbolic story with moral truths.

## Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Have students sit in a circle around one small candle. As they sit quietly, wind some vines (real or artificial) around the chairs, forming a loose connection among all in the circle.
- Ask students to recall and mention people who helped to *connect* them to the faith. Now, invite each one around the circle to mention an event or experience that helped them feel connected to Christ. (*First Communion, a Confirmation retreat, service project etc . . .*) Recall that Isaiah portrays Israel as a vineyard that God tears down when wild grapes (sin) begins to grow there. The image of a vineyard is used often in Scripture. (*The Vineyard Song, Isaiah 5:1–7.*)
- Have a student read John 15:1–5. (*Jesus says “I am the vine, you are the branches . . .”*). A quiet meditation should follow the reading. Ask students to quietly consider what things can damage their connection, their lifeline with Jesus.
- Conclude with a prayer asking for the strength, wisdom and grace to cultivate and protect our living connection with Jesus, the vine.

## Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign the “Review and Reflection” Questions on pages 178, 182, 190, 193, and 198.
- Have students read Chapter 9, “A Spiritual Journey: A Look at Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature” (pages 202–223) for the next session.