

# Week Thirty-Two

Days 218–224



**Exile** Narrative: Isaiah 57–66; Jeremiah 1 | Supplemental: Ezekiel 17–27; Proverbs 13:5–14:8

## WORSHIP CAN KNOCK DOWN THE BARRIER OF SIN



Babylonian Soldiers Loot the Temple of Jerusalem

The great suffering experienced in the Exile challenges us to consider how our sins and the sins of others affect us. It is important for us to think about what we prioritize and why. Ezekiel and Isaiah both emphasize that everyone should mourn the destruction of the Temple. This is true whether one was alive before or after its destruction, as well as whether any individual's sinfulness is seen as represented by the punishment of the Temple's loss.

- Isaiah and Ezekiel help us appreciate the perverse ways we might convince ourselves that idolatry can be OK.
- In Isaiah 57, for example, the image of adultery is used to condemn idolatry, even to the point of worshiping a god said to require child sacrifices. We are all familiar with the kinds of ways people justify adultery.
- Similarly, in Isaiah 58, the people fast and worship falsely and then ask why the Lord does not hear them. God responds that they are seeking their own pleasure with this type of fasting, which will prevent their prayers from being heard.
- At the beginning of chapter 59, Isaiah makes it clear that our sins separate us from God and that judgment and punishment will follow.
- The book of Ezekiel addresses these themes, too. The Lord says in Ezekiel 22 that he does not find people willing to stand up and intercede for the people of Jerusalem.
- As Old Testament books say repeatedly, the infidelity of the people revolves around their false worship and embrace of sin.
- Sabbath, or *Shabbat* in Hebrew, is the seventh day of the week, Saturday. The Lord says, “I gave them my sabbaths, as a sign between me and them” (Ezekiel 20:12). A covenant establishes a relationship, and the sign of God’s covenant relationship is this dedicated time to worship him.
- Sabbath days are meant to comprise worship and rest. Worshiping means living as someone who belongs to the Lord, and resting shows one is free, not in bondage. Throughout the Bible, much is said about the importance of keeping the Sabbath faithfully.

