

WEEK 5- Exile and Return Era

The Bible is the story of God redeeming a broken creation through Jesus Christ.

Books: Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi, Joel.

Timeline: 608 BC - 430 BC

Symbol: Scroll (symbolizes voice of God through Prophets)

Summary Verse: Even now, declares the Lord, "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. - Joel 2:12-13 (NIV)

Timeline of Events

Jeremiah warns Israel about coming judgement. (609

1st & 2nd Waves of Israelites taken into Exile (Daniel & Ezekiel included) – 70 Year Exile Begins.

Jerusalem Temple is Destroyed – 50 more years of exile.

Cyrus of Persia issues decree allowing Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild.

Returning Israelites Rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple – Zechariah & Haggai Prophecy

Esther becomes Queen in Persia.

Ezra & Nehemiah Continue Rebuilding

Malachi and Joel Prophecy, calling out Israel for more disobedience.

Interpretive Issues:

- 1) *Historical Context* - These events are watershed moments that shaped Jewish History - and ours! Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, first ½ Daniel are historical. Historical Narrative is the play-by-play of story.
- 2) *Prophetic Voice* - The message and voice of God coming through people he has chosen; prophecy is the color commentary to the historical play-by-play. Addresses both future AND present.

Themes:

- 1) *Reframing Faithful Living* - Practicing God's presence is not tied to a particular building or location (Temple, Promised Land, sacrifices, festivals, etc.). But is a condition of the heart. Rend your hearts not your garments. Shift from religious to relational.
- 2) *Engage the Lost World Redemptively* - Jeremiah 29:7 - Daniel embodies this. Through his faithfulness he's able to bring the name of God to the Babylonian King's lips. Zechariah proclaims God's word that the Jews are to be both a symbol and a source of blessing to the world.
- 3) *God calls people to live IN Exile, not escape it* - Ezekiel 11:16 "Although I have scattered you in the countries of the world, I will be a sanctuary to you during your time in exile..." God meets them in exile. Mordecai/Esther radiate God's presence even when his name is not specifically spoken.

Tension: Continued pattern of faithful yet compromised leaders; Return leads to hyper-nationalism but no closer connection to God; Physical structures were rebuilt, but what about their hearts? Return to Jerusalem was hope, but did they get it wrong (followed by silence)? Is the Exile really over?

Application:

Still Called to Live As Exiles - Character over Circumstance- Humanity is still in the exile of sin. We as the church need to live redemptively in exile, living as beacons of hope, restoration, compassion, justice and faithfulness. We are “foreigners and temporary aliens” and we have a mission to be above reproach and not compromise our relationships with God.

Center of Worship is Jesus, Not Geography- God’s presence is not a location issue but a heart issue. We shouldn’t miss the presence of God by being too focused on the things that only *represent* God. Church, denomination, religion, tradition, culture, personality, party, preferences. We need to resist these things becoming God in our life. Our true home is not where we go or what we do - our true home is in Jesus.