**Repent, Return, Restore Rebuild**

**Post-Exilic Books**

**Sermon #1**

Here was your situation:

You were enslaved, in prison, captured, lost

How did you get here?

You rebelled/were disobedient

You went after other gods

You said that what God has for you is not enough.

What is the solution?

You need to first to Repent and then to Return

So that God can

Restore you to him and Rebuild your life.

Who is this story about?

It is about God’s people

It is about Judah

It is about each of us individually

It is about the Church

It is about any individual church

Theme of the post-exilic books: Repent, Return, Restore, Rebuild. Ezekiel and Jeremiah: God came and judged his people for their unfaithfulness. They lost their place in the Promised Land. His wrath has now been filled up. Now God will come to comfort his righteous remnant.

The historical background for the beginning of our class can be found in Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Israel, and later Judah became idolatrous, went after other gods and other nations for their protection and became unfaithful to Jehovah. Jeremiah and Ezekiel are about God’s judgment on his people.

Outline of RRRR:

I. Historical Background: Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and Ezekiel

II. Ezra Part I God Uses Cyrus and Darius

III. Haggai Repent and Rebuild

IV. Zechariah Repent, Return, Restore, Rebuild

V. Esther

VI. Ezra Part II God Uses Artaxerxes

VII. Nehemiah Return and Rebuild

VIII. Malachi Repent and Restore

Historical Background:

722 BC Sennacherib destroys Samaria. Israel taken into captivity

605 BC God begins to judge Judah as well, as prophesied by Jeremiah, through Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael taken as captives/ransom

597 Jehoiachin rebels. Nebuchadnezzar returns, Ezekiel and 10,000 taken as captives to Babylon.

592 Ezekiel receives his commission. Prophesies destruction of Jerusalem.

586 Jerusalem Destroyed 70 years of captivity (Jeremiah 29) begins

538 Cyrus captures Babylon, ends neo-Babylonian Empire (Daniel 5). Cyrus decrees the temple should be rebuilt. (Ezra 1:1-4)

537-536 First wave of remnant returns under Zerubbabel. Temple foundation laid.

520 Zechariah begins to prophesy

518 Darius says: Rebuild the temple! (Ezra 6:1-12) Haggai agrees.

516 Temple is completed (seventy years after Solomon’s temple destroyed)

458 (7th year of Artaxerxes) Ezra returns to Jerusalem, bringing second wave of exiles back. Artaxerxes: Rebuild the city of Jerusalem. (Ezra 7:11-29)

445 (20th year of Artaxerxes) The wall is still not built! Nehemiah returns and the city is built.

Note: Esther and Malachi are not in this timeline, because their timing is indefinite.

Probably Esther was queen under Xerxes, so predates Ezra and Nehemiah.

Malachi is not dated, but it has every appearance of being the “last word” from God to his people before the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4). Perhaps it is about 440 BC.

Lesson #1 Old Testament Context to Post-Exilic prophets and historical books:

As we open: God’s people are in slavery in exile. They are (symbolically) separated from God because of their sin.

This is exactly what God said would happen.

Deuteronomy 28:15 If you do not obey the Lord your God… You will be cursed.

Deuteronomy 28:36-37 You and your king will be taken to a foreign land.

Deut 28:49-57 The Lord will bring a nation against you. Terrible suffering. Cannibalism in Jerusalem.

Summary: Deut 29:22-29.

But….. (thank God for the buts in the Bible)

Deut 30:1-10 This is the theme of the post-exilic books.

**30**When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, **2**and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, **3**then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+30%3A1-7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-5712a)] and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. **4**Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back.**5**He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.**6**The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

All this is found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel (but we will use Jeremiah because we just did Ezekiel)

Jeremiah 2:4-13

v. 5 God: What fault did you find with me? Yet you strayed…

You followed worthless idols and became worthless.

You become as valuable at the things you follow.

God was not enough for you. Like Adam, you wanted more.Are you willing to accept what God gives you?

You (v. 6) and the priests (v. 8) do not ask “Where is the Lord?” I was not sophisticated enough to you. I did not appeal to your fancy. I became quaint to you.

2:11-13 Q: How do we become worthless? Answer: By seeking the blessings of the world rather than the blessings God offers. You exchanged God for worthless idols ($, job, pleasure, comfort, safety, praise of man, )

v. 11 Has a nation ever changed its gods? Even the pagans are at least loyal to their national deities! But not you!

v. 13 Q: Have you “dug your own cisterns”—looked for satisfying water elsewhere than in the living water from God?

Q: What was/has been your cistern?

Jeremiah’s message: 3:14-18 3:22 4:1-4 4:8

Return, Repent

3:14-18 Return and I will choose you. I will bring you back from the northern land and I will make a new covenant.

3:22 Return from backsliding. To backslide is not to leave God. It is to no longer do what you did before (evangelism, prayer, zeal, etc.). Sounds like Rev 2:1-7 Ephesus disciples lost their first love.

4:1-4 What “unplowed ground” do you need to break up? What area in your life have you allowed to become hard and unpenetrable to God’s Words?

The result: Disaster from the North (Babylon) 4:5,6 a lion = Babylon

Jeremiah 7:30-34 The Valley of Slaughter.

But… And this is the message of this sermon series

Ultimately, Jeremiah is a prophet of good news!!!!

Jeremiah 23:1-8 God will gather a remnant and place shepherds over them.

v. 5 a righteous branch. Notice, the Hebrew for branch is *nazer* so when Jesus is called the branch, this is fulfilled in that he is the “branch” of David/Jesse (Isaiah 11:1,10), but also in that he is a Nazarene.

About Matthew 2:23, I will have to say that this one gave me a problem for
several years. I finally figured it out just a few years ago. In the Hebrew, the word Nazareth is *nazaret*,the same as the word branch. It is very interesting that God caused the Messiah, Jesus, to be raised in Nazareth because Nazareth means branch. There are several Old Testament passages which prophesy that the Messiah will be called the branch, which can also be interpreted as Nazarene. It is interesting and wonderful that Jesus was both the branch of Jesse and a Nazarene. This is one of hundreds of amazing pieces of evidence which proves conclusively that the entire Bible is inspired by God. The relevant passages are
Isaiah 11:1,2 Jeremiah 23:5 Zechariah 3:8 and Zechariah 6:12. You should
not be surprised that a Jewish person who r

v. 6 a king. The Lord our Righteousness.

v. 7-8 a double prophecy.

[Jeremiah 25:12-14 70 years Jer 29:10-14 70 years]

Jeremiah 30:1-11a

v. 3 I will restore you.

v. 9 They will serve David their king (Jesus)

v. 10 No matter how far you have wandered, you will return and rebuild.

The six books we will be studying are the fulfillment of these prophecies.

Application for us:

All this is about our relationship with God, as a church and individually. We, too, sinned and went into captivity. We, too, were protected while in captivity. We, too, ultimately repented, returned, were restored and rebuilt. Notice Ezek 36:24-32 is equally (or more so) about us. This story is our story. It is about our relationship with God.

**Historical Introduction: Ezra Ch 1:**

Ezra 1:1-3 – In order to fulfill the prophecies in Jeremiah 25, Jeremiah 29, Jeremiah 23 and 30…

Cyrus says it is time to repent, to return, to be restored to the land and to rebuild my city.

This really happened:

Cyrus Cylinder in British Museum in London -

“I returned the statues of the divine patrons of every land…to their own sanctuaries. When I found their sanctuaries in ruins, I rebuilt them. I also repatriated the people of these lands and rebuilt their houses. Finally, with Marduk’s permission, I allowed statues of the dive patrons of Sumer and Akkad to be returned to their own sanctuaries.”

This was all prophesied!!! When God decides, it happens!

[If time: Isaiah 44:7-8]

Isaiah 44:24-45:7 God says (in 710 BC) I will use Cyrus to do this!

v. 26 Inhabited (return), v. 26 rebuilt, 45:4-5 restored! Cyrus mentioned before Hezekiah died in 698 (159 years before Cyrus captures Babylon)!

Ezra 1:1, 5, 6 - The Lord moved: the king, his people and their neighbors even helped them.

Get the vision!