

Bible Overview: Return From Exile

Return from Exile

Prophets proclaim great promises of restoration:

- A return to the Land
- The building of a New Temple (see Ezekiel's vision of the Temple Ezekiel 40-48)
- A New Obedience to God
- A New Davidic King "In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line, he will do what is just and right in the land, in those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety" Jeremiah 33:15-16

538 The decree of Cyrus

Ezra:

1-6 Rebuilding of the Temple 538 to 515

7-10 Ezra himself returns 458 BC spiritual reconstruction of the people

445 BC Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to rebuild the City

3 prophets:

Haggai and Zechariah encourage rebuilding 520-515 -

Malachi 450

Nehemiah:

The City rebuilt

Fierce opposition – particularly from Sanballat & Tobiah the Ammonite

"Also our enemies said, "before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work" Nehemiah 4:11

Chapter 7 city rebuilt

Chapter 8 Great Revival

Chapter 10 The people promise:

- Not to intermarry "We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the people around us or take their daughters for our sons" 10:30
- Not to trade on the Sabbath "When the neighbouring peoples bring their merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath we will not buy from them" 10:31
- To ensure proper provision for the Temple and temple worship " We assume the responsibility for carrying out the commands to give a third of a shekel each year for the service of the house of our God.... We also assume responsibility for bringing to the house of the Lord each year the firstfruits of our crops and of every fruit tree" 10:35

- “We will not neglect the house of our God” 10:39b

Nehemiah returns again to Jerusalem to discover:

- “In those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples and did not know how to speak the language of Judah” 13:23-24
- “In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys...and they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath” 13:15-16
- “Eliashib the priest had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was closely associated with Tobiah and he had provided him with a large room formerly used to store the grain offerings and incense and temple articles and also the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil..” 13:4-5

Rebuilt Temple but:

“But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy” Ezra 3:12

“Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? Does it not seem to you like nothing?” Haggai 2:3

- The City of Jerusalem has been restored and repopulated but it does not compare to its former glory in the days of David and Solomon
- The people are back in the Land but despite the words of hope from the prophets, they don’t seem to have changed at all.
- There is no King on the throne and they are still under enemy occupation.

Return from Exile: “Is this it?”

Discuss:

John the Baptist:

Luke 3:16-18 (At Jesus' baptism)

"I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear the threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire...."

- Who is John referring to?
- How certain does John appear to be about this?

Luke 7:18-22

"John's disciples told him about all these things. (John is now in prison). Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?"

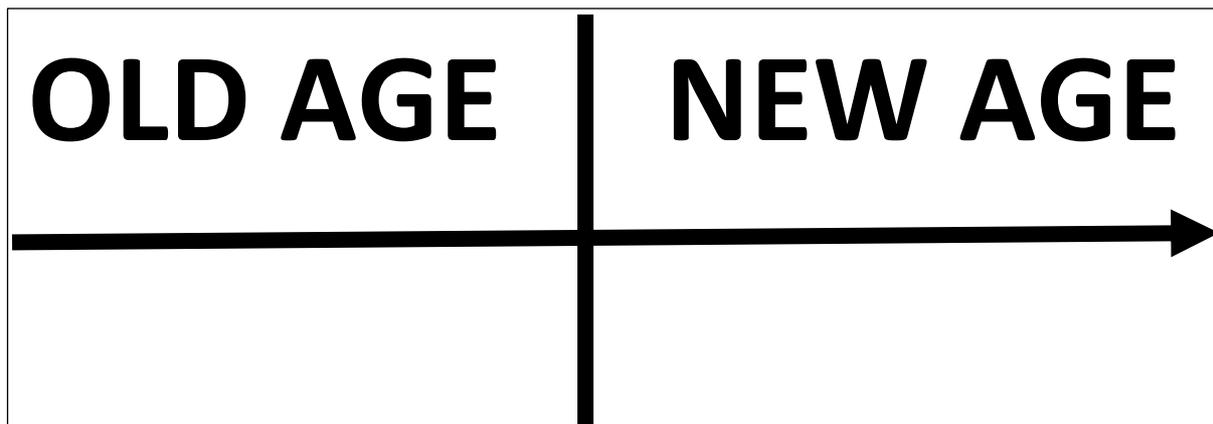
- Why do you think John appears to be having second thoughts or doubting who Jesus is?

"So Jesus replied to the messengers, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard; the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is proclaimed to the poor"

- How does Jesus reply? What is Jesus saying here, do you think?

Jesus & Luke 4:16-21

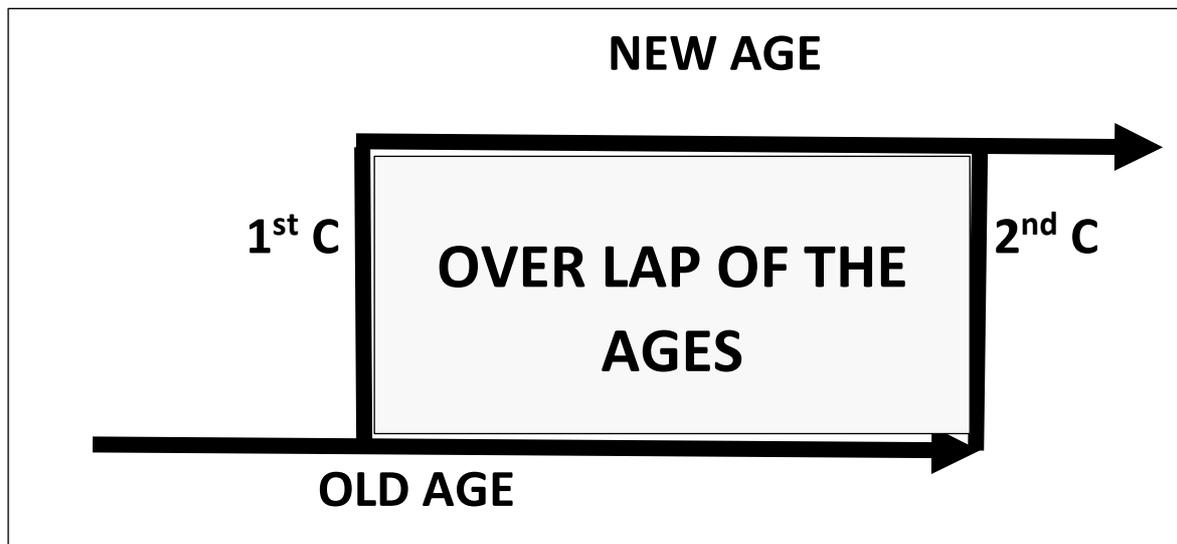
- Where is Jesus reading from?
- When you compare what Jesus reads with the Old Testament passage – what do you notice about what Jesus reads and what he doesn't read? Why might that be?



OLD TESTAMENT VISION OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

Salvation for God's People and Judgment for God's Enemies

- The Messiah would come
- His kingdom of justice, peace and righteousness
- God's people would enjoy the blessings of God freed from their enemies
- God's enemies and the enemies of his people would be decisively and permanently defeated



NEW TESTAMENT VISION OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

What from the distance of the Old Testament appears to be one event, in the New Testament is revealed to be one event but stretched over a long period of time

- Jesus comes first as Saviour to accomplish our redemption
- He will return as Judge "to judge the living and the dead"

Why the delay?

"he is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief" 2 Peter 3:8-10

Matthew 28:18-20

'Overlap of the Ages' = '**Now and the Not Yet**'

What we have **NOW**:

- Forgiveness of sin "we have been justified by faith" Romans 5:1 "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" Romans 8:1
- We are now at peace with God "Since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God" Romans 5:1 – this is not about how we feel – but God's declaration to us that he is now at peace with us
- We were 'dead in sin' but now we are 'alive in Christ, having been saved by grace through faith' Ephesians 2:1-8 – this is an irreversible, eternal. Unchanging reality
- We have been adopted into God's family as his dearly beloved children "See what great love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God and that is what we are" 1 John 3:1
- We have been born again and are now indwelt (permanently) by the Holy Spirit "Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls our 'Abba Father'" Galatians 4:6
- We have 'the first fruits of the Spirit' Romans 8:23
- We are no longer under the slavery of sin, sin is no longer our master "For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law but under grace" Romans 6:14

What we do **NOT YET** have: The Kingdom in all its fulness and the defeat of all our enemies and so:

- We still have bodies that await redemption – so we grow old, get ill, suffer and die "we who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies" Romans 8:23
- Sin is no longer our master, but it is still present in us, we still struggle with the reality of 'indwelling sin' "For I do not do the good I want to do but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing" Romans 7:19
- We still live in a fallen world, filled with suffering, injustice and wickedness

'Look God's dwelling-place is now among the people and he will dwell with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away" Revelation 21:1-4

Like the Israelites after the Exile – we live in the 'now and the not yet'

Two Dangers:

- To expect too much now
- To expect too little now