

Old Testament Survey: 10

Where Was God?

The Exile

The two words 'Exodus' and 'Exile' appear to very similar

- **Exodus** – a mass departure of people
- **Exile** – to expel from ones native land

So what are the differences?

| The Exodus | The Exile |
|--|--|
| God's people want to leave Egypt | God's people want to stay in their land |
| Pharaoh wants them to stay | Their captors want them to leave |
| Their cries to God are heard | Their cries to God are unheard |
| Going to the Promised Land | Leaving the Promised Land |
| Under God's Protection | Outside of God's Protection |
| Under the Blessing (Obedience) | Under the Curse (Disobedience) |
| From slavery and oppression into freedom | From freedom into slavery and oppression |

How could this have happened?

At this very crucial time in their history, God's people may have wondered where God was, maybe even if He was dead.

The book of Lamentations was written around the time of The Exile, it's name is derived from the Hebrew word for 'how' and this is the first word of the first chapter, and is repeated many times. The people of God were asking 'How?', we too often ask these questions when we are facing hard times.

How could this have happened?

How could we have allowed ourselves to get in this situation?

How could God let us down in our time of need or when we need Him most?

Suffering and hard times should direct us to God, not turn us away from Him. It is better for us to fall into the arms of mercy than into judgement. **Don't ever blame God** for problems but **repent** and **turn to Him**.

It was a time of great sadness for the captives in Exile. **Psalm 137** is a song of one of those captives. In it they recall Jerusalem, their homeland and weep because of their sin.

It was a tragic time, the only other event in their history which was worse than this was the Fall. In both cases God's special people rebel against His rule, turn their backs on Him and are exiled from their land. (see [Genesis 3.22-24](#)).

Where Was God? - He was there all the time!

However God hasn't given up on them – He speaks words of deliverance, restoration and blessing through the mouths of the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah, just as He had been doing since the days of Adam. Remember God speaking His word is one of the primary principles of the way He works.

[Jeremiah 29.10-14](#) and [Ezekiel 37.21-22](#) are just a couple of these prophetic utterances.

As part of these prophecies God purposes and plans to raise up a new king for them – from David's family – He will rule His people in righteousness and justice ([Isaiah 11.1-5](#)). [Ezekiel 34.23-24](#); [Ezekiel 37.24](#) tells us that this king would be David, but this cannot be David who replaced Saul as king because he died approx 300 years before Ezekiel's time. So who is this David that Ezekiel talks about? He is the one born from Jesse's stem that Isaiah prophesied about – **JESUS**.

Isaiah also prophesies that He will be a servant like figure who through suffering will bring about forgiveness ([Isaiah 52.13 – 53.12](#)).

During The Exile the prophets encouraged God's people to return to Him in repentance and serve Him. They were to use this time in Exile to learn from their mistakes, very similar to the years spent in the wilderness after leaving Sinai.

The Servant-King

The two figures that we have just seen mentioned – the new King like David and the suffering servant have a key role in establishing the new covenant that God wants to make with His people ([Jeremiah 31.31-34](#); [Ezekiel 36.25-29](#); [Ezekiel 37.23-27](#)). The great thing about God's plan is that JESUS CHRIST fulfils both these roles – He is the Messiah, God's appointed ruler who through suffering the death of the cross serves His people.

*“To you in David's town this day, is born of David's line
A Saviour which is Christ the Lord and this shall be the sign.*

*The heavenly babe you there shall find to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swaddling bands and in a manger laid”*

Nahum Tate ca.1690

As we have already seen the whole of the Old Testament points toward Jesus Christ, He is the fulfilment of all God's promises ([2 Corinthians 1.20](#)) and the patterns the Old Testament reveal about God show us how He will unveil the plan of salvation.

Old Testament Survey: 11

Going Home

Nehemiah

In our first lesson in this series we noted that for the purpose of studying the chronology of the Old Testament, it begins with Creation and ends with Nehemiah.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the final phases of Old Testament history, along with prophets like Zechariah and Malachi. These books describe the resettlement of Israel in their own land after the Exile.

Nehemiah 1.1-4 In these opening verses of the book we find Nehemiah still in captivity. He is a high ranking official serving in the court of King Artaxerxes I (465-424 BC). When Nehemiah hears the news concerning Jerusalem, his homeland, and the destruction of the walls and gates, he is driven to prayer.

In **Chapter 2** we read how he gains authority and blessing from the king to go back to Jerusalem and begin the work of rebuilding the walls and city.

Chapters 3-6 deal with the work of rebuilding the city, it also shows how the people worked together in unity and the opposition that they encountered in the process. We read in **Nehemiah 6.15** that the work was completed in just 52 days.

By the time we get to the end of chapter 7 (**Nehemiah 7.73**) God's people are back in their homeland, each man in his city. God has been faithful to the promise He made to them through the prophets Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel. He had restored them to their own land.

Would they now be faithful to Him?

Things at this time are looking very promising for God's people and Nehemiah sets about making some reforms and re-establishing some Godly principles (**Nehemiah 8.1-18**):

- Reading of the Law
- Worship
- Re-institution of the Feast of Tabernacles (this had not been properly observed since the days of Joshua) - **Nehemiah 8.17**

Israel repent of their sin and make a covenant with God (**Nehemiah 9 & 10**). They promise to be the people that God wants them to be – faithful, obedience to His laws, holy and separated to Him.

After some years Nehemiah returns to Babylon to report to the king all that has happened. He spends a little while with the king before returning back to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 13.1-9. In his absence, the Israelites go back to their old ways. They allow some of their enemies to come and dwell among them, even making an alliance with one of the chief enemies – Tobiah, allowing him to dwell in the house of God. (Tobiah was one of those opposed to the rebuilding of Jerusalem)

Nehemiah 13.10-12 we read that the tithes hadn't been paid and God's house had been neglected.

Nehemiah ends on a very sad note. All the work of rebuilding and establishing God's rule seem to be wasted as Israel failed to be faithful to God despite their covenant with Him. At the end of the book we see Nehemiah praying three times and asking God to remember his faithfulness to Him and asking for mercy and pardon (**Nehemiah 13.14, 22, 31**).

Summary of the Series: Old Testament Survey

- We have seen from Creation through the wilderness years, the Kingdom years up to the end of the exile the **FAITHFULNESS OF GOD**.
- During this time we have also seen how man has been continually **UNFAITHFUL**
- The great tragedy is this: All God ever wanted is to have a people for Himself, with whom He could enjoy fellowship, but they just kept on rejecting Him.
- If God is going to reverse the effects of the Fall, man's sin needs to be dealt with once for all. God's next mark on the pages of history is in the form of JESUS CHRIST. He was born, as the prophets foretold. His death on the cross paid the full price for the atonement of sin and through Him all the promises of God right back to Abraham are fulfilled. Through Jesus there is hope of the Promised Land and fellowship with God.
- Through JESUS man has a completely fresh start (**2 Corinthians 5.17**)
- Through God's spirit our lives are changed so that we actually want to do God's will in a way that the Old Testament people of God could never experience. This doesn't mean that we will never sin or that our obedience will come automatically. Until we are perfected it is going to be a struggle, it's a fight of faith (**1 Timothy 6.11-12**), but we have all the resources we need in Christ to face up to the challenge. If you do fall and sin make sure you do what the Israelites failed to do - **REPENT** and turn to God.