

English Transcript

The Story of the Old Testament

Lesson 9 - The Restoration

We are reaching the end of the story of the Old Testament. Hooray!

We will begin our study of Lesson 9. We will discuss the restoration, the return of God's people from exile back into the land, because God is a promise-keeping God. God will fulfill His promise to build His kingdom. He must get His people back into the land promised to Abraham. God's people would then be living out the purposes of God so that all the nations of the earth could be blessed and begin to see God for who He is, the One True and Living God.

This Lesson is called the Restoration or the Return, and it begins on page 42 of your handout. The time frame for this period runs from 536 BC to 431 BC.

The key Scriptures that support the story are Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

Prophets who wrote during this time were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

This marked the end of the 70 years of exile.

Some of the key players were King Cyrus, while Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah were the three leaders who led God's people back into the land.

The main storyline is that the Jews are restored to the land that God promised to Abraham. They returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 36, we read how God moved the heart of the Persian King Cyrus in verses 22-23

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing: "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up, and may the Lord their God be with them."

The people of Judah who have been in exile, have been given permission to return from exile into their land. When the southern kingdom went into captivity, they went in in three different stages, 605, 597 BC, and 586 BC.

It is very interesting that they returned to the land in three stages as well. At the bottom of the page, there is a chart that outlines this portion of the story of the Old Testament called the Restoration. It's presented in four parts.

Part 1: Ezra 1 to 6. The story of Zerubbabel as the leader of the first group coming back into the land.

Part 2: The gap between Ezra 6 and 7. The story of Esther takes place under King Xerxes back in Persia.

Part 3: Ezra 7 – 10. This is the story of the return of the people to the land of Judah led by Ezra, the priest.

Part 4: Nehemiah. The book of Nehemiah recounts the third return of the people back to the land with the rebuilding of the wall and repopulating of Jerusalem.

Turn to page 43.

The prophet Jeremiah prophesied the return from exile after 70 years. During the exile, Daniel and Ezekiel were used by God to give the people hope. Many believe that also Ezra wrote 1 and 2 Chronicles during the exile.

These writings were intended to remind the people of God that God was still working through the Southern Kingdom. His covenant with King David focused on the One True God and the call for God's people to live for God and make Him known. An one day there would be a king from the tribe of Judah to reign on David's throne forever.

The exiles return in three stages.

Zerubbabel led the first group (Ezra 1 – 6). Zerubbabel's focus was to rebuild the temple.

Ezra, the priest, led the second group (Ezra 7 – 10). Ezra's role was to reform the people and return them to the true worship of God.

Then the entire book of Nehemiah is focused on Nehemiah leading the third group of people back into the promised land. His goal was to rebuild the walls and repopulate the city.

Haggai and Zechariah were the prophets at this time. Their focus was to encourage the people to persevere in the work that God had called them to do by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Through the teaching of the Word of God in Ezra 7 - 10, Ezra brought about a spiritual revival. The Word of God impacted hearts and lead people to confess sin, repent, then change their behavior in a way that was honoring to God. Repentance always precedes revival.

Throughout the Scriptures there is always a desire first to change hearts. We see this in the story of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37. Only God could revive those dry bones. Only God can bring about true revival in His people.

Nehemiah is an amazing story that begins with him receiving a report of the destruction of Jerusalem. The city was destroyed and his heart breaks. He weeps and God placed a vision on his heart. A calling to lead the people back to rebuild the walls and repopulate the city. In just 52 days the walls are rebuilt. Nehemiah faced great opposition from outside and within from his people, yet he persevered. He remained focused. He was strengthened by God to lead the people to complete this important work. God also worked through Ezra and Nehemiah to bring about reforms related to foreign marriages, abuse of the poor, and a return to the proper Sabbath observance.

Malachi was a prophet during the final chapters of the story of the Old Testament. Malachi concluded his writing with a renewing of the Lord's covenant, anticipating the return of the promised King. This was a promise that God made to David stating that on his throne would reign a king from the tribe of Judah in Jerusalem who will reign forever and ever.

This would also fulfill the promise made to Abraham. God was going to make his name great, give him a land and through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. What we see at the end of the Old Testament is that everything God had promised was being restored.

God's people were in God's land. They were restored to loving him, serving him and loving others. They were only waiting for the promised King.

There will not be a king from the tribe of Judah until Jesus returns in Revelation 19. At that time, He will set up His kingdom and reign from Jerusalem for a thousand years. His kingdom will continue into the new heaven and new earth for eternity.

We also discussed Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks looking toward these future times.

On page 44 we see the repetition of the number seven throughout the Old Testament. Seven is meant to be the number of perfection or number of completion in the Bible.

- Every seventh day Israel had a sabbath.
- Every seventh year there would be a sabbatical year of rest.
- Every seven sets of seven years, 49 years, there would be a year of Jubilee.
- Daniel also brings this into his prophecy of the 70 sevens, a period of 490 years.

After this time Jesus will return to set up His kingdom. This sounds like a very special Year of Jubilee. We saw a picture of this in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream back in Daniel chapter 2. The feet of the statue in the dream were made of iron and clay, and this represented a future kingdom, the kingdom of the antichrist that we read about in Revelation and Daniel chapters 9 and 12.

This final seven-year kingdom will be crushed by the rock that was revealed in the dream. This rock is the Lord Jesus. He will come at the end of the seven years of tribulation at the battle of Armageddon. He will defeat Satan and the antichrist. We read this in Revelation 19.

He will put an end to the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. We will discuss this in the story of the New Testament. In Daniel 9:24 we read how Jesus will accomplish a number of things at the conclusion of the 70th week.

“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place.”

God's plan has always been to build His kingdom with Jesus is the eternal king.

God provides new righteousness, not of man but a righteousness that is from God. This comes through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we place our trust in Jesus, we take on His righteousness. We are made righteous and fit to live with God for eternity. We need to have His righteousness because no sin can enter the presence of God.

Malachi 3:1 says,

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.

Malachi, the final prophet in the Old Testament, is giving us a glimpse of what will come at the start of the New Testament. There is a messenger to come who will prepare the way for the Lord. We know this messenger to be John the Baptist.

He is the one who will break the 400 years of silence. This period was called the silent years not because God was not active or present but because there were no prophets speaking and writing for God at that time. In that day promised by Malachi, John the Baptist will prepare the hearts of the people for Jesus as the promised Messiah and King.

Turn with me to Galatians chapter 4:3 - 5.

“So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”

After the 400 years of silence, John the Baptist comes to break the silence. He comes to prepare the way for the Lord at just the right time. At just the right time, God sent the promised Messiah.

This was a Red Thread of Jesus going back to the beginning of the Old Testament story.

In Genesis 3:15, that the Seed of the woman, Jesus, would crush the head of Satan.

The Father sent His Son, Jesus, to be the Savior of the world at just the right time.

As we started this course, I asked you who you to list some of the most important people in the Old Testament. We listed people such as Abraham, Moses, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, and King David.

Then I said that Jesus is the key person in the Old Testament. There is a Red Thread of Jesus running through every book of the Bible.

In Luke 24:44 Jesus shared this with his disciples after his resurrection.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Then Jesus opened their minds and he revealed and explained the scriptures to them. Jesus was claiming that everything written in the Old Testament pointed to him.

There was enough in the Old Testament to help people see that God had promised the Savior. At just the right time Jesus fulfilled this promise, first through His incarnation and then through his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and ultimately in His future return. Through these final stages of the Old Testament, God gave his people a glimpse of the geopolitical future and the greater kingdom to come.

He did it through the prophet Daniel who not only saw angelic warriors doing battle on behalf of God's people, but who also saw successive empires giving way to an everlasting kingdom. That was a picture of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Zechariah saw visions of God's current work among the returning people to rebuild the Temple, but he also saw a hostile world one day surrounding Jerusalem. He foresaw the battle of Armageddon with the world coming against the Messiah. He also saw God defending His land and establishing everlasting peace and prosperity among His people.

Malachi saw a need for correction of current attitudes and actions of the Jewish people but he also saw God suddenly coming to His Temple one day and sending a messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah.

Ezekiel and Daniel saw Jesus as the Son of man.

Zechariah saw him as a shepherding king riding on a donkey.

Malachi saw him as Son of righteousness with healing in his wings.

Following the end of the Old Testament, the 400 silent years would be a period of divine silence. This is how the story of the Old Testament ends. God's people are in God's land living out God's purposes, but they are waiting for the promised King to come.

I encourage you to continue with the story of the New Testament so that you will be able to understand and summarize the story of the Bible in your own words.

There are two more recordings that I'll ask you to listen to. The first is a summary of the tools in your Appendix. I want to make sure you understand what is in your handout that can help you as you study and prepare to tell the Old Testament story.

The final audio is a 15-minute summary of the Old Testament. I will ask you to develop your own summary as well.

The next step in the learning process is to go back and review this handout. Review the scriptures. And use the tools provided in the Appendix to synthesize the story into your own words.

You'll be amazed at how easy it will be to tell the story, share the gospel, and point people to Jesus.

The Red Threads of Jesus will become so clear as the Old Testament comes alive. You will have an even greater understanding of the New Testament. You will see that the Bible is really one story about the kingdom of God with Jesus as the King. I look forward to these final last two recordings summarizing all the tools in your appendix as well as a short summary telling the story of the Old Testament.

God bless.