

Ezra and Nehemiah: Restoration

(Ezra 1 and Nehemiah 8v1-12)

If you've read the previous chapters and been following the 'storyline' of the Old Testament its about to get slightly complicated. This might be a good point to look at the list of books usually found inside the front cover of the Bible.

In the Old Testament the first 17 from Genesis – Esther are historical accounts from ancient times up to about 400BC. The next 5 from Job – Song of Solomon are a variety of 'wisdom literature'. The remainder are the writings of pre-Christian Jewish preachers known as the 'prophets'. They ministered God's messages of warning and promise through the years of Israel's kingdom, downfall, exile in Babylon and repatriation. While prophetic books Isaiah to Malachi come later in the order of Old Testament books they relate to the historical period covered by the earlier books of 1st and 2nd Kings – Esther.

So...

Prophets such as Isaiah and Amos warn that if God's people persist in breaking His commandments He will let them be conquered by enemies Assyria and Babylon. This is what happens as recorded in the historical books (2 Kings 17 and 2 Chronicles 36v11-21).

However while prophets Daniel and Ezekiel express the sorrow of Israel's 'glory departed' and life in exile in Babylon, they also learn to trust that God is in control far from home, globally in fact, that He does not forget His promises or His people and after a time of humbling the people are given to return, in stages between 538 and 445BC, and rebuild their homeland.

This is what Ezra and Nehemiah are about, rebuilding a broken city and a broken people. Ezra was a priest and scripture teacher, Nehemiah was a governor and 'works manager'. Under their leadership, Jerusalem and its people were renewed with outward fortifications of stone and inward wisdom from a revived attention to God's Word.

Insodoing they are preparing the way for the New Testament, the coming of the Lord Jesus and the kingdom of God that will last forever.

