

## The New Testament as an End-of-Exile Story (part 1 of 2)

### I. The context of the NT

- YHWH swore to uphold his promises to Abraham and David (Gen 12; 17; 22; 2 Sam 7).
- Yet, the people sinned and were punished by exile.
  - Definition of “exile”: the presence of God’s wrath and the absence of the blessings promised to Abraham and David.
  - Removal from the land is one of example of God’s wrath, but just one piece. (Hence a bigger use of the word “exile”)
- The prophets explain:
  1. Why Israel is exiled: judgment for sin
  2. How Israel still has a future: God’s gracious restoration.
  3. How Israel can get from judgment to restoration: repentance. (Deut 30:3; Jer 3:12–14)
- Ezra-Nehemiah: exile continues!
  - Insufficient repentance of Israel (e.g., Neh 13): **BIG PROBLEM:** repentance is the way out of exile, but *Israel cannot repent!*
  - Therefore, still under wrath: they are only “adding to the wrath on Israel” by their sin (Neh 13:18)
  - But the restoration is still coming! God gives pledges of his steadfastness, but be ready for something very different (hence God dims the audio-visual aids, giving a smaller Exodus, a smaller temple, a less glorious son of David, etc.)
  - In sum: the return in Ezra-Nehemiah is “a little reviving in our bondage” (Ezr 9:8); Daniel 9: exile will be *long*.
- Second Temple period: more exile.
  - One major empire oppressing them after another.
  - Multiple defilements of the most holy place.
  - Prayers like this: “Gather together our scattered people, set free those who are slaves among the Gentiles, look on those who are rejected and despised, and let the Gentiles know that you are our God. Punish those who oppress and are insolent with pride. Plant your people in your holy place, as Moses promised.” (2 Macc 1:27–29)

### II. Jesus comes

#### A. The scene: exile

- Matt 1:1–17: the genealogy’s last phase is exile, with Jesus born at the end.
- The people are still trying to repent sufficiently, coming to John the Baptist (Matt 3)
- Matt 15:43: Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- Jesus has come to “an evil and adulterous generation” (Matt 12:39), an “unbelieving and perverted generation” (Matt 17:17).
- Only after Jesus will the people see the fulfillment of Daniel 7: the Son of Man coming in the clouds, triumphing over the powers of darkness (Mark 14:62).
- “Nobody in Jesus’ day would have claimed that the visions of Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel had been fulfilled. The Babylons of this world had not been defeated, and Israel was not free” (N.T. Wright).

### B. The motive: why Jesus came

- Nehemiah 9 reiterated the history of Israel, showing how at every point, it was God's *compassion* which brought them out of bondage to sin and its consequences.
- In the same way, the OT said that YHWH's *compassion* is the great turning point that brings his people out of exile. (Deut 4:31; 30:3; 32:36; Hos 2:23; 11:8; Mic 7:18–19; Isa 54:7–8; 60:10; Ps 79:8; 102:13; etc.) (See appendix to this handout.)
- Jesus came because of the great swelling of the tender compassion of our God (Luke 1:78; Matt 9:36)

## III. Jesus brings exile to an end

### A. Jesus completes the suffering and punishment of Israel

- He drinks the cup of God's wrath to the bottom (Matt 26:39; cf. Jer 25)
- As the suffering servant, he carried our sorrows and bore our griefs (1 Pet 2:24; cf. Isa 52:13–53:12)
- He was the true paschal lamb whose blood causes God's wrath to "pass over" his people (John 1:29; Rev 5:9; cf. Exod 12:13).

### B. Jesus is the truly penitent Israel!

- As the true Israel, he undertakes the baptism of *repentance* for the forgiveness of sins (Matt 3:11) to fulfill all righteousness (Matt 3:15)
- Although never himself a sinner, Jesus fulfills Deut 30:1–3 by turning to God fully (with all his heart and soul!) in his time of testing in the wilderness (Matt 4) all the way up to his final hours in Gethsemane and even on the cross itself.
- There on the cross, he prays for our forgiveness on our behalf! (Luke 23:34)

Conclusion: The cross is the ultimate expression of God's wrath. The exile (i.e., the presence of God's wrath) comes to a decisive end when Jesus breathes his last upon the cross! The repentance of Israel has been accomplished by their substitute!

## IV. Jesus inaugurates the resurrection

Everything that the prophets say the restoration would involve, Jesus brings:

### A. Victory and liberty: by Jesus' death

1. Ultimate defeat of all God's enemies in a climactic battle.
  - a. The demons and Satan: "the strong man" has been bound! (Matt 12:29)
  - b. The Sadducees who ran the temple are associated with the "beast" and therefore on a level with Antiochus IV; Jesus' crucifixion will seal their doom, along with the whole international coalition against him (Ps 2:1–2; Mark 3:6; 14:13; Luke 23:12; Acts 4:27; cf. 70 AD).
2. A new exodus out of bondage into the promised land.
  - a. Luke 9:31: Moses and Elijah speak of Jesus' "exodus" (literally!)
  - b. Jesus provides mana in the wilderness (feeding 5,000)
  - c. Jesus heals; just as the Lord is healer in the Exodus (Exod 15:26)
  - d. He leads us out of bondage and into newness of life (Rom 6:4–6; Rev 18:4)
  - e. The great sign of judgment, though, is reserved for himself (the sign of Jonah, Matt 12:39)!

- f. He is the rock which is struck, issuing in life for his people (John 19:34; Exod 17)
3. The forgiveness of sins! (Jer 31:34; Matt 26:28)

**B. End-times ultimate blessings: by Jesus' resurrection**

1. YHWH has returned to Zion: i.e., the resurrected Son of God has ascended to his throne in the heavenly Jerusalem (Acts 2:34–36).
2. God's people are reconciled to him. The "divorce" of exile (cf. Jer 3) is now ended in a new marriage with a resurrected Son and his resurrected virgin bride. A "new covenant" (Jer 31:31–34) has arrived (Luke 22:20; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 9:15)!
3. God's people are reunited: northern and southern kingdoms; even *all nations!* (It began with 12 disciples, representing the 12 tribes.)
4. We are now the people who are under God's covenant blessings (this is the point of the ninefold "Blessed" in Matt 5:3–11)
5. The son of David now reigns on his throne forever (Luke 1:32; Acts 13:33).
6. The end-times temple has been founded and is being built. God has ordained a new and everlasting priesthood. (1 Pet 2:4–6)
7. The people of God have ascended with Christ and have entered into the end-times "land": the new creation (Eph 2:6; Heb 12:22).
8. The "Torah" (i.e., God's teaching) has gone forth from Zion to all the earth (Isa 2:3; Matt 28:18–20)
9. The Spirit has been poured out on the people of God, and the people of God have been circumcised with a circumcision of the heart, not made by hands, but by the Spirit, and we are now enabled to obey from the heart (Deut 30:6; Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:26; Rom 2:28–29; Col 2:11).
10. True worship in Spirit and in truth has been established in the heavenly Jerusalem, into which we enter each Lord's day (John 4:24; Heb 12:22–24).

Jesus' death maps onto exile; his resurrection maps onto restoration:

"Restoration" = the Kingdom of God = new heavens and new earth = eternal life  
= Christ and all his benefits.

**Conclusion:** the entire NT is an end-of-exile, beginning-of-restoration story! We are now living in the new phase promised by the prophets.

## Appendix. YHWH's compassion and the end of exile

Note: in the quotes below, the Hebrew or Greek word is not always translated "compassion", but the word group is the same throughout.

### Yahweh's key character description text centers around compassion

Exod 34:6-7 The LORD, the LORD God, **compassionate** and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth (quoted in Neh 9:17)

### Yahweh's compassion as the turning point, bringing Israel out of exile

Deu 4:31 For the LORD your God is a **compassionate** God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

Deu 30:3 [When you repent,] then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have **compassion** on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.

Deu 32:36 For the LORD will vindicate His people, And will have **compassion** on His servants, When He sees that their strength is gone, And there is none remaining, bond or free.

Hos 2:23 [To the northern kingdom which has been sent away:] I will also have **compassion** on her who had not obtained **compassion**, And I will say to those who were not My people, "You are My people!" And they will say, "You are my God!"

Hosea 11:8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within Me, All My **compassions** are kindled. (See Jer 31:20)

Mic 7:18-19 He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have **compassion** on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.

Isa 54:7-8 "For a brief moment I forsook you, But with great **compassion** I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have **compassion** on you," Says the LORD your Redeemer.

Isa 60:10 Foreigners will build up your walls, And their kings will minister to you; For in My wrath I struck you, And in My favor I have had **compassion** on you. (See Isa 49:13)

Ps 79:8 Do not remember the iniquities of our forefathers against us; Let Your **compassion** come quickly to meet us, For we are brought very low.

Ps 102:13 You will arise and have **compassion** on Zion; For it is time to be gracious to her, For the appointed time has come.

Jer 12:15 And it will come about that after I have uprooted them, I will again have **compassion** on them; and I will bring them back, each one to his inheritance and each one to his land. (see 30:18)

Lam 3:22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His **compassions** never fail.

Lam 3:32 For if He causes grief, Then He will have **compassion** According to His abundant lovingkindness.

Neh 9:17, 19, 27, 28, 31 God's **compassion** cited six times as the key turning point in Israel's history

Dan 9:18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great **compassion**.

Zech 1:12 O LORD of hosts, how long will You have no **compassion** for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant these seventy years?

Zech 1:16 Therefore thus says the LORD, "I will return to Jerusalem with **compassion**; My house will be built in it," declares the LORD of hosts, "and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem."

Zech 10:6 I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph, And I will bring them back, Because I have had **compassion** on them; And they will be as though I had not rejected them, For I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.

2 Chr 30:9 For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and your sons will find compassion before those who led them captive and will return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and **compassionate**, and will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him.

### The climactic manifestation of God's compassion in Jesus Christ

Luke 1:78 [John the Baptist will carry out his ministry] Because of the **tender mercy** of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us

Luke 15:20 So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt **compassion** for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

Matt 9:36 Seeing the people, He felt **compassion** for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.

Matt 14:14 When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt **compassion** for them and healed their sick.

Matt 15:32 And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel **compassion** for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat . . . "

Matt 20:34 Moved with **compassion**, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

See Mk 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; Lk 7.13

### Our response

Luke 6:36 Be **merciful**, just as your Father is **merciful**.

Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the **mercies** of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

2 Cor 1:4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of **mercies** and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Phil 1:8 For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the **affection** of Christ Jesus.