

**SCE Seminar:**  
**The Message of the**  
**Post-Exilic Books**

**23 January 2021**



# Purpose

Overview of Ezra,  
Nehemiah (8-10),  
Haggai, Zechariah,  
Malachi



# Format

Part 1 – Background, Ezra 1-6,  
Haggai, Zechariah

Q&A

Break

Part 2 – Ezra 7-10, Nehemiah 8-  
10, Malachi

Q&A





**Message**

**Return**

**Rebuild**

**Reconsecrate**



# **Background to the Post-exilic Restoration**



# What and When was the Exile?

Exile of the Northern Kingdom, Israel (722 BC)

Exile of the Southern Kingdom, Judah

- Wave 1 – King Jehoiachin and 10000 exiled, temple treasures seized (598 BC, 2 Kgs. 24:11–16)
- Wave 2 – Walls and temple of Jerusalem destroyed, chief priest and officers executed (597 BC, 2 Kings 24:20- 25:17)
- Wave 3 – Third deportation after Gedaliah is assassinated (c.f. 2 Kings 25:22-26)

# Why did the Exile take place?

After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time—if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and arousing his anger, I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed. **The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you.** There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell. (Deut. 4:25-28)

# Why did the Exile take place?

Writhe in agony, Daughter Zion,  
like a woman in labor,  
for now **you must leave the city**  
to camp in the open field.  
You will go to Babylon;  
there you will be rescued.  
There the LORD will redeem you  
out of the hand of your enemies. (Micah 4:10)

Therefore, thus says the Lord:  
“Your wife shall become a prostitute in the city,  
and your sons and your daughters shall fall by  
the sword,  
and your land shall be parcelled out by line;  
you yourself shall die in an unclean land,  
and **Israel shall surely go into exile** away from  
its land.” (Amos 7:17)

For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,  
like a great lion to Judah.  
I will tear them to pieces and go away;  
**I will carry them off**, with no one to rescue  
them. (Hosea 5:14)

Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” declares the LORD, “and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. **I will completely destroy them** and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. **This whole country will become a desolate wasteland**, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jeremiah 25:8-11)



# What was the effect of the Exile?

How **deserted** lies the city,  
once so full of people!  
How like a widow is she,  
who once was great among the nations!  
She who was queen among the provinces  
has now become a **slave**.  
**Bitterly she weeps** at night,  
tears are on her cheeks.  
Among all her lovers  
there is **no one to comfort her**.  
All her friends have **betrayed** her;  
they have become her enemies. (Lamentations 1:1-2)

# What was the effect of the Exile?

“This disaster was the death of the nation. Far from recording an evolutionary spiral of steady progress from Moses to Christ, the Bible presents a high point of revelation at the time of the exodus, followed by a decline which the occasional reformation was powerless to reverse. The whole tragic story could be summed up in the sequence: chosen, privileged, presumptuous, rebellious. **The defeat and captivity of the two kingdoms was a divine judgment, from which the nation would never recover.**” (Joyce Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary)

# What was the effect of the Exile?

Why do you always **forget** us?

Why do you **forsake** us so long?

Restore us to yourself, LORD, that we may return;  
renew our days as of old

unless you have **utterly rejected** us

and are **angry with us beyond measure.**

(Lamentation 5:20-22)

# Why was the return from Exile anticipated?

This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and **fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place**. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “**plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future**. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and **I will listen to you**. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. **I will be found by you**,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.” (Jeremiah 29:10-14)



# Why was the return from Exile anticipated?

Leave Babylon,

flee from the Babylonians!

Announce this with shouts of joy  
and proclaim it.

Send it out to the ends of the earth;

say, “The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob.”

(Isaiah 48:20)

# Post-Exilic Books

Narratives: Ezra,  
Nehemiah

Prophetic books: Haggai,  
Zechariah, Malachi



Persian Kings	Dates of Their Reigns (B.C.)	Biblical Events	Scripture References	Dates (B.C.)
Cyrus	559–530	Edict of Cyrus for the return	Ezra 1:1–4	538
		First return of 49,897 exiles, under Zerubbabel (to build the temple)	Ezra 2	538
		The altar and the temple foundation is built	Ezra 3:1–13	536
		Opposition to the rebuilding	Ezra 4:1-5	
Cambyses	530–522			
Smerdis	522			
Darius I	521–486	Haggai prophecies	Ezra 5:1	520
			Book of Haggai	
		Zechariah prophecies	Ezra 5:1	520–518
			Book of Zechariah	
		The temple is completed and dedicated	Ezra 6:13-22	515
Xerxes	485–465	Accusation against Judah	Ezra 4:6	486
Artaxerxes I	464–424	Artaxerxes stops the rebuilding of Jerusalem	Ezra 4:7–23	ca. 464–458
		Second return of 4,000–5,000 exiles, under Ezra (to beautify the temple and reform the people)	Ezra 7–10	458
		Third return of exiles, under Nehemiah (to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem)	Book of Nehemiah	445
		Nehemiah’s second return	Nehemiah 13:6	ca. 430
		Malachi prophecies	Book of Malachi	450–430 (?)

**Key Characters,  
Message, Outline,  
Themes of Ezra 1-6,  
Haggai, Zechariah**





# Key Characters

## Zerubbabel

- Grandson of King Jehoiachin, son of Shealtiel, and also an ancestor of Jesus through the Davidic line (Matthew 1:12-13).
- Likely to have led the first wave of returnees from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 7:7).
- Governor of Judah who oversaw the rebuilding of the temple, from the laying of its foundations (Ezra 3), to its restart and eventual completion (Haggai 1:12-14, Ezra 6:14-15).
- Fuelled Messianic hopes, especially when prophets Haggai and Zechariah invested him with messianic glory (Hag. 2:21-23, Zech. 3:8; 6:12–13).

# Key Characters

## Haggai

- Not much is known. He is simply introduced as “the prophet” (Ezra 5:1, 6:14, Hag 1:1).
- A young child who returned from Babylon in 538BC? (name not included in Ezra 2) An old man at the time of his ministry who had seen the first temple before its destruction (c.f. Haggai 2:3)?
- A priest because in the LXX, Psalm 145-148 are attributed to Haggai and Zechariah?
- Prophesied within a space of fifteen weeks during the second year of Darius I (521–486 BC), from the first day of the sixth month to the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the ninth month of Darius’ reign.

# Message and Outline

## Haggai

- Message: **prioritize God and his work in rebuilding the temple**. Then you will not experience the hardships you have been experiencing. Then you will participate in the glorious future that God is bringing to pass.
- Four Speeches:
  1. First speech challenges the people to rebuild the house of God. (1:2-11)
  2. Second speech encourages the people to build the temple for it would be filled with even more glory than the former house. (1:15b-2:9)
  3. Third speech warns of the need for purity in worship. (2:10-2:19)
  4. Fourth speech speaks of a Messianic age to come when God's kingdom will be established. (2:20-23)

# Key Characters

## Zechariah

- a prophet, identified as “son of Berechiah, son of Iddo” (Zech. 1:1, 1:7), possibly from the priestly family of Iddo, listed in Nehemiah 12:4.
- Prophesied at the same time as Haggai, beginning in the eighth month of the second year of the reign of Darius I (1:1) till at least the fourth day of the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius (7:1).
- Encouraged the rebuilding of the temple by inspiring them to do it as an act of faith, pointing them to the future blessings that would accompany the completion of the temple.



# Message and Outline

## Zechariah

- Message: **place your hope in the God who will remember his promises to his people**, to dwell with them, to give them prosperity and peace, to build up Jerusalem, and to install a divine king who would rule over the nations
- Outline:
  1. Introduction: A Call to Return to the Lord (1:1-6)
  2. Eight Visions of Encouragement (1:7-6:15)
  3. Four Sermons on Fasting (7:1-8:23)
  4. Two Oracles of the Messianic Kingdom (9:1-14:21)

# Major Themes

## Temple

- Dwelling place of God, where God's glory was manifested (1 Kgs 8:10, 2 Chr. 7:1-2), the site from which God ruled, where worship of God was carried out. Temple was in many ways the centre of Israel's national existence.
- Rebuilding the temple would:
  - Prove that God was indeed still with them (Hag. 1:14, 2:4)
  - Prove that Zerubbabel was God's chosen instrument and that God had indeed renewed his covenant with them (Zech. 4:6-10)
  - Serve to remind them that God still loved and chose them (c.f. Zech. 1:14, 2:12).
  - Point to the coming of a Messianic age (Hag. 2:6-9), and of a Messiah who would unite the role of priest and king (Zech. 6:9-15)
  - Announce to the nations that Yahweh had not gone out of existence when Judah was exiled, but was present and able to protect his people (Zech. 9:8, c.f. Ezek. 37:28).

# Major Themes

## God's Sovereignty

- God oversees the affairs of the world, and uses even foreign kings and powers, to fulfil his purposes.
- “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” (Ezra 1:1).
- Allowed for King Darius to re-decree that the rebuilding of the temple is to take place (Ezra 6).
- Moved King Artaxerxes to act favorably towards Ezra and Nehemiah so that they would be given permission to return to Jerusalem, teach people the law, beautify the temple and rebuild the wall (Ezra 7, Nehemiah 2).
- “the gracious hand of God” (Ezra, 7:9, 8:18, 8:22, Nehemiah 2:8, 2:18).

# Major Themes

## The Coming King and Kingdom

- Expectation of some promised superhuman ruler, one in the line of David, who would rule over the nations. (c.f. 2 Sam. 23:5, Psalm 2, 45, 72)
- Revived when Zerubbabel was given leadership in the community (Hag 2:23, Zech. 4:14), along with Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3:8, 6:12).
- A humble and lowly king (Zech. 9:9-10), rejected (Zech. 11:8), pierced and killed (Zech. 12:10). Yet, he opens the way of forgiveness and cleansing (Zech. 13:1, 9).
- From the New Testament, we see that only Jesus Christ brings together these various strands of prophecies concerning Judah's king.

*The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. (Zech 14:9).*

# **Contemporary Significance and Pastoral Implications**



# Is there hope for me?

“The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. Therefore tell the people: This is what the LORD Almighty says: **‘Return to me,’ declares the LORD Almighty, ‘and I will return to you.’** (Zech. 1:2-3).



# God's part or the people's part?

“...I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and **I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God.**”

This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Now hear these words, **‘Let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built.’**

(Zech. 8:8-9).

# **What will we choose to build?**

“Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” (Haggai 1:4).

**Q & A**



**SCE Seminar:**  
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**Post-Exilic Books**

**Part 2**



**Key Characters,  
Message, Themes  
of Ezra 7-10,  
Nehemiah 8-10,  
Malachi**



# Key Characters

## Ezra

- In 458 B.C., Ezra returned to Jerusalem to beautify the temple and enliven the worship life of the community. He was also sent to teach the Jews the Law of God (Ezra 7:13-26). Along with Ezra came around 4000-5000 people from Babylon (Ezra 8).
- A priest, credited with re-establishing the law in Israel after the exile. “Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.” (Ezra 7:10)
- A strong personality, convinced that the only way to return to God was by taking the law seriously and applying it to every aspect of life (c.f. Ezra 9).
- In Nehemiah 8-10, Ezra again read the book of the Law. As a result, they reinstituted feasts and festivals (Neh. 8), confessed their sins (Neh. 9), and reconsecrated themselves to God (Neh. 10).

# Key Characters

## Nehemiah

- Returned in 445 B.C. to oversee the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls and gates. Nehemiah also appointed key officials for the city and repopulated Jerusalem (Neh. 1-7)
- A gifted leader, excellent administrator, and man of prayer (Neh. 1:4-11, 2:4). Nehemiah was also very zealous for the laws of God to be kept (Neh. 13).
- Ezra and Nehemiah's work left its mark on history. Because the post-exilic community persevered, God's redemptive plan through the Jewish people could continue.



# Key Characters

## Malachi

- Means “my messenger”. Not much known about him.
- In terms of dating, general consensus is that Malachi belongs to the same period as Ezra and Nehemiah.
- Malachi’s concerns: failure of the priests to serve the people wholeheartedly, the people’s apathy and faithlessness towards God.
- Message: **Renew your covenant with the Lord** by practicing God-honouring worship, loyalty to marriage covenants, faithful handling of material possessions. Do this on the basis of God’s love for you (1:2), your covenant unity with God and one another (2:10), and the hope of a coming day of judgment and blessing (3:16–4:3).

# Message and Outline

## Malachi

- Marked by a series of 6 speeches, most of which are disputation speeches consisting of a thesis, a counter-thesis, and a dispute:

Speech 1 — 1:2-5	God's love
Speech 2 — 1:6-2:9	Unfaithful priests
Speech 3 — 2:10-16	Divorce
Speech 4 — 2:17-3:5	Divine justice
Speech 5 — 3:6-12	Tithes
Speech 6 — 3:13-4:3	Day of judgment
Appendix 1—4:4	Observe the Law
Appendix 2—4:5-6	Coming of Elijah

# Major Themes

Main Question from Ezra 1-6, Haggai, Zechariah

**Who is God and what is He doing?**

Main Question from Ezra 1-6, Haggai, Zechariah

**What does it mean to be a covenant community? What sets God's people apart?**

# Major Themes

## Continuity, Identity, Purity

- Continuity between the post-exilic and pre-exilic Jewish community important as it means God will continue his redemptive activity through them.
- Demonstrated was through feasts and festivals (Ezra 6:19–22, Neh. 8). These feasts celebrate God's great saving acts in the Exodus.
- Recounting events of the past and especially God's covenant with his people.(Ezra 9:6–15; Neh. 1:5–11; Neh. 9:5–37)
- Post-exilic Israel less a monarchy and more as a covenant community.
- Greater need to preserve their distinctive identity and keep themselves pure.
- Strong emphasis on separation from any form of defilement or syncretism with non-Jews. Unchecked assimilation would have meant the end of the community.

# Major Themes

## Scripture, Prayer, Worship

- Moral laxity and spiritual apathy happen when the law is not being taught and obeyed. But when people take the Word seriously, renewal and revival takes place. (Ezra 3:2–4; 6:18; Neh. 8:14–15, Ezra 9:4, 10:3 – the people “trembled at the words of the God of Israel” and “fear(ed) the commands of God”).
- Prayer is a central feature of the covenant community (Ezra 9, Neh. 1, 9). The work of rebuilding and reforming the people was soaked in prayer (Ezra 8:21, Neh. 1:4, 2:). “Remember me” (Neh. 5:19; 13:14, 22, 31).
- Corporate worship is also central to the identity of the post-exilic community in Ezra-Nehemiah. Great detail is given when describing temple activity and personnel (Ezra 3:10–13; 6:16–22; Neh. 12:27–43, Neh. 11:17, 23; 12:8–9, Neh. 11:15–24).

# Major Themes

## Social Ethics

- Being part of a covenant community means not just relating rightly to God but others.
- “God’s plan of redemption did not just involve the rescue of individuals and their transport to heaven. Rather, it involved the formation and redemption of a community through which God would bring global blessing and reverse the curse of Babel. This is why “so much of [the Old Testament’s] ethical thrust is necessarily social.” (Taylor & Celenden, Haggai, Malachi, New American Commentary).
- Social concerns taken very seriously:
  - Wealthy Jews charging interest to less wealthy Jews (Neh. 5)
  - People not taking care of the Levites, such that the Levites to farm for their own food (Neh. 13:10)
  - Unfaithfulness in marriage (Mal 2:13-16)
  - Defrauding labourers of their wages, oppressing widows and the fatherless, depriving foreigners of justice (Mal. 3:5)

# **Contemporary Significance and Pastoral Implications**





**Centrality of Word and Prayer**

**Practicality of worship**

**Purity**

**God uses different ones to build his church**

**Q & A**

