

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

### I. Already: Jesus has ended our exile; restoration has begun

- By our union with Christ, we now enter into the restoration realities he himself has begun to enjoy in his resurrection!
- A sampling of these benefits (the left column is derived from last week’s class):

<b>What Christ achieved</b>	<b>Who we are <i>now</i> in union with him</b>
Decisively defeated our enemies—Satan, sin, and death	We are more than conquerors (Rom 8:37)
Atoned for our sin on the cross; was declared righteous in his resurrection	Our sins are forgiven and we are righteous (Jer 31:33; Col 2:13–14). We are reconciled to God (Rom 5:10).
Broke our bondage and led us out in a new Exodus	We are no longer slaves of sin, but now have the freedom of being able to obey God (John 8:36; Rom 6:18; Gal 5:1)
Reunited Jew and Gentile in himself	We are now one with God’s people, having been reconciled to one another (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:14–15; Col 3:11).
Absorbed the curse of exile in himself; entered end-times heavenly blessing.	We are now under God’s covenant blessings, not under his covenant curses (Gal 3:10, 13).
Is seated on God’s throne, ruling as David’s son.	We now reign together with him (Eph 2:6; Rev 20:4).
Founded the end-times temple	As living stones, we are joined to Jesus the cornerstone in a living temple (Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:5).
Ordained as high priest; inaugurated end-times worship.	We are ordained as priests through the Spirit and through baptism, and participate in this perfect worship, offering ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1; 1 Pet 2:5).
Commissioned the Great Commission. (In addition to Isa 2:1–4, see the use of “preach the gospel” in Isa 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1)	We are now spreading the gospel of the kingdom (Acts 8:4; Phil 2:15).
Entered the end-times “land” of the new creation.	We are there with him (Eph 2:6; Heb 12:22).
Received the Spirit to the uttermost.	We have had the Spirit poured out on us (Acts 2; Rom 5:5; 8:9, 15).
Was circumcised on the cross.	We now are circumcised in our hearts (Rom 2:29; Col 2:11).

- In sum, the restoration prophesied by the prophets has arrived in Jesus and we are now enjoying its blessings!
  - 1 Pet 2:9–10 SHOUTS end of exile realities! “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness

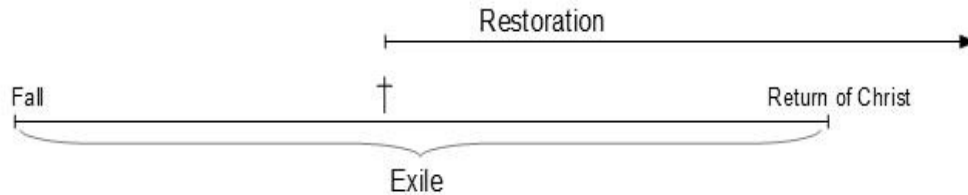
[darkness as a metaphor for exile] into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

- N.T. Wright: when Christians use “kingdom” language and say that the kingdom has arrived in Jesus, we are not abandoning the Jewish story, but rather we are saying that we are “living in its long-awaited new phase.”

## II. But not yet: exile continues; Jesus has yet to consummate the restoration

- We are truly unified to Christ, but our union is not yet complete. We still are living in the old creation, with old creation bodies and with hearts that have not yet been perfected in holiness.
- Therefore, exile does still continue. The restoration has not yet been consummated. (We should expect this if we understood Dan 9, that we are living in the last half-week of the Seventy Weeks.)
  - We are called exiles in the NT: Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 1:1, 17; 2:11. For example, 1 Pet 2:11: “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and *exiles* to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.”
  - Experiences of exile:
    - To be at home in our bodies means we are away from the Lord (2 Cor 5:6, 8). We long to see Jesus (1 Pet 3:8). We are pilgrims on our way to Zion (Heb 4:11). Our present location is (spiritually speaking) “Babylon” (1 Pet 5:13).
    - Our bodies break down (2 Cor 4:16); things in this old creation fall apart and are subject to futility (Rom 8:20)
    - We are assaulted by sinful desires and fears all day every day (1 Pet 2:11).
    - Our enemy, the devil, prowls and seeks to devour us (1 Pet 5:8).
    - We are aliens among the people of this world, citizens of a heavenly country (Phil 3:20), living in a land that is not our own, having no share with the people of this world (2 Cor 6:14–16). This leads to estrangement, even in our own households (Matt 10:36–37; 1 Pet 3:1–6).
    - Our glory is hidden to this world; we are considered the scum of the earth (1 Cor 4:13). The people of this world malign us (1 Pet 4:4) and persecute us (2 Tim 3:12).
    - Until our death, we are to take up our cross (share in his “exile”) and follow Jesus (Matt 16:24).
- The restoration has arrived, but it is also future:
  - Peter says “heaven must receive [Jesus] until the period of *restoration* of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time” (Acts 3:21).
  - We are awaiting a savior from heaven (Phil 3:20; 1 Pet 1:5).
  - We await Jesus coming to lift us up together with him.
  - We have yet to judge the world with Jesus (Matt 19:28 [“new world” in this passage = the restoration kingdom]).
  - We continue to sin and have not yet attained to perfect holiness.
  - The end-times temple is not yet complete.

- Our worship at the heavenly Zion is sporadic (once per week), not uninterrupted. We are present with Christ only in our spirits, not in the body.



- Both are true: restoration has begun, but exile continues.
- HOWEVER: our exile is not the same as the exile experienced in Ezra-Nehemiah's day. Our *exile has been transformed by the work of Christ and the arrival of the restoration*:
  - Now, we suffer not because we are cursed, but because we are blessed! The wrath of God is no longer upon us (Ezr 9:15; Neh 13:18 vs. Rom 8:1!)
  - We suffer not because of our sin *precisely because* we are suffering as exiles in union with Christ. Now our sufferings come not because of our disobedience but in response to our *obedience*. Hence 1 Peter insists that we suffer *only* for obedience! (1 Pet 2:20; 3:17)
  - Our sufferings together with Christ are part of our present glory! 1 Pet 4:14: "If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of *glory* and of God rests upon you."
  - Even in our sufferings we are rejoicing "with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Pet 1:6, 8). Indeed, we rejoice *because of our sufferings!* "To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation" (1 Pet 4:13; Matt 5:11-12)
  - Our sufferings are the path not to shame but to glory: Jesus left us "an example for you to follow in His steps" (2:21). We are to "humble [ourselves] under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt [us] at the proper time" (1 Pet 5:6).

### III. The transition from "not yet" to "already": repentance

- Even now, our exile is abating and our restoration is becoming more and more a present reality. Just as Jesus' "repentance" (turning to God in his exilic sufferings) on our behalf was the decisive gateway to glory, so our repentance continues to usher in end-times restoration realities.
- Every time a sinner repents for the first time:
  - The kingdom grows; another exiled person has been gathered to the people of God; a slave to sin has had their heart circumcised, their sins forgiven; the Spirit is poured out; etc. ← All restoration realities!
- Every time a Christian repents:
  - Our holiness increases; our witness becomes more consistent; the glory of Christ shines brighter; our joy increases; etc. ← All restoration realities!
- Ultimately, the repentance of the church is the last thing needed for the savior to return: "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away,

in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you” (Acts 3:19–20).

- Every act of repentance is a gift of God. Hence even as Peter calls us to repent, he reminds us that “God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you *by turning* every one of you from your wicked ways” (Acts 3:26).
  - This is the decisive change that overcomes the inability of the people in Ezra-Nehemiah to repent! The gift of the Spirit! The circumcision of the heart by the Servant!

#### IV. Conclusion

- We are living in the overlap of the ages: exile and restoration overlap in this present time.
- Are we exiles? Yes and no. Yes, in that we share the sufferings of Christ. No, in that we are no longer alienated from God, suffering for our sins.
- What does this mean for us?
- We are *exiles*:
  1. We should consider ourselves exiles: dead to this present world with its passing lusts (Gal 6:14; Phil 3:8; Col 2:20).
  2. We should expect suffering as basic and fundamental to our identity as co-sufferers with Christ, not being thrown off by it as though something strange were happening to us (1 Pet 4:12).
  3. We should no longer think that if we suffer it’s because God is angry with us. Rather, we are blessed! (Matt 5:11–12; 1 Pet 3:14; 4:14)
- We are *restored*:
  1. We should rejoice at the incomparable blessings showered on us through the new Exodus. We are living in the epic final period of God’s great story!
  2. We should consider ourselves truly forgiven, truly treasured, truly transformed by Spirit, truly free from sin. We should live as though these things are true even if we don’t always feel like it.
- Repentance is the way forward:
  1. We should get serious about calling all people to repent and join the new Exodus toward Zion while there is yet time.
  2. We should get serious about our own repentance, giving no provision for the flesh.
- Finally, we should read the whole Bible as an end-of-exile story, a story about Christ bringing us from exile unto restoration through repentance. It’s what the Bible is all about!