

Return From Exile

10 "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious." 11 It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. 12 He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:10-12).

Context

Who, What, Where, When, and Why?

Who: The prophet Isaiah to the people of Judah and Israel. He began his ministry around 740 BC and continued until around 701 BC. By the time of his ministry Israel has been divided for many years, into two kingdoms in northern kingdom of Israel in the southern kingdom of Judah.

What: A prophecy about the Messiah recalling the people to the land, bringing them out of exile along with an influx of Gentiles. It seems the return of the people is not just physical but a spiritual return to pure worship of Yahweh.

Where: The prophecy was delivered in the southern kingdom of Judah. The subjects of the prophecy, the people are called from many nation to return to the land of Israel

When: From the perspective of Isaiah and his original audience, this is in the future.

Why: The people had continually strayed from the time of their Exodus from Egypt to the days of the kings and even after the return from the Babylonian exile. They needed to return.

Content

What was the original author concerned with and what did he want his original audience to understand? Furthermore, how would the original audience interpret it?

Isaiah's original audience would have recognized this as a Messianic prophesy but would not know when it would take place. They would have probably thought about a military exercise to place Israel at the forefront of nations.

The first century readers (some 70 years after it was written), would hope to see the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in their lifetime. We see evidence of that hope in the popular literature of the first century devout Jew.

Isaiah's original audience would know nothing about the Babylonian exile and Israel's exile was probably not yet complete. To their way of thinking, the Exodus from Egypt was the "first time" and the "second time" was yet to be revealed.

Many first century readers would have believed the return from Babylon had not fulfilled the terms of the prophecy. According to Isaiah, the exiles returned from the four corners of the earth. That circumstance fits the first century experience. Thus the general hope for a messianic intervention to restore the fortunes of God's people.

Consideration

What are the principles found here and how do they apply to the modern Christian?

Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled by Jesus the Christ in the first century. Moreover, Jesus was the fulfillment of the hopes of devout Jews – even though many did not accept him. The long cherished hope of return from exile was fulfilled in Jesus. A state of affairs we enjoy today. Christ has taken us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

Jesus was lifted up and drew all men to himself. The standard of the Gospel – Jesus death on the cross for our sins and the inauguration of the new world in the resurrection of Jesus – continues to draw men, women and children out of exile and into relationship with the Father in Jesus.

Study Questions

- 1. Roughly when did Isaiah originally deliver this prophecy?*
- 2. What evidence do we have first century devout Jews were hoping for a return from exile?*
- 3. What is the difference between fulfillment of prophecy and the filling up of prophecy?*