

## **HOW ISRAEL'S STORY ILLUSTRATES OUR OWN, PART 2**

Deuteronomy 30:1-6; Ezekiel 36:26-28

### **QUICK RECAP FROM LAST WEEK**

### **ON THE OTHER SIDE OF EXILE: ISRAEL'S SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION**

What happened during the 400 year intermission between the Old and New Testaments?

- The Old Testament writings, including the Psalms, were collected and canonized.
- The writings of the prophets were collected, canonized and studied.
- Israel's hopeless obsession with idols was replaced a hard-nosed adherence to monotheism.
- Judaism officially became Israel's national religion.
- In addition to the temple, synagogues were built all over the Mediterranean world wherever there was a population of Jews, for the purpose of learning God's Word and for worship.
- There was a rise of new religious leaders: Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees

*"In short, exile represents the death of Israel. In losing her land, Israel apparently also loses her identity, history, and covenant relationship with Yahweh. Restoration from exile, then, is a resurrection from death to life."* —Dr. Kenneth J. Turner, "The Death of Death in the Death of Israel"

### **ISRAEL'S (AND OUR) NEED FOR A SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROCESS**

*"Spiritual formation is the a process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others."*  
—Robert Mulholland

### **THE PLACE AND ROLE OF EXILE IN OUR LIVES TODAY**

*"We want—even expect—our journeys to run more smoothly. Yet we each have our own history of regrets and failures. Every one of us would be tempted, if we could, to erase from our history some of our painful and sinful experiences. But the wonderful truth of the Gospel is that Jesus not only forgives our sins and heals our wounds, but He REDEEMS them. "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Our ability to know the love of God and to share that love with others is uniquely greater BECAUSE of our brokenness and woundedness . . . We are conformed into the image of Christ, even in the uniqueness of our sin experience. What a wonderful and amazing Lord we have." [emphasis mine]*  
—Thomas Ashbrook, "Mansions of the Heart"

Deuteronomy 30:1-6

*“And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you<sup>2</sup> and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul,<sup>3</sup> then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you . . .<sup>6</sup> And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”*

Ezekiel 36:26-28

*“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.<sup>28</sup> You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”*

### **SOME QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DEVOTION:**

1. When you visit a new shopping mall and wish to find a particular store, it's common for to look for the kiosk showing the floorplan of the mall. Once you find the kiosk, you look up the store and then what? The big red dot that says, “You are here.” Think of an example of where you are today in relation to the place you want to be.
2. Now using the story of Israel as a spiritual road map, what part of Israel's journey can you relate with? 1. Are you walking in faith (like Abraham) in obedience to God's promise? 2. Do you feel in bondage and crying to God for deliverance? 3. Do you sense that God has “opened up the sea” after being trapped for a long time? 3. Do you feel as if you're walking aimlessly in the wilderness? 4. Are you trying to occupy the land God had promised with mixed results? 5. Do you feel you're in exile? 6. Do you find yourself on the other side of exile? What part of Israel's journey do you most identify and why?
3. For Israel, the exile needed to be part of her spiritual journey so that her heart would be humbled to follow the Lord. What areas have you suffered loss and found yourself turning to God as a result of it?