



Sunday Evenings at St Mary's, Portchester (Autumn 2020)

## “Returning from Exile”

Drawing inspiration, challenge and comfort from those who have been here before.

### No. 3 “Restoring the fortunes of Zion”

*“When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter.” (Psalm 126:1)*

#### Introduction

- Relief at the end of lockdown – but not a joyous national celebration
- But in a sense the exiles are returning home.
- Does Israel’s story have parallels for us today? Have we been here before?

#### The Babylonian Captivity

- Faith kept alive – but changes in ‘the way we do church’:

Before the Exile	During the Exile
Temple	Synagogue
Priests	Rabbis and Scribes
Sacrifices	Psalms, Prayers, Teaching
Oral tradition	Written scriptures

- Hope kept alive: The Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel)
    - Things are going to get better
    - The dream of returning to the land, the restoration of the Davidic monarchy
    - The message of judgment and doom, followed by
    - The promise of restoration.
  - In the meantime – exiles, strangers, not at home here, hold the things of the world lightly. ((Romans 12:1; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11; Mat 6:19-21)
  - Isaiah: Oracles concerning Babylon (13 & 14; 46-47); Moab (15-16); Damascus (17) Egypt (19), Tyre (23) Assyria (37), but a great future for Israel.
  - Jeremiah: Prophecy of the Babylonians laying siege to cities of Judah (33) but the restoration of Israel; foretold that the captivity would last 70 years (29:10; 2 Chron 36:17-23)
- Daniel (9:1-2) knew of this prophecy in Babylon, as did Ezra (Ezra 1:1)

#### Three empires in Mesopotamia: Assyria, Babylon and Mede-Persia

- Existed between the 8<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC
- Mesopotamia: “the land between two rivers: Euphrates and Tigris) Today’s Iraq, but also in wider sense: Iran, Syria, Levant,
- The Garden of Eden?; Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9); Abraham called from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 15:7)
- Problems with names and dates.
- Assyria. (2 Kings 16 -19; 2 Chron 21; Isaiah 20)
- Babylon (2 Chron 36; Jer 43:10; Jer 46:1-12 Battle of Carchemish; Nahum 2; Daniel 1-9)
  - Saddam Hussain as the new Nebuchadnezzar and revival of Babylon, 1985. (Isaiah 13:19-20; Jeremiah 50:39)