



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. 6 Prophets of the Return:
Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.**

Introduction

- The last three books of the Old Testament, but their historical context is Ezra and Nehemiah.
- Haggai and Zechariah were part of the earliest returns under Zerubbabel
- Malachi ministered later but as a contemporary of Nehemiah.
- The New Testament idea of the foundational ministries Ephesians 4:11, and the ‘team ministry’ of Nehemiah (Apostle), Ezra (Teacher) Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (Prophet).
- Yet the church will always be incomplete and immature, ‘a work in progress’ until the return of Jesus to perfect and complete. (Ephesians 5:27).
- The darkest hour is before the dawn when ‘the sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings.’ (Malachi 4:2)

The foundations of the Temple laid

- Sheshbazzar led the first return (Ezra 5:13-16) The son of King Jehoiakin who with his family was taken captive to Babylon, yet treated well there. (2 Kings 25:27-30)
- Succeeded as Governor of Judah by his nephew, Zerubbabel, also of the blood line of King David and an ancestor of Joseph, Mary and Jesus (Matthew 1:12 & Luke 3:27).

Disillusionment: prophecies not fulfilled

- The prophecies of Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Isaiah of a great future for Judah on return from exile. (Isaiah 45:13-17; 51:11-16; 52:1-10; 60:1-22; 62:1-12; Ezekiel 37)
- They built an altar and sacrificed, even before the foundations of the temple were laid (Ezra 3:1-7)
- Most of the Jews did not return to Judah (Zechariah 2:6-7)
- There was no flowing of the Gentiles into Jerusalem
- There was no conversion of King Cyrus or any other pagan king
- The conditions in Judah were of economic hardship, famine, crop failure (Haggai 1:9-11; 2:15-17)
- No walls to protect them and opposition and discouragement from their neighbours.
- The people more concerned with their own homes than with God’s temple.
- They cried to God for intervention (Zech 1:12) while others began to doubt his power.

Haggai

- His name means ‘Festival’ ; the second year of Darius I (520BC)
- Mentioned in Ezra 5:1; Ezra 6:14; Zech 8:9
- His main focus – in fact his only message – ‘rebuild the temple’ which had commenced with the foundations 18 years previous.
- Indifference to worship and wrong priorities.