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# VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

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## LECTURE 21: RESTORATION

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**The John Knox Institute**  
of Higher Education

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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# *Module*

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## **BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**

**30 LECTURES**

***ROBERT D. McCURLEY M.Div.***

**21 CHAPTERS OLD TESTAMENT · 9 CHAPTERS NEW TESTAMENT**

### *Old Testament Lectures:*

1. Introduction
2. Creation
3. Fall
4. Noah
5. Abraham
6. Patriarchs I
7. Patriarchs II
8. Exodus
9. Sinai
10. Tabernacle
11. Sacrifices
12. Priesthood
13. Inheritance
14. David
15. Psalms
16. Solomon
17. Temple
18. Kingdom
19. Prophets
20. Exile
- 21. Restoration**

### *New Testament Lectures:*

22. Incarnation
23. Atonement
24. Resurrection
25. Pentecost
26. Church
27. Union
28. Application
29. Mission
30. Glory

# Lecture 21

## RESTORATION

### *Lecture Theme:*

God promises of deliverance endure to the very end and train his Old Testament people to yet hope in the even greater promises to be fulfilled in the coming of the promised Messiah.

### *Text:*

“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:16–18).

## TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 21

Few things compare to the experience of coming home, especially after having been gone for a long period. Familiar sights, sounds, and smells greet you on your arrival. We find comfort in what is familiar to us, and nothing is more familiar than home itself. Even following the route that takes you home conveys a sense of joy. You recognize old landmarks and familiar scenes. You're heading back to where you belong. Many of the Jewish exiles died in Babylon. Some of them decided to stay, having grown accustomed to their pagan surroundings. Some were born in Babylon and were going to see Jerusalem for the first time, not in its glory, mind you, but in crumpled ruins. But, some of the older Jews would be returning to what they left. It would have brought them joy but a joy mixed with sorrow because it was not what they once knew. But certainly, joy was dominant. You can read Psalm 126 and imagine them singing it on their trek and arrival home. Psalm 126:1–2 say, “When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.”

How does the timing of the return from exile relate to God's word of prophecy? Who were the main leaders in this return and what prophets continued to bring God's Word to His people? What ongoing sins persisted after the return? What theological truths do we glean from Nehemiah's call to biblical reformation? What function does the Sabbath have at the end of the Old Testament, and what does that teach us about its permanent relevance? What do we learn about the new covenant in the Old Testament prophecies? As we conclude our study of this Old Testament period, what have we learned about the points of continuity and discontinuity between the Old Testament and New Testament? In this lecture, we will have completed 21 lessons on the Old Testament. We began with the account of Eden before the fall, and the Old Testament history ends with what we might call the second Exodus, the Jews' deliverance and return from Babylonian exile. This history is recorded in places like the

end of II Chronicles and Esther and especially Ezra and Nehemiah. God's prophetic word during this time can be found in books such as Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

First of all, let's give some consideration to what we learned about the history of this period. God had foretold through the prophecy of Jeremiah that the Jews would spend 70 long years in Babylonian captivity. Those who paid close attention to God's Word knew this, and Daniel was such a man. We read in Daniel 9:2, "In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish 70 years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Well, as Daniel saw the end of the time in Babylon coming to a conclusion, he was motivated to pray for God to do what He promised. You remember Solomon's prayer of dedication at the temple way back? He prayed in I Kings 8:33-34, "When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house: then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers." Daniel's prayer is built upon all of this, and really the prayer of Daniel 9 is one of the model prayers of the Bible. It is filled primarily with the confession of sin, sin being the cause behind their exile from the land of promise. Daniel does not seem to have lived to experience the return himself, but God's promise came to pass.

The Jews, which is the southern kingdom, returned from captivity in three successive waves. First of all, the first group returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. This begins where II Kings and II Chronicles end. The second group returned under Ezra, a scribe and a priest. The book of Esther probably describes a situation just prior to this second return, this second group returning. The Bible describes the good hand of God upon them and the enduring validity and fulfillment of God's promises. This time of renewal also brought fresh demands of humility and return to God's law, as you see in Ezra. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah provide God's Word to His people during this period. The third wave of return took place under Nehemiah with Malachi prophesying around this time. Under Nehemiah's leadership, God brought about the last Old Testament reformation, providing another pattern of restoration and renewal.

Considering the whole flow of redemptive history, what was one of God's primary purposes for bringing His people back from captivity into the land? The answer is the Lord brought the Jews back from exile and preserved the kingdom so that the path to the coming Messiah would remain open. The great King would arise from Judah as promised centuries earlier. God was keeping His promises.

Secondly, we need to consider the theology of this period, some points of theology. God in His providence is steering the whole course of history to serve His primary purpose with His people and the unfolding of His redemption, as we saw in the last lecture. So, the Lord raised up Cyrus, king of the leading world superpower, to issue an edict enabling the Jews to return to Judea. God refers to Cyrus as His servant and as the one appointed to accomplish His purposes. The same could be said for Artaxerxes in the days of Nehemiah. They actually lent their political support to advancing the good of Zion. While they were pagan rulers, what they did served God's will. The office of kings, as we have learned previously, exists to serve the Lord first and foremost and to uphold God's law under God's authority. We learn in Proverbs 21:1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." God is directing the course of history for the good of His people.

Secondly, God had judged His people and destroyed Jerusalem and removed His people from the promised land, further rebellion against God, defying His law and breaking His covenant; but we discover upon their return that those same sins persisted in the hearts and lives of His people. They reverted to their old patterns. Notice that now at the end of the Old Testament we see many of the same sins that we discovered at the beginning of the Old Testament. Significant space, for example in Ezra, is devoted to His dealing with their sin of intermarrying with the heathen, those outside God's covenant. We first saw this all the way back in Genesis 6. We've seen warnings about it several times since then. We're also told that they returned to corrupt worship and desecrated God's Sabbath.

All of this stemmed from a disobedient heart of unbelief accompanied by all sorts of sins that came as a result. Malachi reveals that their outward form of religion was twisted, perverted, and without the fear of the Lord, and it was evidenced by sorcerers, adulterers, false swearers, and oppressors of the stranger, fatherless, and widows. We see that in Malachi 3. Remember, before exile Jeremiah provided another clear list of these sort of second table sins in chapter 7:8-9, and that list comes immediately following a passage that graphically depicts

their spiritual adultery. Under Nehemiah, we see the last Old Testament reformation. I will not repeat what we learned in the last lecture, but you can trace the same exact pattern here. It began with the reading of the law, resulted in the conviction of sin, repentance, separation from the world, and the recovery of God's pure worship. Nehemiah calls them back to God's covenant, the pure worship of God, and to obedience to God's law, but I want to focus our attention on the role of the Sabbath as one example within this context.

We read about in and in Nehemiah and especially chapter 13 verses 15 and following. We read of the Jews buying and selling food, commercial transactions, on the Sabbath and permitting outsiders, non-Israelites, to do the same. Nehemiah confronted the leaders, the nobles, and he imposed strict enforcement as a magistrate of Sabbath keeping in and all around Jerusalem. Why was he so vehement about the Sabbath? Well, we read in Nehemiah 13:18 this, "Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath." Sabbath desecration was a cause for their previous judgment in exile. This is important for understanding the theology of the Bible because it connects the beginning and the end of the Old Testament and sets the precedent for continuity in the New Testament.

As you'll recall, the Sabbath was established as a creation ordinance in Genesis 2:2-3. This preceded the fall and had relevance apart from sin and redemption. The Sabbath belongs in the same category as marriage, work, [and] procreation, and can be no more abrogated than they are. The Sabbath is built in the very structure of the universe. We have accounts of God's stipulating the importance of the Sabbath prior to the giving of the Mosaic covenant in Sinai. One example is Exodus 16:22-30. There was no interruption in the flow of Sabbath observance from the time of Adam to the ratification of Sabbath observance in the 10 Commandments. The Sabbath was of course embedded in the 10 Commandments. It's the fourth commandment as you see in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5. These commands are moral in nature and are a continuing standard for all time as a reflection of God's character. Jesus affirmed this in Matthew 5:17-19. This standard regulates the conduct of all nations and all peoples and all time.

Failing to set apart one day in seven is as sinful as stealing, committing, adultery, or the violation of any of the other commands of God. You'll remember that in the Old Testament, the penalty for desecrating the Sabbath under the theocracy of Israel was capital punishment. We see that in Exodus 35 and Numbers 15. This established irrefutably the importance of keeping the Sabbath to Jehovah. Can you think of anything that merited capital punishment in the Old Testament that is not considered sin in the New Testament? It should be fixed in our minds that the Lord does not take lightly violations of His moral law.

The prophets raised the same concern. We read in Isaiah 58:13-14, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." God requires people to cease from their ordinary work and recreation in order to devote the whole day to public and private worship, the exercise of the soul in fellowship with God. This is accompanied by works of necessity and mercy as Christ taught. While Jesus confronts the perversions of the Pharisees' distortion of the Sabbath, He upholds its original standard. That standard continues to the present day. When we read Nehemiah, we are reminded that spiritual declension will be found wherever the Sabbath is desecrated, and biblical reformation will always include its recovery. I've highlighted one particular item to demonstrate the relevance of the theological truths gleaned from this period of history.

Thirdly, we need to go on to see how this final stage, this final period of the history of the Old Testament, points us forward because the final segment of Old Testament redemptive history promotes within us a sense of expectation. The inadequacies of the second Exodus, the return from exile, demonstrate that something more is needed. God's last word to Israel in the Old Testament of course is found in Malachi. We read at the end of that book in chapter 4 verse 2, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." We can see the expectation here. God then says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (verse 5). As you turn the page over into the New Testament, you see this fulfilled almost 400 years later in the ministry of John the Baptist as the forerunner preparing the way for Christ. We also need to say something about the references to the new covenant in the Old Testament

As we draw our studies of the Old Testament to a close and as we prepare to turn our attention to the New Testament, we should consider what the era of the prophets, as a whole, contributed to God's revelation about the coming new covenant, which is referred to as an everlasting covenant. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and some of the minor prophets provide several key texts about the new covenant. The difference between the Old Testament old covenant and new covenant is not one of substance but of administration.

Well, we can only consider a few themes, but one important text is Jeremiah 31:31–34. It's in part important because it is cited in the New Testament in Hebrews chapter 8. When you read that textual, you will note first of all the continuity between what is described as the new covenant with the former covenants. So, it speaks of the same people, Israel and Judah, uses that language, speaks of the same law, a law which is now put into their heart, and the same promise that we learned long ago in our studies, the very core of the covenant, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," and so immediately you see the continuity and connections. But, it will bring new blessings that God once again initiates. He will apply His law internally in their hearts. He will provide increased knowledge of Himself. He will grant definitive, full forgiveness of sins, no longer in Old Testament symbols.

Paul in II Corinthians 3 shows that the comparatively greater glory of the new covenant will surpass the glory of the old. Hebrews 8 through 10, which speaks a lot about the new covenant, grounds this in the superiority of Christ's ministry as mediator. Christ, of course, ratifies the new covenant in blood for the remission of sins. We see this in the descriptions in the four Gospels of Christ establishing the Lord's Supper. We see the same language in I Corinthians 11. Likewise, Ezekiel 36:25–27 promises cleansing, to sprinkle His people with clean water, and it promises a new heart and God's Spirit that would be put within His people, enabling them to walk in His statutes. We'll discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in new covenant when we come to the lecture on Pentecost. But for now, we recognize that it is important for us to begin with what the Old Testament foretells about the coming new covenant. We'll see it even more fully and clearly when we turn to the New Testament itself.

Lastly, as we prepare for consideration of the New Testament, it may be helpful to pause and summarize some of the points we have learned about the continuity and discontinuity between the Old Testament and New Testament as a whole because these two things must be held together as we've seen all the way through these lectures. You cannot rightly understand the New Testament without a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament, upon which the New Testament is built. Likewise, you must interpret the Old Testament in light of its fulfillment in the New Testament.

First all, we'll consider points of continuity, sameness, and connection. As we've seen throughout this course, the Bible primarily emphasizes the continuity of the Old and New Testament. We've seen this in the one covenant of grace that stretches from Genesis 3:15 and gradually unfolds and expands through the covenant with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and now into the new covenant. All the way through, God proclaims the same basic promise, "I will be your God and you shall be my people." Both the Old and New Testaments reveal the same God: A God Who is unchanging.

To draw a contrast between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament would be a destructive error which heretics of the past have taught over and over. No, He is the same unchanging God in both Old and New Testaments. Both the Old and New Testament also revealed the same Savior. The Old Testament points forward to Christ through types and shadows and ceremonies. The New Testament unveils His person and work in the full glory of His coming. The Old Testament and New Testament also set forth the same gospel of grace. Contemporary Gentile believers are saved by faith in Christ just as Abraham was redeemed. God does not have multiple plans for salvation throughout biblical history. He unfolds one single grand plan for redeeming His people after the fall. The Old Testament is therefore full of gospel content.

The Old and New Testaments also represent one people of God, one church, under two different administrations. In the New Testament, the church of course is greatly expanded through the influx of Gentile believers as had been promised all through the Old Testament. The moral law of God, the 10 Commandments, also remains the same for all people and all ages as the revelation of the character of God and of His divine will and standard of right and wrong. All of these points of continuity reinforce the fact that the whole Bible is the Christian Scriptures, and we must study and understand this whole Bible revelation of God and His redemption.

Well, secondly, discontinuity. We've also noted various points of discontinuity in our study of the Old Testament. There are several differences between the two testaments and between the administration of the covenant,

the Covenant of Grace, in the Old and New Testaments. This should not surprise us. The Old Testament foretells, and the New Testament fulfills. Points of discontinuity would include, first of all, the removal of Old Testament ceremonial laws, institutions and regulations. The New Testament set aside the ceremonial worship of sacrifice, altars, priests, and so on, along with the rituals of purification and the ceremonies of clean and unclean prohibitions. The significance of the promised land as well is also replaced with the realities it symbolized. As Paul says, we must not return to the shadows when we stand in the presence of the person that they pictured. To do so would be an affront to Christ and would undermine His finished work.

Another difference includes the important place of kingdom expansion, which I mentioned briefly. The Old Testament did not exclude Gentiles altogether, and think of people like Rahab, Ruth, Uriah, and several others; but proportionately fewer Gentiles were enfolded in the covenant and Old Testament church. And here's why: the Old Testament was primarily a "come and see" model, if you will. God set Canaan, generally, and Jerusalem, in particular, as a light to the nations. Some outsiders would be attracted to come and learn about Jehovah and receive His salvation. So, the Old Testament was primarily a "come and see" model, but the New Testament issues a commission to "go and tell" (Matthew 28:19). See the difference? The gospel is now taken to the nations beginning in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The mission focuses on expanding Christ's kingdom universally, not locally in Israel. The recipients of these covenant promises will include people from every tribe and tongue throughout the whole world. The Gentile nations are to be disciplined and added to Christ's inheritance. Now, we realize because of our studies of the Old Testament this mission to the Gentile world of course was predicted all through the Old Testament from the early chapters of Genesis onward, but it comes to fruition under the New Testament. As we will see in future lectures.

A last category of discontinuity relates to the greater degrees of blessing in the New Testament, derived from the finished work of Christ. A greater measure of the fullness of the Spirit is given at Pentecost. We have more direct and immediate communion with God without the aid of earthly priests. We have an increased assurance and heightened power in sanctification, and we could list many other examples under the same category. So, while there is primarily a dominant continuity that hold the Old and New Testaments together as one Bible, we also need to be very conscious and careful about these points of discontinuity, the differences between the Old and New Testament, that we have learned in our studies.

In conclusion, we have now completed our last lecture on the history and theology of the Old Testament. This last period of the Old Testament leaves us, if you will, straining to see the promised Christ coming over the horizon. In the next lecture, we will turn our attention to the New Testament and begin our consideration of some of the theological themes that God revealed in the culmination of the Bible's history of redemption.