EXILED FROM THE LAND… FOREVER?

Series: Israel or Palestine? Thinking Biblically About the Land of Israel

Selected Scriptures

In the last message in this series, we talked about how Israel was **scattered**. Jews in the northern ten tribes were exiled to Assyria in 722 BC. Jews in the southern 2 tribes were exiled to Babylon in 586 BC. But was this exile permanent, and why not? Another question might be, Is their dispersion all over the world permanent today? There are Jews all over the world today. Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, Uganda, Morrocco, India, China, Thailand, Chile, Argentina. They are called Diaspora (or "dispersed") Jews. That's what we're going to talk about today as we continue to work our way chronologically through Scripture, focusing on key truths relating to Israel and the land with the goal of **thinking biblically** about it all.

I remind us that we're studying this because of the situation going on in Israel right now and the number of questions I've received from young and old. Many Christians, and rightly so, want to know how to think about the modern state of Israel and the Jewish people and the battle for the land today. The Bible gives us the answers. Israel is a major subject in the Bible. Most of the Bible is about Israel or God's interactions with them so it's hard to understand your Bible without understanding Israel. If you want to understand the Bible storyline, you have to pay attention to Israel. When you do, you gain tremendous insight into the state of the world today because events recorded in the Bible have shaped the world situation today.

By way of review, we have established that God promised the land to Abraham (the first Jew) and his descendants forever. God defined the land as the soil that Abraham walked on. God confirmed that promise with a unilateral, unconditional covenant. God chose this land because the nation of Israel that would come through Abraham would be given the Law and have a global influence on the world there. Then we asked the question, If God promised the land to the Jewish people, why do they rarely dwell securely in the land? Why is there never any peace in the Middle East or for Israel? One reason is that there is ancient spiritual animosity between Abraham's descendants over the promised land and who is the heir of the promise. The second reason is that the land always belongs to the Jews, but disobedience brings exile from it. Upon entering the Mosaic Covenant, a bilateral and conditional covenant, Israel understood that keeping that covenant would bring guaranteed blessings, but breaking that covenant would bring guaranteed cursing. If they obeyed, they would be established in the land. If they disobeyed, they would be scattered/exiled from it.

And as we saw last time when we studied the conquest and settlement of the land, Israel disobeyed fairly quickly. They did not keep the Law, but worshiped the "gods" of the Canaanites, becoming *even worse* than the Canaanites who inhabited the land before them! Thus, the theocratic kingdom of Israel came to an end: God's shekinah **glory presence departed** from the temple Solomon built (Ezek. 8-11); the land was laid waste/**made desolate**—*"like a wilderness"* or *"cities which are not inhabited"* (Jer. 22:5-7); and having an active ruler on the **throne of David** ended (Jer. 17:5; 22:2, 4, 30). **Jeremiah 22:29-30** says, *"O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord!" Thus says the*

Lord, 'Write this man [speaking of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah] *down childless* [consider him childless (though he wasn't)]*, a man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah."* Obviously, the Davidic line didn't end completely because Christ comes through that line, but the self-autonomous rule ended. From this point on they would be ruled by Gentile powers as Daniel speaks of and as Jesus dubbed "the times of the Gentiles" (Lk 21:24) which according to Jesus lasts until His return. He said, *"Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* The "times of the Gentiles" is not a positive statement about the mostly Gentile Church. It's a negative one about Gentile nations ruling over them while the kingdom of Israel is dissolved and Jerusalem is controlled by her enemies like Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome—or anyone who comes after them.

But the kingdom of Israel falls and it's a sad story. The good news is that God doesn't just crush Israel and reject them forever. He is a covenant keeping God. He disciplines but doesn't destroy them (Jer. 30:11). As we've learned, the <u>observable</u> and <u>patternable</u> divine program of God for Israel is that even though they are **dispersed,** God **preserves, restores,** and **reconciles** them. All of this is foretold as early as **Deuteronomy 4** when Israel is on the plains of Moab getting ready to settle the land. This chapter (4) and chapter 30 are key passages to understand as it relates to Israe's future. Moses says to Israel,

25 "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord your God so as to provoke Him to anger, 26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. 27 The Lord will <u>scatter you</u> among the peoples, and <u>you will be left few in number</u> among the nations where the Lord drives you. 28 There you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. 29 <u>But from there you will seek the Lord</u> your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. 30 When you are in <u>distress</u> and all these things have come upon you, <u>in the latter days</u> you will <u>return</u> to the Lord your God and listen to His voice. 31 For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the <u>covenant</u> with your fathers which He swore to them."

So this is a tremendous spoiler alert, isn't it? Here Israel is getting ready to enter the land and they're excited—and we're excited for them reading it for the first time! If we didn't know the rest of the story we'd be thinking, "Wow, this is it. This is finally it! They're going to enter the promised land!" However, this message sobers up your excitement quickly because Moses prophetically reveals how when they enter the promised land they're going to disobey and be **exiled/scattered**. He doesn't say if they do but when they do. So, he predicted their apostasy and exile long before it happens. But there's another spoiler in that in their **distress**, they would **seek God** and **return to the land** because of the kind of God that God is—He is faithful. He will **not destroy them completely because He does not forget the covenant** with them. Their distress brings about His desired result of steering their hearts back to Him (a Tribulation purpose; Jer. 30:7-8). A remnant

will be preserved and returns to the Lord and to the land. These are the promises they would cling to in exile—the promises that would shepherd their hearts in exile as they understand God's covenant-plan is not nullified through their disobedience. That's an assuring promise principle for us too who are in Christ, isn't it? And by the way, there is a lot of direct archaeological evidence for the Jews living in exile in these places. Just know, this really happened. It's unquestionable.

God promises not to destroy, but to <u>return</u> and <u>restore</u> them, based on his covenant.

But there's something else we don't want to miss or gloss over: *"in the latter days you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice."* Take not of that one phrase there: **"in the latter days**." That phrase is used in abundance by the prophets. The "latter days" or "the last days" or phrases like that are prophetic phrases that typically signify an event in connection with the second coming of Christ. And what you often see in the prophets is that they're not just talking about the return from Babylon, but the distant future. Something that hasn't occurred yet. Conditions not yet seen.

In **Deuteronomy 29:4**, Moses reveals to them that they are in need of a **new heart**. It says, *"Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear."* So already, God is hinting at the **New Covenant** that Israel must be brought into in the last days (Rom. 11:25-26; Zech. 12:10). And **Deuteronomy 30:3-4** says, *"then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord you God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. The Lord your God will bring you into the land which you which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. Moreover the Lord you God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. The Lord your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you… Then the Lord your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand."*

Here we see the first mention of **repeated theme in the latter prophets: national Israel scattered for disobedience but regenerated and restored in the last days**. This message is repeated in great detail over and over and over again like a broken record in the latter prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 Minor Prophets). Like this, you see 1) Israel regathered by God; 2) they are saved/given new hearts 3) Israel's enemies are judged; 4) they prosper in the land. And note that these are not only spiritual blessings promised to them but also physical, material blessings. But even Jesus spoke of material blessings in His kingdom for those who are faithful (Matt. 19:28-29). The trouble is, I think most people think we all just go to heaven when they die and that's it. But the story of the Bible is Christ and His kingdom coming down to earth in the end (Rev. 19-22) and making things right.

But what the **prophets** do is they **build on what is said here in Deuteronomy 4 and 30**. While they prophesy about the return from Babylon, many times their prophecies clearly extend beyond

that return to a future, ends times return and restoration of the kingdom with Christ on the throne of David in Jerusalem—something that never happened in the return from Babylon. In the return from Babylon and Assyria and the 400 silent years between the Old and New Testament, there was no mass repentance and return. They rebuilt a meager temple that Herod later enlarged, but there was no glory-presence of the King Yahweh there. They waited for His coming, but were still dominated by Persia, Greece, and Rome. So if it was all fulfilled then in that first return, well, we'd have to conclude that the prophecies failed miserably. The return from exile just never reached the magnitude that is envisioned by the prophets, nor yet today. Even post-exilic prophets like Zechariah were still preaching the fulfillment as yet future (Zech. 12-14).

And basically all I want to do with the remainder of our time is look at some of those prophecies about Israel being restored in the land and **develop an OT definition of this kingdom** they were expecting so that when we turn to the Gospels next we understand what they have in mind. And I just want to say a couple words about **prophecy** as we dive in: Prophecy is not just to feed curiosity, but to spark **purity** (1 John 3:3), **provide hope** and **eternal perspective**. Prophecy will change you. It motivates you to holy living when you see God's judgment but encourages you and stabilizes you when you see that a sovereign God is going to make things right. Prophecy brings an eternal perspective to even our most ordinary moments in life. It helps us see beyond the here and now, and prioritize what we give our lives for.

We live in a day and age when prophecy is on the backburner. It's neglected, avoided, even despaired of. It kind of seems like we went from one extreme to the other: prophecy was everything and now it's nothing. But even if you don't know exactly what to believe about it, you need it. You need to know Jesus is really coming back, resurrection and judgment are really coming, and you really should live faithfully in light of God's coming eternal kingdom. Somewhere around 30% of the Bible is prophecy and my job is to preach the full counsel of God so it's really difficult not to talk about prophecy. So I just want to encourage us in that. Let's not forget that prophecy is a precious, soul-shaping gift from God. It has such a wonderful effect on our lives. So let's dive into a few OT prophetic texts on the restoration of Israel and the kingdom, just getting a cursory view of what they entail:

Hosea 3:4-5 says, *"For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols. Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days."* So again we see Israel without king, without prince, without sacrifice (no temple) and ephod, and all of that. Obviously, the original audience is in view in that ancient context, but Hosea is also pointing beyond that to a future time because it's "in the last days" (that's the same Hebrew phrase as Deuteronomy's "latter days") when Israel returns to the Lord and comes trembling before **David**—Christ, the ultimate David, will be their king.

Jeremiah 23:5-8 says, "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 "In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; And

this is His name by which He will be called, 'The Lord our righteousness.' 7 "Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when they will no longer say, 'As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,' 8 but, 'As the Lord lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.' Then they will live on their own soil." So as this prophecy suggests, Judah and Israel will be brought back and united again (Isa. 11:1, 10; Jer. 3:18; 30:8-11; Mic. 5:3), **dwelling securely** in the **last days** under Christ, the **Davidic Branch**, who reigns as **king** over them **on their own soil**. I don't know about you, but when I read that and simply take it at face value, it points beyond the first restoration (original audience) to the second coming. Often the second coming passages speak of a great tribulation followed by the return of Christ and the salvation of Israel through an encounter with hostile nations surrounding Israel or Jerusalem (cf. Is. 63:1-6; Zech. 12:1-9; 14:1-5; Rev. 19-20); that's followed by the establishment of the kingdom characterized by righteousness, justice, and peace on earth because Christ rules.

A coming <u>righteous reign</u> on earth is an unmistakably dominant theme in Scripture.

Isaiah 2:1-4 is another major OT prophetic text regarding the kingdom. It predicts international harmony among nations as a result of Messiah's reign from Jerusalem. Nations stream to the geographical areas of "Judah and Jerusalem" to worship. It reads, *"The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 Now it will come about that <u>in the last days</u> the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. 3 And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war."*

One commentary on Isaiah by Jospeh Alexander said about this passage that, "the Prophet sees the church, at some distant period, exalted and conspicuous, and the nations resorting to it for instruction in the true religion."[1] John Calvin said that this prophecy is "concerning the restoration of the Church" and that the fulfillment of it is "not to be looked for on earth."[2] It's fairly common to see texts like this treated that way by those who think God is done with Israel and that we're living in the kingdom now—people trying to fit them into the age we're living in by spiritualizing them. But I just don't think it's necessary. I would even say that approach could be dangerous because you're making the text mean whatever you want it to mean.

I think texts like this (esp. Zechariah 14 or Ezkiel 40-48 or Isaiah 65), that don't fit our present age or the eternal state, fit naturally into the **1,000 year reign** mentioned in Revelation 20 after Christ returns but before the eternal state of things (described in Rev. 21-22). Christ rules over the world and His saints with Him (Luke 19:11-19; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12a; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4). Bible students call this **Premillennialism**. The idea that the Millennium (the 1,000 year

reign) is in the future after the second coming. And just so you know, especially if this is all new to you, the early church was Premillennial. Some of the earliest big-name saints like Papias (AD 60-130), Polycarp (AD 69-155), Irenaeus (AD 130-202), and Justin Martyr were Premillennial (AD 100-165). Justin Martyr said this was the orthodoxy of his day: "But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare." Historian Philip Schaff said, "The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene [pre AD325] age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years… it was… a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius."

What happened was as time went on and the Roman Empire became the *Holy* Roman Empire, people started to think the Catholic Church was this geo-political kingdom of God predicted in the OT. A school in Alexandria, Egypt along with a couple of influential men there, Origin and Augustine, started to spiritualize/allegorize these texts. Thus, **Amillennialism** (no Millennium or now-Millennium) became a dominant view. Premillennial thought existed throughout church history but didn't recover as a mainstream belief again until shortly after the Reformation when most people started using a normal and plain, (what we call historical-grammatical) method of interpreting the Bible again. But at the end of the day, I simply don't put much stock in what the early church says. I think it's wisest to choose biblical fidelity over historical allegiances any day.

I'm impressed when people simply open the Word and let is say what it says. I do want to read a couple of quotes though. J.C. Ryle, who lived in the 1800's, said, "Time would fail me, if I attempted to quote all the passages of Scripture in which the future history of Israel is revealed. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah all declare the same. All predict, with more or less particularity, that in the end of this dispensation the Jews are to be restored to their own land and to the favor of God. I lay no claim to infallibility in the interpretation of Scripture in this matter. I am well aware that many excellent Christians cannot see the subject as I do. I can only say, that to my eyes, the future salvation of Israel as a people, their return to Palestine and their national conversion to God, appear as clearly and plainly revealed as any prophecy in God's Word."

Charles Spurgeon in an 1864 sermon called "The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews," said "There will be a native government again; there will again be the form of a body politic; a state shall be incorporated, and a king shall reign. Israel has now become alienated from her own land… . If there be anything clear and plain, the literal sense and meaning of this passage [Ezekiel 37]—a meaning not to be spirited or spiritualized away—must be evident that both the two and the ten tribes of Israel are to be restored to their own land, and that a king is to rule over them." I share these quotes because I feel the same way. I cannot not see a future restoration of national Israel in the prophets. It's too clear and descriptive. And if you let the terms retain their historical-grammatical meaning, you'll end Premillennial every time. You'll up look around at the state of the world and the modern state of Israel and think, "If I'm understanding the times, the stage is set

for these prophetic events. Christ could come back, and I need to be about His business." So prophecy keeps me ready and watchful. It keep me on my toes. But hey, don't take my word for it on this stuff. I want you to be convinced through your own study of the Word about all this.

Isaiah 11 contains detailed information concerning the nature of the coming kingdom. It is not just a spiritual kingdom, but a kingdom that transforms every aspect of creation—lifting the curse on creation. *"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3 And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; 4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. 5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist. 6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. 7 Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. 10 Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.*

11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. 12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. 13 Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, and those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not harass Ephraim."

Isaiah 19 reveals that believing Gentile nations—not just individuals—will be included in the people of God *alongside* Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. For the sake of time, we only read a portion, *"22 The Lord will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the Lord, and He will respond to them and will heal them. 23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. 24 In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, 25 whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."* So again and again, like this passage, the prophet predicts Israel at the center of this global kingdom with the rest of the nations blessed *alongside* Israel. Zechariah says that nations that don't come to represent in worship experience chastisement by lack of rain and plagues (Zech. 14:17).

But to sum up the message of the prophets, Israel's future contains these themes: 1) exile 2) distress/the great Tribulation 3) return from exile in the land, 4) reunification of Israel/Judah, 5)

new covenant blessing such as forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, 6) restoration of Jerusalem, and 7) the worship of Christ the King who brings joy to the world. Like Ryle said, time fails us, so my mission for you this week—should you decide to accept it—is to either individually or as a family (if your children are old enough), read some of these prophetic texts I have listed: Isaiah 24-27 (Is. 24-27 is Revelation in a nutshell), 34-35, 65; Jer. 30-33; Ezek. 36-48; Dan. 7; Amos 9; Zech. 12-14 (especially 14). Read them and sit in wonder about what God has in store for the future. Let it sanctify you and give you hope and purpose now—until He comes.

Lastly, let's not miss God's faithful, covenant-keeping character again. God's loyalty to the patriarchal covenant is the basis for their restoration (Mic. 7:20).[3] And **His faithfulness to Israel is a bellwether of God's faithfulness in our own lives**. We're a lot like Israel. We are not perfect. We disobey. We all have moments of great spiritual clarity and growth in Christ, but we also have moments where we are prone to leave the God we love. So Israel's story could very much be our story.[4] Despite Israel's sin and shame, or our own, God showed Himself faithful to them. He delights in unchanging love (Mic. 7:19). He keeps His word (Jer. 33:14). He keeps His promises. For those of us in Christ, there is no condemnation. But there is a bright future in store. If you haven't trusted in Christ, Scripture says a dark future is in store for you. But you can change that by responding to the good news that Jesus died for you sins and by trusting in Christ right now you can pass out of judgment and into life, given an inheritance in His eternal kingdom. Eternal life in His kingdom is the greatest gift you could receive this Christmas.

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[1] Michael J. Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever* (Silverton, OR: Lampion House, 2017, 2020), 147.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Robert Chisolm Jr., "Israel According to the Prophets," in *The People, the Land, and the Future of Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2014), 55.

[4] Christopher J. Katulka, *Israel Always* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2022), 247.

FALL 2023
Life Group Questions
Series: Israel or Palestine? // December 10, 2023
Exiled… for Good? // Selected Scriptures

Introduction

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. However, due to your leader's preference or the natural flow of discussion in your group, it should not be expected to cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 10-15 min)*

A **new warm up question** just for fun: What are looking forward to in the next month?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion:

1. Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth.
    b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives unto the glory of God.
    c. For grace to hear and apply what God's Word is teaching you.
2. Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group or read together as each person takes a couple of verses.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

Question 1:
Take a Bible and place one finger in Genesis 12 and one finger in Acts 1. Now look at all the Scripture in between that for the most part deal with Israel. The section that deals primarily with the Church only takes up about 20% of Scripture. Israel is a major subject in the Bible that if we don't understand, we won't understand much of our Bibles. Now be honest: how much time have you spent in the Old Testament? In the Prophets? Has this study on the history and geography of Israel been helpful in any way so far?

Question 2:
What stood out to you today from the prophets?

Question 4:
The prophets unanimously predict a tangible kingdom where Jesus is ruling in justice, peace, and righteousness. It is a kingdom where the curse of sin is lifted on the world. Do you long for this kingdom? What difference does it make in your life now to anticipate it?

Question 5:
Jesus says many times that if we are faithful, we will reign with Him. Here are some verses to look up that put this reign in the future kingdom (1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12a; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4). How could this change the way you live today? How could it change the course of your life?

Question 6:
Is it comforting to know that even in Israel's exceeding wickedness and when the prophets were predicting their discipline by God, God reminded them time and time again of His promise to restore them?

Prayer *(Suggested time: 10-15 min)*

A significant part of coming together and "connecting" in Christian fellowship is being open and honest with our lives. Praying with a group of people may be new or it may be familiar to you. While we encourage everyone to pray out loud, please do not feel obligated to do so.

Take a few moments to share any prayer requests. Consider praying about what God teaching you through His Word and the recent discussion that seems the most applicable. Consider what you notice about your own relationship with Jesus. Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?