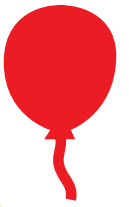


RETURN

The Bible is a bunch of smaller stories that point to one, big, true story: The story of God and His rescue plan through Jesus.



CREATION PATRIARCHS EXODUS CONQUEST JUDGES KINGDOM EXILE RETURN SILENCE GOSPEL CHURCH MISSIONS FUTURE

Let's summarize the RETURN era:

God kept His promise to let the Israelites return to their homes after living in exile. The people returned to Jerusalem in three waves and began to rebuild their lives. God used men to lead the people in rebuilding the Temple and the wall. What God wanted even more than buildings and actions was for their hearts to trust that He loved them and had a good plan for them.

Where is it found?

Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther

Names to know:

Zerubbabel
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther

What are the major stories?

(Ezra 1-3) King Cyrus of Persia let the first group of Israelites return to Jerusalem. Led by Zerubbabel, the people rebuilt the Temple. This allowed them to do the things instructed in God's Law.

(Ezra 7-8) When Ezra returned with the second group, he saw that the people in Jerusalem were not obeying the Lord. God used Ezra to teach the truth about Himself, His Word, and how He wanted them to live. This could help them love and serve Him with all their hearts.

(Nehemiah 1-6) Nehemiah led the third group back to Israel to rebuild the protective wall around Jerusalem. Their enemies attacked them, but God was with them and helped them rebuild the wall in 52 days.

(Esther 4-9) Esther, an Israelite still living in exile, became the Queen of Persia. God worked behind the scenes and used her to rescue His people in Persia from being killed.

How does the RETURN era point to Jesus?

God is always more concerned about what is going on in people's hearts than what they can do for Him. Just as God wanted the Israelites to know, love, and trust Him, He wants us to know, love, and trust Him, too. That is why He promised to send a Savior, a future king who would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). This king would be righteous, victorious, humble, and even enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). Jesus, born in Bethlehem, entered Jerusalem the week before He died on a cross by riding on a donkey, signaling that He was the promised king. Jesus' death and resurrection made a way for people to be forgiven for their sin and return to God with all their hearts.