

Jesus as the New Israel: The Reconstitution of the People of God around the Person of Jesus



Christ Drives the Merchants from the Temple
Duomo di Monreale. Monreale | Sicily, Anonymous and Temple

Reconstitution -- rē,kānstə't(y)ōōSH(ə)n

The act of establishing, founding, or returning a thing to its original purpose or state.

Redefinition -- rē,defə'niSH(ə)n

The action or process of defining something again or differently.

An essay accompanying the sermon series
All About Jesus: Explorations in the Gospel of John
by Rev. Dr. Jason Carter

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Why did Jesus die? The theological or spiritual response we've become accustomed to hearing in the church is "Jesus died for my sins" or "Jesus died to save us". Behind the historical events of Jesus, we see the providential hand of God the Father. *In simple terms, God accomplishes his purpose and plan of salvation in and through his son Jesus Christ.* This deeply theological and profoundly spiritual response is an absolutely necessary reaction to the documents of the New Testament. As Christians, we stake our lives upon this spiritual and theological response to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

At the same time, Jesus died in Israel outside the city of Jerusalem after being accused by the first century religious leadership of Judaism on a Roman cross. In other words, Jesus died in a volatile historical setting within an explosive political-religious context. Jesus was accused of blasphemy by the Jews and treated as a political rebel by the Romans. Why did Jesus die? There also exists a *historical response* since Jesus was a real historical figure who was crucified by the Roman Empire in the region of Palestine.

The question is: why is it important to wrestle with the historical context of the person and work of Jesus if we already know (and confess) the theological and spiritual reasons for his death (i.e. "Jesus died for my sins")? Maybe we've never even asked the question! Simply put, why is history important and how does it affect our understanding of Jesus?

In the first place, *we want to follow the person of Jesus, not only the idea of him.* To ask the question: what difference does it make that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and not in Barcelona? What difference does it make that Jesus died outside of Jerusalem and not Jakarta? If – in our reception of Jesus – he could have just as well lived and died in Orlando or Omaha without suffering any consequence to our comprehension of him, then we have yet to fully understand the person of Jesus.

We can only know that the death of Jesus takes away our sins because we've interpreted his death in historical terms based on the background of the Old Testament sacrificial system. If the house of theology, then the foundation is history. The theological statement "God forgives my sins through the cross of Christ" rests squarely upon the historical event of the death of Jesus on a cross during the Jewish Passover.

If we simply believe that Jesus died on a cross for us – in *whatever* setting and in *whatever* time period – then we are in serious danger of following only the *idea* of Jesus and not Jesus himself. *It is precisely the historical context of Jesus that gives us a fuller and more robust understanding of his person and work.*

Secondly, we want to understand the life of Jesus and the event of the cross from a biblical perspective. That means the Old Testament does not simply supply a few unimportant

background tidbits to “round out” our (21st century) comprehension of Jesus but rather represents the fuel and fodder of how Jesus understood his own vocation and how we best grasp the significance of his teachings and actions. There is intrinsic value in understanding the world of the Old Testament and how it was perceived by first-century Jews.

A Climactic Event (Eschatology) in a Chosen Nation (Election)

Jesus did not parachute down from heaven into any random nation. Jesus came *to Israel*, the nation awaiting the arrival of the promised Messiah (the Christ), the nation chosen by God (in election) to be the means *through which* the entire world would be saved. Jesus believed, along with some (albeit not all) of his contemporaries, that the mission of Israel to be the light of the world would be inaugurated by bringing Israel’s history to a *decisive moment of climax* (think: second Exodus) which would usher forth God’s redemption for all peoples and the renewal of creation whereby God’s love and justice would spill forth from Israel to bless the entire world. Through this climactic event, Israel would be vindicated, and God would be enthroned as King of the whole world.¹

This “climactic event” was often interpreted by first-century Jewish zealots or patriots as a decisive religio-political overthrow of the Romans whereby God would enact judgement against the pagan rulers wherein Rome would play the part of the Egyptians and Israel would again return to prominence through another dynastic (and Davidic) golden era. Jesus refused to play that game. Yet, in a surprising move, he preached about the Kingdom of God! No wonder people needed eyes to see and ears to hear. Jesus was speaking the same language of his Jewish contemporaries but they often completely missed the melody. The melody which called for abandoning a political overthrow of the Romans and its attendant religious triumphalism (Israel on top!) in favor of turning the other cheek, forgiving their enemies, and dying on a cross in order to bless the nations (instead of rule over them) was sung in such a different key that it was completely missed, especially by the Jewish religious establishment with vested religio-political interests.

Yet this “climactic event” did happen. A second exodus which brought God’s kingdom to earth was inaugurated *precisely during the celebration of the first Exodus* – during the Jewish Passover – as Jesus died on a cross outside of Jerusalem.

Who was Jesus?

In the 20th century quest for the historical Jesus, there is a famous line whereby one scholar observed that each successive quester looked down “the long well of history and saw his own face reflected back to him”. In other words, there is an inherent danger in studying the

¹ “In technical language what I am talking about is *election* and *eschatology*: God’s choice of Israel to be the means of saving the world; God’s bringing of Israel’s history to its moment of climax, through which justice and mercy would embrace not only Israel but the whole world,” N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering who Jesus Was and Is*, 35.

historical Jesus to reshape him to fit our modern values and ecclesial propensities. To the 1960s hippie, Jesus was the paragon of “peace not war”. To some twenty-first century Hollywood actors, “Jesus is my homeboy”, a popular symbol whereby one is free to adopt the icon and leave aside the message. To a person raised in a legalistic household or carrying the wounds of a legalistic church, Jesus becomes the quintessential dispenser of free grace with little need for true obedience to his commands. To younger generations suspicious of religious institutions, Jesus is a radical anti-establishmentarian calling for a privatized faith, hope, and love (“Jesus and me”) without the need of actually doing the hard work of living in Christian community.

Yet all of these “portraits” of Jesus miss the mark. They re-shape the person of Jesus after our own image.

So who was Jesus? And how did he conceive of his own vocation, especially during his three years of public ministry? In *The Challenge of Jesus*, N.T. Wright argues that “Jesus was not primarily a ‘teacher’ in the sense that we usually give that word. Jesus *did* things and then commented on them, explained them, challenged people to figure out what they meant.” In other words, if Jesus was simply a teacher, then he often left his students scratching their heads! His parables did not simply illustrate truth but often cloaked the truth from his hearers (i.e. Mark 4:11-12; Matthew 13:14-15; Luke 8:10). N.T. Wright continues: “He acted practically and symbolically, not least through his remarkable works of healing—works that today all but the most extreme skeptics are forced to regard as in principle historical.” Jesus often healed. However, was Jesus’ primary vocation like that of a physician? He healed the sick but was quick to bestow upon those healings weighty symbolic and theological meanings. N.T. Wright concludes: “In particular, he acted and spoke in such a way that people quickly came to regard him as a prophet. Though, as we shall see, Jesus saw himself as much more than a prophet, that was the role he adopted in his early public career, following on as he did from the prophetic work of John the Baptist. He intended to be perceived, and was indeed perceived, as a prophet announcing the kingdom of God.”²

In his public ministry, Jesus was ministering in Israel against the backdrop of a long line of Old Testament prophets. And what did OT prophets do? They often imbedded their prophetic messages in symbolic actions. They invested their teachings with symbolic meaning. Isaiah walked naked and barefoot as a sign against Egypt and Cush (Isaiah 20:1-6), Jeremiah symbolically smashed a clay jar as a prophetic indictment against Israel (Jeremiah 19:1-15), and Ezekiel lay down on his left side for 390 days (then 40 days on his right side) eating bread prepared over cow dung as a symbolic prophetic action against the houses of Israel and Judah (Ezekiel 4:1-17).³

² See N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 38-39.

³ See also Isaiah 8:1-4; Jeremiah. 13:1-11; 27:1-15; 32:6-15; Ezekiel 12:1-25.

In the public ministry of Jesus, then, it should not surprise us when Jesus curses the fig tree (Mark 12:12-14), then proceeds to cleanse the temple (Mark 12:15-19). This is a prototypical prophetic action. We should not be surprised that Jesus goes out of his way to heal *precisely on the Sabbath* (John 5:1-17; 9:1-14) like he is intentionally trying to prove a point! Jesus not only turns water into wine but also performs the miracle by symbolically using the stone jars typically used for the Jewish rites of purification (John 2:1-12). In other words, *he who has ears let him hear* and *she who has eyes let her see* the deeply meaningful and highly symbolic prophetic actions of Jesus. Jesus is intentionally investing his teachings and his miracles – and ultimately his person and work – with rich symbolic meanings derived from how the Old Testament was perceived and understood within first-century Israel.

Why did Jesus die? Because of his message of love and compassion?

So now we can come back to the original question asked in a decidedly historical way: why did Jesus die? Many portraits of Jesus paint him as a renegade of love which conflicted with the legalistic framework of first-century Judaism (especially the Pharisees). In this view, Jesus is sometimes likened to a hippie revolutionary or a peasant Sage turning up to full force the faucet of God's lavish love and compassion.

Yet, while Jesus unmistakably shows us the love and compassion of God, the historical question remains: is it *really* the case that Jesus' love and compassion were ultimately responsible for landing him in the crosshairs of both the Jewish religious leadership and the Roman political conquerors? A roaming hippie Sage canvassing the back-country of Israel advocating people to love God and love their neighbor, argues many contemporary scholars, would not have turned up the temperature sufficiently for Jesus to land himself on a wooden cross.

Yet, what if Jesus directly challenged and confronted *the* most cherished and central symbols of the nation of Israel? What if Jesus confronted ethnic Israel with a choice to abandon its nationalistic symbols – those symbols which re-enforced the boundary marker between ethnic Israel and the nations – in favor of a newly constituted people of God (aka: “the new Israel”) which he was radically forming around his own person and work? What if belonging to the people of God was constituted not by birth (into ethnic Israel) but by the new birth (by following Jesus and his agenda)? And, what if following Jesus entailed worshipping him as the New Temple – the place where God meets with his people – thereby making the most prestigious religious symbol of ancient Israel (the temple in Jerusalem) obsolete?

Symbols evoke powerful emotions. As N.T. Wright acutely observes: “One can close one's eyes to unexpected behavior. One can stop one's ears against a tale newly told. *But if someone burns the flag, something must be done...* Praxis may be disturbing. Stories may be subversive. But lay a finger on a cherished symbol, and the fat will be in the fire.”⁴ In his public ministry, Jesus was,

⁴ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the People of God*, 369.

in a sense, burning the flag consisting of all *the* most sacred symbols of Israel's worldview! Challenging sacred symbols, historically speaking, places you decisively in the crosshairs of both Jerusalem and Rome while ultimately landing you on a wooden cross.

Preach love and compassion, and you might be greeted with snickers. Challenge sacred symbols, and you are in hot water. (Just ask any pastor who has attempted to move the flowers, a beloved baptismal font, or a flag in a sanctuary.) Consider that in ancient Israel (like much of the Middle East today), there was no artificial line between "religion" and "politics". In this sense, Jesus' actions of challenging the Temple was tantamount to burning the flag on the steps of the National Cathedral and the White House – if they were rolled-into-one.

Sacred Symbols

The central focus of the public ministry of Jesus can be summarized like this:

- *Jesus was challenging Israel to re-think its allegiance to all its most sacred symbols by offering his own person and work as a radical substitution for what it meant to be part of the people of God.*
- *In his public ministry, Jesus was forming a "new Israel" – redefining or reconstituting Israel – around his own person and work.*
- ***In short, Jesus was reconstituting Israel by challenging its most sacred symbols and redefining those symbols around his own person.***

Scholar Stan Slade states the idea like this: "*The central axis of the public ministry of Jesus is the transformation or substitution of Judaism for Jesus.*" Jesus is re-creating Israel around his own person by redefining all the most sacred symbols of Israel around himself. Let's take a look at a few of these sacred symbols:

Purity Codes: Jesus especially attacked the symbols of Israel that sought to maintain the distinction between the Jews and everybody else. In first century Judaism, this included maintaining a separateness from people who were not ritually "pure". The Samaritan woman was surprised at the mere association of Jesus with her: "*You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?*" (*For Jews do not associate with Samaritans*) (John 4:9) To merely have *touched* the Samaritan woman, Jesus would have become ritually "impure"; the same "purity codes" applied to touching lepers. The purity codes served as a boundary-marker to separate Jews from everybody else: "*The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.*" (Mark 7:3-4).

N.T. Wright observes that these purity codes were not, first and foremost, primarily about *purity* or *cleanliness* in the strictly religious sense but rather had a sociological function to "separate" Jews from their pagan Gentile neighbors. In other words, Israel had never fully

grasped the radical implications of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) that Israel was to be a *blessing* to the nations. N.T. Wright argues, “the purity codes were not simply ‘about’ personal cleanliness, but, as the social anthropologists would insist, were coded symbols for the purity and maintenance of the tribe, family or the race....[they] were the boundary-markers for a beleaguered people.”⁵

Jesus was challenging the purity codes of first century Judaism by offering a radical new program: Israel should leave behind her fanatical self-preservation which distinguished Jews from Gentile (reinforced by the ancestral codes in the first-century) and instead embrace its (original) calling to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.⁶ It was a challenge that penetrated to the very core Israel’s identity and what it meant to be Israel.

Temple: Almost every historical study of Jesus recognizes the central role that the challenge to the Temple played in the death of Jesus. To challenge the Temple and the political-religious system associated with it was to challenge the very fabric of first-century Judaism and put your life severely at risk.

“On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves...And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a ‘den of robbers’”.
(Mark 11:15,17)

Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days....But the temple he had spoken of was his body.” (John 2:19, 21)

For first-century Judaism, the Temple was the place of sacrifice, the place of worship, the place for the forgiveness of sins, and the place where the presence and glory of Yahweh were definitively to be found. Yet Jesus acts in his public ministry as if he embodies – in his own person – a New Temple of God. Jesus receives worship on the dusty streets of Galilee; no need to travel to Jerusalem to worship God at the Temple maintained by the religious establishment. Jesus forgave sins thereby bypassing the entire priestly and sacrificial system which occurred in the Jerusalem Temple. And Jesus embodied the presence and glory of Yahweh like never before (Jn 1:1-18; Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36). Wherever Jesus went and walked, there the Temple traveled with him: Jesus was the New Temple.

⁵ N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 58. In *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Wright argues, “There is no question that in the first century there was a substantial body, not least in Judaea and Galilee, that considered itself Jewish on the basis, more or less, of shared ancestry, and that considered it its god-given duty to protect that identity by careful observation of the god-given law, particularly the distinctives of sabbath, food, and circumcision, and of the sanctity of the temple. These formed the clearest marker-posts for the symbolic world of Israel. And, according to the synoptic gospels, three out of these four became occasions of controversy between Jesus and his contemporaries, particularly the Pharisees,” 389. Sabbath, food, and temple became major controversies in the public ministry of Jesus while the apostle Paul waded into the controversy of circumcision.

⁶ See N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 58.

N.T. Wright writes: “Jesus acted and spoke as if he was in some sense called to do and be what the Temple was and did. His offer of forgiveness, with no prior condition of Temple-worship or sacrifice, was the equivalent of someone in our world offering as a private individual to issue someone else a passport or a driver’s license. He was undercutting the official system and claiming by implication to be establishing a new one in its place.”⁷

Not only was Jesus making people pure or clean (instead of the purity codes), but also Jesus was insisting that he was the New Temple! How audacious and bold. Jesus was redefining all the sacred symbols of Israel around his own person and work. Jesus was reconstituting Israel around his own person. Jesus was communicating a challenging prophetic intent: *to be part of Israel was now to follow Jesus and his agenda.*

Sabbath: One Sabbath, Jesus was wading through the grain fields when the religious “thought-police” (aka the Pharisees) objected to his disciples plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath. In answering the Pharisees, Jesus referred to an incident (in 1 Samuel 21) where David, as Israel’s King, entered the house of God and ate the bread of the presence along with his companions which was forbidden by anybody but the priests to eat (Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5; Matthew 12:1-8).

In appealing to David, Jesus is making the point: *the true representative of Israel can redefine even the most sacred and cherished of symbols for Israel.*⁸ “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Jesus customarily healed precisely on the Sabbath, indicating that the Sabbath was the perfect day to express the liberating and saving acts of God. Resting *in Jesus* brings the *true* Sabbath rest for the people of God (Matthew 11:28-30).

Feasts of Israel: In the Gospel of John, Jesus fulfills all the major feasts and festivals of ancient Israel (Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, Feast of Dedication) as well as the Sabbath which acted as a weekly mini-festival for Israel (John 5-10). (*We’ll delve more in depth into these feasts and festivals – and Jesus’ fulfillment of them – in our preaching series in the Gospel of John.*)

See the chart below to review “The Central Questions of First Century Israel” to see how Jesus redefines all the sacred symbols of Israel around his own person (Nation, Torah, Family, Food Laws/Purity Codes, Temple, Sabbath, Feasts...) as he creates a New Israel (The Reconstituted People of God) around his own person and work.

⁷ N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 65

⁸ N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 60.

Bringing it All Together

So how can we bridge the gap between the historical Jesus and our contemporary discipleship?

We need to understand the story Jesus was telling in his own time. Jesus was embodying a story where the glory of God was returning to Israel in order to bless the entire world: “Israel was called to be the light of the world; Israel’s history and vocation had devolved on to Jesus, solo. He was the true Israel, the true light of the whole world.”⁹ Jesus brought the decisive moment for Israel and, by extension, to the whole world by acting within Israel’s history: the exile was over, evil was defeated, and Jesus was enthroned as King of the whole world. The foundation for discipleship and for the mission of the church has been laid decisively by Jesus. Jesus is the chief cornerstone and all subsequent building within the house (discipleship, mission) is only possible because of Jesus.

Christian discipleship and the mission of the church is to build a house on a foundation already laid, tend a garden already planted, and play the melody of a musical score already composed.¹⁰

“As Jesus to Israel, so the church to the world.”¹¹

We are to enact in word and deed the symbols for our own age which point to the truth that evil has been ultimately defeated, that humanity has returned from exile, and that God has acted decisively for our world in the person and work of Jesus.¹² Jesus is the *light of the world*, even though our world prefers darkness instead of light; Jesus is the *Truly Human One* even though our world prefers to dehumanize itself instead of finding its true humanity (and true self) in Jesus.

N.T. Wright summarizes our true Christian calling rather poetically – by suggesting that we are to embody symbolic Christian practice in our everyday lives and vocations that Jesus is Lord – in words that deserve to be quoted at some length:

“If you are to shape your world in following Christ, it is not enough to say that being a Christian and being a professional or an academic (to address these worlds particularly for the moment) is about high moral standards, using every opportunity to talk to people about Jesus, praying for or with your students [or your colleagues], being fair in your grading and honest in your speaking [or being fair and honest in your business practices]. All that is vital and necessary, but you are called to something much, much more. You are called, prayerfully, to discern where in your discipline the human project

⁹ N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 177.

¹⁰ N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 185.

¹¹ N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 181.

¹² N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 185: “Our task is now to build the house, to tend the garden, the play the score. The human race has been in exile; exiled from the garden, shut out of the house, bombarded with noise instead of music. Our task is to announce in deed and word that the exile is over, to enact the symbols that speak of healing and forgiveness, to act boldly in God’s world in the power of the Spirit.”

is showing signs of exile and humbly and boldly to act symbolically in ways that declare that the powers have been defeated, that the kingdom has come in Jesus the Jewish Messiah, that the new way of being human has been unveiled, and to be prepared to tell the story that explains what these symbols are all about. And in all this you are to declare, in symbol and praxis, in story and articulate answers to questions, that Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not; that Jesus is Lord [and neither wealth, power, or sex is not]; that Jesus is Lord [and our particular cultural moment is not].”¹³

What does it mean to bring cross-shaped symbols into your workplace and family? What does it mean to embody confidence and live defiantly that despite the groaning of our present age (Rom. 8:22) that evil has been ultimately defeated? What are the symbols in our own day which enslave people – projects and ideas that dehumanize people vis-à-vis greed, injustice, sex, or pride – which we can challenge with an entirely new symbolic worldview centered on Jesus who was humble, servant-hearted, just, and others-centered? What does it mean to build upon the Kingdom that Jesus inaugurated in his own person so that people are freed from their idols and challenged to re-orientate their lives around the enthronement of Jesus as the divine King of the whole world? These are questions for Christian discipleship that call forth prayerful discernment for all of God’s children.

He who has ears let him hear, she who has eyes let her see.¹⁴

Soli Deo Gloria.

Jason Carter

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¹³ N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 187.

¹⁴ For a more comprehensive interaction with N.T. Wright, I recommend his “Big Book” on Jesus entitled *Jesus and the Victory of God*. I typically do not recommend 700 page books, but this one is paradigm-changing. For a more concise treatment which is easier (though not simple) to read, see N.T. Wright’s *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*. While I do not agree with every jot and tittle of N.T. Wright’s entire project, his writings on the historical Jesus are especially insightful.

Central Questions of Israel during the time of Jesus	Israel	The New Israel <i>Israel Reconstituted and Redefined around the Person of Jesus</i>	Scripture
What is the people of God? How do you belong to this people?	<p>The people of God consists of the 12 Tribes of Israel.</p> <p>*Requirement to Enter: Born a Jew or become a Jewish proselyte (including the adoption of Jewish customs & traditions)</p> <p>*Sign: Circumcision</p> <p>*“We are Abraham’s descendants” (John 8:33)</p>	<p>Jesus calls 12 disciples, forming a New Israel.</p> <p>The new People of God is founded upon the person of Jesus.</p> <p>*Requirement to Enter: Follow Jesus</p> <p>*Sign: Baptism</p>	John 1 – Jesus calls his disciples and begins to form a “New Israel”.
Who is my family? <i>“Who is my mother and who are my brothers?”</i> (Matthew 12:48)	<p>My family consists of those who have been born in ethnic Israel (alongside Jewish converts).</p>	<p>The family of God are those that follow and believe that Jesus is the Son of God</p> <p><i>You belong to the family of God if you abandon everything to follow Jesus, much like the 12 disciples did.</i></p>	<p>*Matthew 8:21-22; Luke 9:59-60; Mark 3:33; Mathew 12:48; Matthew 10:34-39</p> <p>This theme appears more in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, & Luke)</p>
How can we be considered “clean” or “pure”?	<p>Through the purification rituals</p> <p><i>“The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.”</i> (Mark 7:3-4)</p>	<p>Through contact with Jesus.</p> <p>John 2: Jesus changes the water of ceremonial washing to the wine of the new messianic age. In the Messianic age, contact with Jesus makes one “pure/clean”.</p> <p><i>“A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’...I am willing, he said, ‘Be clean.’”</i> (Mark 1:40-41)</p>	John 2:1-2 (Wedding at Cana)
What is the central place of worship? What is the place where the presence and glory of Yahweh dwells?	<p>The Temple</p>	<p>The Temple redefined around the person of Jesus</p>	John 2:13-25 Jesus’ prophetic act against the Temple

Central Questions of Israel during the time of Jesus	Israel	The New Israel <i>Israel Reconstituted and Redefined around the Person of Jesus</i>	Scripture
<p>How do we know the will of God?</p> <p>Who interprets the Torah?</p>	<p>Torah</p> <p>The Rabbis/Teachers interpret the Torah for the people of God</p>	<p>Jesus + Torah</p> <p>Jesus gives the definitive interpretation of the Torah as the Teacher-Rabbi without equal.</p> <p>The words of Jesus are the definitive words of Yahweh. To listen to Jesus is to listen to the Torah and the voice of God.</p> <p><i>In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...(Hebrews 1:1-2a)</i></p>	<p>John 3</p> <p>Jesus replaces the role of Nicodemus</p>
<p>Where we do go to sacrifice and receive forgiveness of sins?</p> <p>Where do we go to worship Yahweh?</p>	<p>The Temple</p> <p>The Temple in Jerusalem</p>	<p>Forgiveness comes through Jesus – the New Temple.</p> <p>Moreover, Jesus is the new “place” of worship. Jesus accepts worship, replacing the Temple Worship in Jerusalem as the New Temple.</p>	<p>John 2:13-25 // John 4:1-42</p>
<p>Who defines the Sabbath? What does the Sabbath mean?</p>	<p>The scribes and Pharisees interpret the Sabbath and had made it a burden for the people.</p> <p>The Sabbath had become a work to obtain favor with God <i>and</i> had become a boundary marker that maintained Jews separate from her pagan neighbors.</p>	<p>Jesus redefines even the most important symbols of Israel, including the Sabbath, around his own person.</p> <p>Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath.</p> <p>The Sabbath is the best day to understand what God is doing in the world— liberating and saving the world through his Son.</p>	<p>John 5 // John 9</p>

Central Questions of Israel during the time of Jesus	Israel	The New Israel <i>Israel Reconstituted and Redefined around the Person of Jesus</i>	Scripture
How do we celebrate the salvific acts of God?	Through participation in the feasts and festivals of Israel.	Jesus redefines the feasts and festivals of Judaism around his own person. In Jesus, people find the true significance of the Feasts and Festivals of Israel.	John 6 (Passover); John 7-8 (Feast of Tabernacles) John 10 (Feast of Dedication)
Where does one find the blessings of God?	In the promised land – in Israel.	In and through Jesus. Jesus is the New Israel.	John 15
How do we express the return from exile?	Geographically. By living in Israel (or returning frequently to Jerusalem as part of the Jewish diaspora)	Spiritually. Through repentance and faith in Jesus. Jesus is bringing the restoration of Israel around his own person and ministry.	The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus John 18-21 should be understood as a NEW EXODUS signaling the salvation and liberation of God's people. The role of John the Baptist: "Prepare the way of the Lord" (in a return from Exile).
How do we best express symbolically the return from Exile in the first century?	The reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and military force (throw out the Romans and the pagans from Israel).	During the teaching ministry of Jesus: Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) The parable symbolically announces that the people of God are returning from exile.	John 18-21 Jesus dies on a cross in Jerusalem during the Passover Feast, bringing Israel's history to a decisive climax whereby God is vindicated and Jesus is enthroned as King of the world.