



Handout for week of 4/1/19 John 8: 1-11 & Is. 43: 16-21

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**Is. 43:16** Thus saith the LORD, who maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; **17** Who bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power--they lie down together, they shall not rise, they are extinct, they are quenched as a wick: **18** Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. **19** Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. **20** The beasts of the field shall honour Me, the jackals and the ostriches; because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, Mine elect; **21** The people which I formed for Myself, that they might tell of My praise.

COMMENTARY:

**c. 536-480**

**Building of Second Temple  
Prophecy of Zechariah, Haggai**

**538 Cyrus allows Israelites to return to Jerusalem; Judah a Persian province**

**\* India: Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (c. 563-483)  
\* China: Confucius (c. 551-479)  
\* Greece: Archaic period**

The Jewish people did not suffer in Babylon in quite the same way that they suffered in Egypt. There were no bricks to make (with or without straw), no whips, no prison walls. It was a different kind of captivity, but perhaps just as wounding to their soul, especially if they forgot who they were and bought into the values and ways of the empire that had carried them off. Brueggemann has written often of this tension between Israel's identity and the pressures of empire, a tension that translates well into our own life, thousands of years later and thousands of miles away, facing different but still formidable powers that be. He describes the problem of exile in Babylon as severe displacement, alienation "from the place that gave identity and security...[and] the shapes and forms that gave power to faith and life." For Israel, exile was being lost, homesick, divided, unmoored, rootless except for memory. It must have been challenging to resist settling into Babylon ways, Babylon beliefs, Babylon values. It must have been hard to resist the temptation to settle down, fit in, sell out, and forget the story that had held them together. After all, what good had all that done them? (An ancient version of "How's that working out for you?") Into that emptiness stepped a poet-prophet to sing a new song about ancient things, about the new thing that the God of old was about to do. Maybe that's why we use the words, "ever ancient, ever new."

[Daniel Hazard](#)