



# Recap

How do you **return** to God?

So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. **They realized this work had been done with the help of our God.** 6:15-16

In October, when the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled with **a unified purpose** at the square just inside the Water Gate. **They asked** Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given for Israel to obey. 7:73-8:1

# Recap

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, "Don't **mourn or weep** on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the Lord your God." **For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.** vs 9

So the people went out and cut branches and used them to build shelters on the roofs of their houses, in their courtyards, in the courtyards of God's Temple, or in the squares just inside the Water Gate and the Ephraim Gate. **So everyone who had returned from captivity lived in these shelters during the festival, and they were all filled with great joy!** The Israelites had not celebrated like this since the days of Joshua son of Nun. vs 16-17

## Recap

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, **for your sins have brought you down.** Bring your confessions, and return to the Lord. Say to him, “Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer you our praises. Assyria cannot save us, nor can our warhorses. Never again will we say to the idols we have made, ‘You are our gods.’ No, **in you alone do the orphans find mercy.**” **Hosea 14:1-3**

The Lord says, “Then I will heal you of your faithlessness; **my love will know no bounds,**” **4a**

# What Is Salvation History? D. A. Carson

Although the word “history” sometimes refers to what has taken place, it more commonly refers **to the story or account of what has taken place**. No human account of what has taken place can ever be exhaustive: we simply do not and cannot know enough. For example, a history of the Roman Empire cannot possibly tell us everything that took place within the Roman Empire during the centuries the empire existed. Any history of the Roman Empire will necessarily be selective. A history will be judged as excellent or poor on the basis of how **representative** it is, how the parts are made to cohere, how evidence has been handled, and the like.

# What Is Salvation History? D. A. Carson

Salvation history is thus the history of salvation — i.e., the history of events that focus on the salvation of human beings and issues involving the new heaven and the new earth. Even when the focus narrows to one man, Abraham, and his descendants, that man is given the promise that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3). Biblical Christianity is not an abstract or timeless philosophy (though of course it involves abstractions): at least in part, it is the **account of what God has done**, of the events and explanations he has brought about in order to save lost human beings.

Above all, **salvation history** provides the locus in which God has disclosed himself in events and in the words that explain them. As salvation history is the framework of the Bible's story line, so it is the locus of the **revelation of the living God**, the Lord of history. **Greg Strand**

Before you return you must  
acknowledge **why** you left

In order to heal you must  
acknowledge what is **broken**

On October 31 the people assembled again,  
and this time they **fasted** and dressed in  
**burlap** and sprinkled **dust** on their heads. **9:1**

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest  
and scribe, and the Levites who were  
interpreting for the people said to them, “Don’t  
**mourn** or **weep** on such a day as this!” **8:9**

Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners as **they confessed their own sins and the sins of their ancestors.** They remained standing in place for three hours while the Book of the Law of the Lord their God was read aloud to them. **Then for three more hours they confessed their sins and worshiped the Lord their God. vs 2-3**

the separation was to not enforce their beliefs on others

We view sin as an immediate action, they understood sin as a **process**

sometimes we learn the wrong lessons in confession (unhealthy self loathing, too glib in grace)

Worship partnered with confession helps us to heal **properly**

## vs 5-37, Salvation History

But as soon as they were at peace, **your people again committed evil in your sight**, and once more you let their enemies conquer them. **Yet whenever** your people turned and cried to you again for help, you listened once more from heaven. **In your wonderful mercy, you rescued them many times!** vs 28

God is never surprised by our sin. He **always** provides a way back to Him

The people responded, “**In view of all this**, we are making a solemn promise and putting it in writing. On this sealed document are the names of our leaders and Levites and priests.” **vs 38**

Then the rest of the people—the priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, Temple servants, and all who had separated themselves from the pagan people of the land in order to obey the Law of God, together with their wives, sons, daughters, and all who were old enough to understand—**joined their leaders and bound themselves with an oath. 10:28-29**

They **solemnly promised** to carefully follow all the commands, regulations, and decrees of the Lord our Lords **10:29**

not marry pagan people **vs 30**

Sabbath, let our land rest **vs 31**

It will provide for everything necessary for the work of the Temple of our God. **vs 32-33**

first part of every harvest to the Lord's Temple **vs 35**

And a tenth of all that is collected as tithes will be delivered by the Levites to the Temple of our God **vs 38-39**

## Weird Oaths?

**Marriage:** You must not intermarry with them. Do not let your daughters and sons marry their sons and daughters, **for they will lead your children away** from me to worship other gods **Deut. 7:3-4**

**Sabbath:** You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of complete **rest**, an official day for **holy assembly**. It is the Lord's Sabbath day, and it must be observed wherever you live. **Lev 23:3**

**Temple and Tithe:** You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, **while all of you are busy building your own fine houses.** **Haggai 1:8-9**

Confession and repentance are **central** to the book. Nehemiah had overseen the physical renewal of the city of Jerusalem. However, when he looked around, **he recognized that the people of Israel were in great need of personal and spiritual renewal.** While God had delivered his people from captivity, **they were still in sin.** **Robert D. Lupton**

Before you return you must  
acknowledge **why** you left

But our ancestors were **proud** and **stubborn** 9:16

In order to heal you must  
acknowledge what is **broken**

they were **disobedient** and **rebelled** against you. vs 26

And now, our God, the great and mighty and  
awesome God, who keeps his **covenant of**  
**unfailing love**, do not let all the hardships we  
have suffered seem insignificant to you 9:32

# What We Get Wrong About 'Giving Our Testimony' Becca Vandekemp

Evangelical Christians have developed a rather confusing habit when it comes to sharing testimonies. We have a tendency to prefer telling dramatic stories about dark, reckless pasts turned around at a sudden moment to grab the attention of the crowd and stir their emotions rather than describe **the ebb and flow of real-life faith stories**. The more dramatic the conversion story, the better.

There seems to be an obsession with sensational testimonies and tangible moments of catharsis—you know, those brilliant “this-changes-everything” moments that make every story better. **But the problem is, often, the walk into faith is gradual.** And the reality is that struggles are constantly coming and going. How does that work its way into our stories?

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That's the problem with the sensationalized, past tense testimony. There is no room for everything that isn't OK now. There isn't room for real failures. It's hard to talk about our past brokenness.

It's nearly impossible to talk about current brokenness, especially because of the undeniable pressure to fit the mold in contemporary churches.

How you're being saved is as important as how you got saved.

His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps **feel their way toward him and find him**—  
though he is not far from any one of us. **Acts 17:27**