

A STUDY ON THE ESSENCE OF WORSHIP IN ONLINE WORSHIP GROUPS

UNDER COVID-19 PANDEMIC:

FOCUS ON KOREAN MINISTERS IN THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA AREA

By

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Liberty University

A THESIS PROJECT PRESENTED IN PARTIAL

FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to review the current needs regarding online worship that were conducted by Korean ministers in the Northern Virginia area under the COVID-19 pandemic and thereby supplement the found needs through establishing a theological basis and a summary of essential elements of worship that should be applied to online worshipping groups. Thirty-three (N = 33) Korean ministers in the Northern Virginia area who conducted online worship under COVID-19 participated in this survey. Results showed that the dominant need in online worship was an education on the essence of worship followed by technical support and ways to interact with the congregation. To supplement the participant's needs, qualitative research was conducted, which included illustrations of biblical principles of worship, parallel analysis between the exilic period and COVID-19 pandemic, biblical examinations on preserved essential worship elements in the exilic period, insights from online education, benefits of family worship, and facets of online worship under COVID-19. As a result of the qualitative research, the legitimacy of practicing biblical worship elements such as Kerygma, Didache, and Koinonia was verified. It was found that these elements are to be emphasized and practiced in circumstances when the congregation cannot gather for in-person worship.

*Keywords: Kerygma, Didache, Koinonia, Essence of Worship, COVID-19 Pandemic, Online Worship*

## Contents

Abstract.....	i
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Statement of the Purpose.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	5
Limitation of the Study.....	5
Research Questions and Hypotheses.....	6
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Introduction.....	9
Biblical Principles of Worship under COVID-19 Pandemic.....	10
Kerygma.....	11
Didache.....	11
Koinonia.....	11
Diakonia.....	11
Liturgia.....	11
Preserving Essence of Worship under COVID-19 Pandemic.....	13
Parallel Circumstantial Figures between the Exilic Period and COVID-19 Pandemic.....	14
Impact of Deaths: Demographical Decline.....	16
Economic Blow.....	18
Diminish in Security.....	21
Pragmatic Response.....	23
Re-establishing Spiritual Identity through the Word of God.....	27
Anxiety and PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder).....	31
Disobedience, Unacceptable Worship, and Restoration through Exile.....	33
Reason for Exile in the Book of Jeremiah.....	34
Resolution from Exile: The Word of God & Building and Replanting in Overthrown Land.....	39
Restoration from Exile: Return and Repent.....	41
Disappointed Hopes in the Postexilic Period.....	44
Ultimate Restoration from exile through Jesus.....	46
Acceptable Worship and Unacceptable Worship.....	49
Online Worship and Family Worship.....	54
Online Education and Online Worship.....	54
Family Worship.....	56
Family Worship in the Bible.....	57
The Early Church House Worship.....	59
Biblical Principles of Family Worship.....	60

Benefits of Family Worship under COVID-19 pandemic .....	61
Facets of Online Worship under COVID-19 Pandemic .....	62
Technical Support for Stable Online Worship.....	63
Use of Facebook, Youtube, and OBS (Open Broadcaster Software) .....	63
Use of Zoom: Interactive Communication .....	63
Conclusion .....	64
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>65</b>
Introduction.....	65
Design .....	65
Participants.....	67
Procedures.....	70
Data Analysis .....	71
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>76</b>
Essential Elements of Worship to be Preserved in Online Worship .....	76
Practicing Kerygma .....	77
Practicing Didache through Family Worship .....	78
Practicing Koinonia .....	79
Worshipful Lifestyle under COVID-19 pandemic .....	79
Technical Support for Online Worship.....	80
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>81</b>
Summary of Study .....	81
Discussion of the Research Findings .....	82
Limitations of the Study.....	83
Recommendations for Further Study .....	83
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>APPENDIX: IRB Approval.....</b>	<b>90</b>
Table 1. Statistics of Variables .....	69
Table 2. Reliability.....	72
Figure 1. Jeremiah in the midst of Old Testament Literature .....	43
Figure 2. Missing Values .....	68
Figure 3. Number of Missing Values.....	68
Figure 4. No missing values from 33 samples.....	69
Figure 5. Analysis of Selected Question 1 from the Survey.....	73
Figure 6. Analysis of Selected Question 2 from the Survey.....	74
Figure 7. Analysis of Selected Question 3 from the Survey.....	74

Figure 8. Analysis of Selected Question 4 from the Survey .....75  
Figure 9. Analysis of Selected Question 5 from the Survey .....75

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### Background

During the spring of 2020 and 2021, Korean churches in the United States have undergone an unexpected transition from in-person services to online worship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most ministers and church members adapted to this transition thanks to previously developed digital technology platforms and precedent of grown numbers in conducting online worship. According to studies, many churches faced difficulties replicating the worship experience from offline worship to online worship.

Negative and positive impacts have been reported among Christian church leaders due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Vivian A. Dzokoto et al. have reported that the ban has impacted fourteen church leaders of Ghana on religious gatherings, which led to negative impacts such as “spiritual slacking, loss of fellowship, disruption of normal routine, pandemic anxiety, and financial stress.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, some noticeable positive impacts were “increased faith, relief/reduced stress, and increased family time.”<sup>2</sup> This positive report provides the legitimacy to examine what Christian leaders could bring into the discussion to make the most spiritual benefit amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Closing places of worship were the church’s general norm for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This created an uneasy atmosphere for churches as well as many religious groups. Saber Yezli and Ana Khan illustrated this atmosphere as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Vivian A. Dzokoto, “Ban of Religious Gatherings During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact on Christian Church Leaders’ Well-Being in Ghana.” *Pastoral psychology*. 70.4 (2021): 335–347. Web.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Social distancing has been key in the fight against the rapid spread of COVID-19 with interventions to limit people contact and gatherings introduced in many countries, including the closure of schools, malls, and offices. It is then time to also temporarily close places of worship and suspend religious gatherings. The current COVID-19 ‘infodemic’ is creating a sense of anxiety, panic, and fear among many people. In such a climate, group prayers and gatherings at places of worship such as mosques, temples, churches, and synagogues could serve as an important outlet for people of faith to seek comfort, strength, and direction, express solidarity, and fortify community cohesion and relationships. In addition, such gatherings could be used as an effective platform for COVID-19 risk communication. However, gatherings at places of worship represent a risk for COVID-19 transmission to potentially large numbers of people from a single case.<sup>3</sup>

Christian communities were experiencing a crisis of their spiritual comfort zone: the place for worship and fellowship among believers. They looked to online platforms as the most viable alternative, but they were far from in-person worship.

In this context, the researcher attempted to find similar situations that the protagonists of the Bible faced. There were two representative incidents in which the people of God could not gather for worship: the Exilic period and the Early Church era. In light of the exegetical and historical examination of these two periods, the researcher attempted to draw out biblical worship principles in situations when the congregation could not gather for worship. Considering the similar worship situation under COVID-19, these principles could be foundations in designing and conducting online worship.

There also have been theological and practical attempts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Theological answers were crucial for Christians to continue with their spiritual lives and discipline amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Nick Donnelly published a manual that Catholic

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<sup>3</sup> Saber Yezli, PhD, Anas Khan, MD, “COVID-19 pandemic: it is time to temporarily close places of worship and to suspend religious gatherings,” *Journal of Travel Medicine*, Volume 28, Issue 2, March 2021, taaa065, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/jtm/taaa065>.

churches could use in times of emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Donnelly's book comprises suggested protocols that Catholic churches can take in situations such as "when deprived of confession or Holy communion when suffering life-threatening situation without a priest, scripture for times of emergency."<sup>4</sup>

Another example of a theological response was the effort to grant legitimacy to online worship. Presbyterian Church of Korea concluded that utilizing and maintaining an online worship platform is inevitable under the COVID-19 pandemic and began "to seriously rethink the essence of biblical worship."<sup>5</sup> Baik Chung-Hyun added that "though a gathering worship in a place is still important, how to worship is more essential than where we worship."<sup>6</sup>

Churches have adopted the platform of social media more than ever. Justine and Joseph Remus Galang presented how social media have aided churches in the Philippines. They claimed through their article that "if social media is utilized ethically and with positive disposition and perspective, it can be a powerful tool in the Church's mission of evangelization, and its response to this pandemic."<sup>7</sup>

Having examined these responses and the issues listed above, the researcher felt the need to aid ministers who had no other realistic alternative to conduct online worship. Hence, a significant portion of this thesis was devoted to answering this central research question. We

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<sup>4</sup> Nick Donnelly, *A Catholic Survival Guide for Times of Emergency*, (Ashland: TAN Books, 2020) Accessed July 28, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>5</sup> Baik Chung-Hyun, "The Korean Church's Reflection on Worship, Church, and Mission in the Calamity of the COVID-19 Pandemic." *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 45, no. 1 (2021): 42-50.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Justine Renu F Galang, Joseph Renu F Galang, "Social media as tool for the Church's mission and response to the COVID-19 pandemic," *Journal of Public Health*, 2021;, fdab263, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/pubmed/fdab263>.

elaborate a research question that could potentially aid ministers who are going through transitions in worship platforms: “What are the essential elements of worship that are to be preserved when transitioning into any form of worship, including online worship?” This question was investigated by examining the worship principles observed during the exilic period and the Early Church era in the Scripture.

### **Statement of Problem**

Due to social distancing, quarantine, and isolation, many ministers and church members under COVID-19 transitioned from offline worship to online worship. Moreover, WHO (World Health Organization) recommended “conducting faith activities remotely/virtually as long as required.”<sup>8</sup>

Online worship is likely to be the norm for many churches in the future during the pandemic restrictions. Considering these issues, We decided to research the needs and effects of this situation on the ministers and congregations involved in online worship. In order to find the most urgent needs of ministers who conduct online worship, We developed questionnaires to Korean ministers in the Northern Virginia area who underwent a transition in worship from offline to the online platform under COVID-19. This thesis is built upon this survey.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to review the current needs regarding online worship that Korean ministers in the Northern Virginia area conducted under the COVID-19 pandemic, and

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<sup>8</sup> WHO, “Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19,” April 7 2020. [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19?gclid=CjwKCAjwqML6BRAHEiwAdquMnYXpLVks5xW6W-JK6kWkwx7N049eSOBPu\\_cNjlhZEzjxr3-ZunbusxoCdKMQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19?gclid=CjwKCAjwqML6BRAHEiwAdquMnYXpLVks5xW6W-JK6kWkwx7N049eSOBPu_cNjlhZEzjxr3-ZunbusxoCdKMQAvD_BwE)

thereby supplement the found needs through establishing a theological basis and a summary of essential elements of worship that should be applied to online worshiping groups.

### **Significance of the Study**

Although some churches have reopened and started to gather offline with social distancing guidelines after a tempest of COVID-19, the need for retaining online worship platforms is still relevant. Using both online and offline worship platforms will be likely in the future. In this regard, it will be vital for ministers who conduct online worship to establish the essence of worship. Additionally, the ministers who completed the survey for this thesis have expressed that possessing and educating the essence of worship is imperative under the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering these circumstances, this study aims to guide the ministers who conduct online worship. The guidance will be derived from answering the following question: What elements of the essence of worship must be preserved when the congregation cannot gather?

To answer this question, we investigated what and how essential elements of worship were preserved in the Exilic Period and the Early Church Era when the congregation could not gather physically for worship. This historical investigation will aid the ministers and the readers recognize the essential elements of worship that must be preserved amid a transition in worship.

### **Limitation of the Study**

This study is designed to supply a theological basis to meet the needs of ministers who conduct online worship under the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey was conducted among Korean ministers in the Northern Virginia area. The scope of this research was to see in what areas these ministers were facing the most challenges in conducting online worship. From this survey, the researcher found challenging areas addressed with biblical exegesis and historical research. Thus, this study is not experimental research. Instead, it mainly supplies some fundamental theories and

practical suggestions derived from exegetical and historical research applicable in transitioning to an online worship platform.

It was not merely one finding<sup>9</sup> regarding the needs of the survey participants. There were several other needs, such as ways to vitalize family worship and reflecting congregational feedback. Due to the focus and length of this thesis, we could not expound utterly on these matters. Again, most parts of this thesis will elaborate on essential elements of worship to be preserved in situations unable for physical gathering.

Additionally, there exists a limit on how the participants were all Korean ministers in Northern Virginia, and thus, it is hard to state that all the general needs in online worship ministry were listed in this thesis.

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

This dissertation utilizes mixed-method research. The initial research question was, “what essential elements of worship should be preserved whenever there is a need for a transition to remote worship when the congregation cannot gather for in-person worship?” A survey was conducted among Korean ministers in the Northern Virginia area who conducted online worship during the COVID-19 pandemic to investigate this question. They expressed a dire need for education of the essence of worship during online worship. Following this need, the researcher decided to examine the biblical principles that would be helpful and relevant in conducting transition on worship platforms. These are the subsequent research questions developed for this study:

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<sup>9</sup> It was not merely the education of essence of worship that was found as needs of survey participants.

RQ1: What essential elements of worship should be preserved whenever there is a need for a transition to remote worship when the congregation cannot gather for in-person worship?

H1: Worship Lifestyle must be preserved according to the Bible's emphasis on how worshipful life goes beyond rituals and meetings.

This research question was examined through biblical exegesis and historical research.

Derived and extracted from the survey questions, we developed two additional research questions:

RQ2: What are some ways worship leaders can make online worship most effective?

H2: There are opportunities for pastoral care and evaluations on individual worshipers' lifestyles and authentic worshipful hearts due to the moving of the venue of worship from a physical place to the hearts and lives of the congregation.

RQ3: What are the pros of online worship?

H3: More family time and worship

RQ4: What could be improved to address the needs of ministers who conduct online worship?

H4: Technical support is the most pressing need for online worship ministers.

RQ5: What areas could be improved in online worship?

H5: Developing ways for interaction and feedback will help with the most challenging and neglected element of online worship: fellowship.

These questions and answers led to the need to conduct theological research in some

aspects of worship such as Discipline, Koinonia, and Call & Response.

In short, by answering the researcher's quantitative questions, participant ministers reported several needs and challenges in online worship. The researcher attempted to address and offer guidance through examining qualitative questions.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic struck diverse areas of contemporary civilization, including the ways of conducting religious rituals. The outcomes were devastating, including communal Christian worship. During the devastating period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the transition to the online worship platform of churches worldwide was inevitable. Nevertheless, there are still crucial and valuable elements of worship to be preserved among these devastations and transitions. These elements can be verified by examining biblical principles of worship that were preserved during the exilic period. This dissertation will present the circumstances of the exilic period, which will conclude that there are some parallel aspects between the exilic period and the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, this presentation will provide biblical responses on how people continued to worship under circumstances when people could not gather for in-person worship. These biblical responses will be relevant to apply to worship settings under the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this chapter, the researcher will present essential elements of worship to be preserved under circumstances when the congregation cannot gather for in-person meetings, such as under the COVID-19 pandemic. Parallel structures will be utilized so that comparison between the Bible era and the COVID-19 pandemic will be vivid. This comparison will confirm the similar facets and the un-similar aspects, thereby discern, extract, and apply some of the biblical principles of worship relevant to situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, observations of online worship ministry practices during the COVID-19 pandemic will be conducted by discerning the benefits and pitfalls of online worship. The

benefits of online worship will be focused on family worship, while the pitfalls of online worship will be focused on the lack of interactive communication.

### **Biblical Principles of Worship under COVID-19 Pandemic**

In recent issues of worship, there has been a debate on forms of worship. As contemporary worship tends to conduct worship informally, which is to say that today's worship form does not accord with so-called liturgical worship, the biblical principles of worship became an inevitable source of worship that could be applied to any form of worship. Today's worshippers "need to return to the first principles, to the foundations, and search out what God wants us to do in worship."<sup>10</sup> Following is one of the ways to illustrate biblical principles of worship.

While there are several ways to illustrate the biblical principles of worship, the researcher decided to approach from the ecclesiastical view for the scope and design of this dissertation. There is a consensus on essential structure elements that forms a church. They are Kerygma, Didache, Koinonia, Diakonia, and Liturgia. They are often called "the five ancient marks of the church."<sup>11</sup> These elements are essential for conducting biblical worship because a church is a worshipping community. Now then, what do these elements represent? Considering the biblical usages of each term aids one's understanding of these elements. The Centre for Christian Studies well summarized the core of each element.

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<sup>10</sup> R. C. Sproul, *How Then Shall We Worship?: Biblical Principles to Guide Us Today*, (David C. Cook, 2013),14.

<sup>11</sup> Lessons from Laodicea, 106.

- 1) Kerygma – the proclamation of the Gospel. Kerygma is translated in the New Testament as “proclaiming,” “announcing,” “preaching.” This church mark indicates that the church is being the church when the message of good news – the gospel — is being shared.
- 2) Didache – training in the Way of Christ. Didache is variously translated as “teaching” (in Latin “doctrine” meaning teachings and “doctor” meaning teacher), “formation,” and “training.” Rather than simply acquiring a body of knowledge, Didache is more like an apprenticeship. Ideally, Didache begins when we enter the life of the church and is a life-long process.
- 3) Koinonia – community in Christ. Koinonia translates into words like “community,” “fellowship,” and “participation.”
- 4) Diakonia – serving Christ. Diakonia is the root word for our terms “diaconal ministry” and “deacon.” In the world of the New Testament, it referred to the role of a servant. It is after the diaconal symbol of foot washing that Jesus proclaims the new commandment “that he or she love one another as Jesus has loved them.” The parable also informs Diakonia of the sheep and the goats, in which Jesus teaches that he is present in the most unexpected of strangers.
- 5) Liturgia – worship of God. Liturgia means “a work of the people.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Centre for Christian Studies, accessed on June 24, 2021, <https://ccsonline.ca/2014/02/five-ways-of-talking-about-church/#comment-118176>.

Out of these essential elements, there seemed to be a lack of conduct or necessity to emphasize some elements under online worship platforms. They were Kerygma, Didache, and Koinonia.

Kerygma, proclaiming, announcing, and preaching the Word of God, was at the center of restoration of God's worshipers in the exilic period when they experience the loss of worshiping venue and were scattered. Kerygma is also essential in restoring biblical worship today when worshipers cannot gather in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Proclamation of the Word of God is to be emphasized in both online and offline worship platforms. Restoration of biblical worship in online worship platforms depends substantially on the Kerygma ministry.

Didache, teaching, training, and discipleship can be some of the benefits of online worship. While the church members cannot gather in person for worship, there is a chance for the family members to gather as a small church. Quarantine could function as a platform for conducting family worship and spiritual discipline within. *Havruta*, a traditional Hebrew way of disciplining children at homes and the Early Church house worship, provides the legitimacy for Christians to conduct family worship and train their children.

Koinonia, community, fellowship, and participation, was an element that was easily neglected under online worship platforms due to the restriction of not being able to gather in one space. There were technical limits in conducting Koinonia and having interactive communications through an online worship platform. These limits can be partly overcome by examining how online education has developed technical ways to conduct bilateral dialogue in their teaching curriculum and apply it to online worship.

Preserving the essence of worship encompasses maintaining the five marks of the church. This means that worship is conducted in a liturgical sense and in a worship lifestyle that includes Kerygma, Didache, Koinonia, Diakonia, and Liturgia whether in public, private, or private in-person or online worship. When observing these essential elements of worship, the notion of worship needs to reach beyond the stages or gatherings of worship. By examining the exilic period and the Early Church, the researcher will argue that Kerygma, Didache, and Koinonia were still essential elements of worship when the congregation could not gather for worship and should be supplemented to online worship services today.

### **Preserving The Essence of Worship under COVID-19 Pandemic**

This part of the dissertation will elaborate on the parallel structure between the exilic period and the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby corroborating the relevance of applying biblical principles of worship from the exilic period into situations where worshipers cannot gather in person, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. First, extant parallelism will be verified by illustrating the lives of the exilic period and the situations of the COVID-19 pandemic. After that, there will be examinations on how worshipers responded to situations when they could not gather in person for worship under the exilic period. This biblical response of worshipers will show two crucial worship principles: 1) The Word of God was at the center of restoration of true worship, and 2) Ultimate restoration of true worship is done through Jesus. Considering the extant parallelism between the exilic period and the COVID-19 pandemic, these two biblical responses are still relevant to situations of worshipers not being able to gather in person for worship. Depicting parallel circumstantial figures between the exilic period and the COVID-19 pandemic will serve

as a starting point to look for resolutions if situations as the COVID-19 pandemic were to occur soon.

### Parallel Circumstantial Figures between the Exilic Period and COVID-19 Pandemic

Throughout history, the motif of Babylon has been adopted and employed in each different era. For example, “an early and important adaptation of this motif can be found in the Book of Revelation (14, 16-18), in which Rome is compared to Babylon as a city of sin, decadence, and oppression”<sup>13</sup> and “Martin Luther employed the motif of Babylon to criticize the Roman Catholic Church.”<sup>14</sup> In relatively recent history, “a famous product of this tradition is Boney M’s disco hit *Rivers of Babylon*, originally a Jamaican song based on Psalm 137.”<sup>15</sup> As a similar stream of attempts in interpreting the Babylon exile throughout history that reflects each era, the researcher pointed out that there is also parallelism when comparing the situations of the exilic period and COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia: A Study of Deportees in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BCE*, (Brill. 2020). 26

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> It is noteworthy to refer to how Helen Froud summarized this parallelism; “The Babylonian exile, described by Wright as ‘the greatest disaster of all’ for God’s people, presents a number of different parallels to the COVID-19 pandemic. It describes large numbers of culturally similar people who are unable, for reasons out with their faith, to gather in community in their chosen location for worship. There are documented histories of New Testament Christians being unable to gather for worship, but these do not feature explicitly within New Testament narratives. However, Christians are reminded in Phil. 3:20 and Heb.13:14 and elsewhere that their citizenship is not on earth, and that exile is a permanent condition for those who are faithful. These Scriptures on exile and return are therefore a helpful context for the Church to reflect on her return to gathered worship.”, Helen Froud (2021) Returning from exile? Reconciliation within the church after COVID-19, *Practical Theology*, 14:1-2, 123-131, DOI: 10.1080/1756073X.2020.1861402, accessed on July 14, 2021, <https://www.tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/1756073X.2020.1861402?needAccess=true>.

“The Hebrew Bible is an important source for reconstructing the events leading to the Babylonian exile, but it offers relatively little information on Judean life in Babylonia.”<sup>17</sup> To compensate for this little information, the parallelism presented in this dissertation will put its ground primarily on Tero Alstola’s work, *Judeans in Babylonia*, and J.L. Wright (eds.)’s compilation work, *Interpreting Exile: Interdisciplinary Studies of Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, for depicting the lives of the exilic period. For depicting the lives after the COVID-19 pandemic, various recent sources will be utilized. These depictions will provide a comparison and parallelism between the lives of Judeans in Babylonian exile and people under the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alstola focuses on recent studies on excavated, studied, and published cuneiform sources, which depicted well the lives of Judeans in Babylonia in the sixth and fifth century B.C.E. The lives of Judeans can be verified through the “Yahwistic names” recorded in the cuneiforms, just as one can identify “Kim’s family” as Korean people. “In Babylonia in the sixth and fifth centuries, Yahwistic names indicated a person’s Judean origin.”<sup>18</sup>

Through this onomastic research and comparison, the researcher was able to extract and point out the following parallel circumstantial figures between lives in the exilic period and COVID-19 pandemic: 1) Impact of deaths: Demographical Decline, 2) Economic Blow, 3) Diminish in Security, 4) Pragmatic Response, 5) Re-establishing Spiritual Identity through Documenting, 6) Anxiety and 7) PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder).

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>18</sup> Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 55.

## Impact of Deaths: Demographical Decline

War indisputably accompanies a substantial number of deaths. When the Judeans and the city of Jerusalem underwent Babylonian campaign, it is evident that war involved cascading demographical decline. It was not the only deportation to Babylon that affected the demographical decline of Judeans but also many other tragic results that derived from the Babylonian campaign to Jerusalem.

Avraham Faust presented a plausible assumption that the Judeans who experienced exile must have undergone a demographical decline. Faust applied “the mechanism of demographic decline” observed from warfare in the exilic era. According to Faust, “the mechanism of demographic decline” involves the following elements: Death in Battle, Famine and Epidemics, Executions, Long-Range Factors<sup>19</sup>, Refugees, Insecurity, and Deportation.<sup>20</sup> Among these factors, deaths in battle were prominent factors regarding the demographical decline of Judeans who underwent exile.

Frank Ritzel Ames depicts a demographical decline of Judeans under exile from a biblical perspective through the book of Jeremiah. Ames presents the cascading effects of displacement. This is explicitly elaborated via his interpretation of Jeremiah 29:4-23. This passage is arranged in the form of chiasm as following:

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<sup>19</sup> Faust explained the Long-Range Factors as the Life Support Systems being destroyed which derived from collapse of the administration that led to further increase of famine. See Avraham Faust, *Interpreting Exile: Interdisciplinary Studies of Displacement of Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, “Deportation and Demography in Sixth Century B.C.E”., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 97.

<sup>20</sup> Avraham Faust, *Interpreting Exile: Interdisciplinary Studies of Displacement of Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, “Deportation and Demography in Sixth Century B.C.E.”, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 96-99.

- A Welfare of Babylon (4-9)
- B Welfare of Jerusalem (10-14)
- B' Judgment in Jerusalem (16-20)
- A' Judgement in Babylon (15, 21-13)<sup>21</sup>

As shown in this chiasm structure, the judgmental notion is vividly emphasized through comparison with welfare. God's divine voice is being pronounced on how Judah embraces this imminent judgment and reacts with responsibility under exile. Through this divine voice, readers and listeners of the book of Jeremiah notice how terrible the judgment and results of displacement will be. Ames states that "the cascading effects of displacement are evident in what the letter says about judgment, which includes the triple threat of 'sword, famine, and pestilence' (v. 17): violence that displaces, a diminishing of resources needed for survival, and the heightened morbidity and mortality that plague exile (cf. v. 18)."<sup>22</sup>

Demographical decline and impact of deaths, to some degree, also resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Research on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic in 21 industrialized countries presented death numbers as following: "From mid-February through May 2020, 206,000 (95% credible interval, 178,100–231,000) more people died in these countries than would have had the pandemic not occurred."<sup>23</sup> Additionally, a report from CDC (Centers for

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<sup>21</sup> Frank Ritzel Ames, *Interpreting Exile: Interdisciplinary Studies of Displacement of Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, "The Cascading Effects of Exile: From Diminished Resources to New Identities", (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 182.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Ritzel Ames, "The Cascading Effects of Exile: From Diminished Resources to New Identities", 183.

<sup>23</sup> Kontis, V., Bennett, J.E., Rashid, T. et al. Magnitude, demographics and dynamics of the effect of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic on all-cause mortality in 21 industrialized countries. *Nat Med* 26, 1919–1928 (2020), accessed on July 6, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-020-1112-0>.

Disease Control and Prevention) announced 604,251 total deaths due to COVID-19 as of July 9, 2021.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, many deaths could not be neglected in both periods of the Babylonian exile and COVID-19 pandemic. The Babylonian campaign against Judah and the crisis from the coronavirus also led to an economic blow.

### **Economic Blow**

While some Judeans adjusted well economically under Babylonian exile, some underwent an economic blow. One of them was indebtedness. It is plausible through the following illustrations to speculate that many Judeans during exile were suffering from indebtedness.

Excavated Babylonian cuneiforms attest that some of the royal lands of Babylon were allotted to some Judeans, which made them landlords. As a forfeit of this allotment, these Judean landlords were burdened with taxes and service obligations. In this process, “it appears some farmers struggled to make ends meet”<sup>25</sup> and “credit was needed to pay taxes or to hire a substitute to perform service obligations, and sometimes indebtedness resulted in the pledging of landholdings.”<sup>26</sup> To overcome economic struggles pertaining to paying taxes and service

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<sup>24</sup> CDC, COVID Data Tracker, accessed on July 9, 2021, [https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases\\_casesper100klast7days](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesper100klast7days).

<sup>25</sup> Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 159.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

obligations, family units or communal collaborations such as the Murašu family worked together as a larger group.<sup>27</sup>

There is also biblical evidence of an economic blow that occurred in the exilic period. When reading 2 Kings chapter 24 and 25, along with the destruction of the temple, one can see that all the gold, silver, and the vessels used in YHWH's house and the King's house had been carried off to Babylon. Jerusalem's wealth was moved to Babylon. 2 Kings 24:13 states, "He[Nebuchadnezzar] carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, just as the LORD had said." All the treasures of the temple and palace were transported to Babylon. In chapter 25, Babylonian soldiers break into pieces all the large objects and carry them to Babylon. (25:13-15a) Massive quantity was carried out to Babylon when considering the expression from 25:15b and 25:16 of what was taken away; "what was fine gold and what was fine silver," and "Solomon had made for the house of LORD." This kind of deportation of wealth and demolition of temples was a conventional way of conquering and remapping territories in the days back then.<sup>28</sup>

The economic blow was also present after the impact of COVID-19. BBC News announced the following measures on stock markets from Bloomberg source.<sup>29</sup> "The FTSE

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>28</sup> Jacob L. Wright, *Interpreting Exile: Interdisciplinary Studies of Displacement of Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, "The Deportation of Jerusalem's wealth and Demise of Native Sovereignty in the Book of Kings", (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 120-121.

<sup>29</sup> Lora Jones, Daniele Palumbo, and David Brown, BBC News, "Coronavirus: How the pandemic has changed the world economy," accessed on July 9, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51706225>.

dropped 14.3% in 2020, its worst performance since 2008.”<sup>30</sup> Additionally, BBC News showed measures that corroborated the following elements: the struggle of unemployment, the global economy shrank by 4.4% in 2020,<sup>31</sup> commercial flights remaining well below normal levels, crumbling in the global tourism industry, and a massive drop in shoppers.

Recent research shows that the recession caused by COVID-19 will last in the long term. Research on the long-term impact of COVID-19 “estimates the size of the COVID-19 related unemployment shock between 2 and 5 times larger than the typical unemployment shock, depending on race and gender, resulting in a significant increase in mortality rates and drop in life expectancy.”<sup>32</sup>

As seen above, the economic crisis was present in both Babylonian exile and the COVID-19 pandemic periods. Along with demographical decline and economic blow, there was diminished security in both exilic periods and the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Diminish in Security**

Studies about the exile show that when exile occurs, it brings insecurity.<sup>33</sup> Exile places the deportees in insecurity pertained to lack of resources such as food, shelter, water, education, and employment; sexual assault; and health issues. Frank Ritel Ames performed a sociological

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> BBC stated that this decline was the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930’s.

<sup>32</sup> Fancesco Bianchi, Giada Bianchi, and Donho Song, *NBER Working Paper No. 28304*, “The Long-Term Impact of the COVID-19 Unemployment Shock on Life Expectancy and Mortality Rates, (National Bureau of Economic Research, MA, December 2020).

<sup>33</sup> Frank Ritel Ames, *Interpreting Exile: Interdisciplinary Studies of Displacement of Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, “The Cascading Effects of Exile: From Diminished Resources to New Identities”, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 175.

approach in elaborating on how exile affected one society such as Judah. Ames presented three effects of exile: Diminish of Resources and Security; Increased Morbidity and Mortality; and Pragmatic Response to Diminished Resources and Security and Increased Rates of Morbidity and Mortality.<sup>34</sup>

Loss of resources during exile and dislocation is directly connected to insecurity. According to Ames, “exile separates people from their property, including food and water, clothing and furnishings, tools, documents, and artistic, religious, and nostalgic items, as well as animals, which are a form of wealth and a source of food, clothing, entertainment, warmth, and tools.”<sup>35</sup> Huge material loss leads to insecurity. This mainly corresponds to the insecurity of women. Ames argues that “security diminishes during and after relocation, and displacement puts women in particular at risk.”<sup>36</sup>

Risks in food security due to COVID-19 are also becoming an issue. An article regarding “COVID-19 risks to global food security” made a statement that “although no major food shortages have emerged as yet, agricultural and food markets are facing disruptions because of labor shortages created by restrictions on movements of people and shifts in food demand resulting from closures of restaurants and schools as well as from income loss.”<sup>37</sup> According to that article, there are four pillars that could effect food security under pandemic: “availability (is

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<sup>34</sup> Frank Ritchel Ames, “The Cascading Effects of Exile: From Diminished Resources to New Identities”, 175-177.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> David Laborde, Will Martin, Johan Swinne, and Rob Vos, Science, “COVID-19 risks to global food security,” *Science* 31 Jul 2020:, Vol. 369, Issue 6503, pp. 500-502, DOI: 10.1126/science.abc4765, accessed on July 10, 2021, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/369/6503/500.summary>.

the supply of food adequate?), access (can people obtain the food they need?), utilization (do people have enough intake of nutrients?), and stability (can people access food at all times?).”<sup>38</sup>

Risk in cyber security is also an issue under the COVID-19 pandemic. In their recent article, Navid Ali Khan, Sarfraz Nawaz Brohi, and Noor Zaman have pointed out that these ten cybersecurity threats had and could take place during the pandemic: DDos Attack, Malicious Domains, Malicious Websites, Malware, Ransomware, Spam Emails, Malicious Social Media Messaging, Business Email Compromise, Mobile Apps, and Browsing Apps.<sup>39</sup> That study suggests that “bad actors around the world are using the coronavirus as a new tool for their evil deeds in the form of hacking, attacking or scams,” and added the following report: “According to Trends micro research, in the recent pandemic, there were a total of more than 907K Spam messages, 737 Malware attacks, and 48K hits on malicious links around the world until the start of April 2020.”<sup>40</sup>

Demographical decline, economic blow, and security diminish substantially affected Judeans' lives in the exilic period and people who underwent the COVID-19 pandemic. They all had to adjust to the new environment. They needed to respond relevantly, practically, and spiritually to continue with their lives.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Navid Ali Khan, Sarfraz Nawaz Brohi, and Noor Zaman, “Ten Deadly Cyber Security Threats Amid COVID-19 Pandemic”, accessed on July 10, 2021, [https://seap.taylors.edu.my/file/remis/publication/109566\\_7215\\_1.pdf](https://seap.taylors.edu.my/file/remis/publication/109566_7215_1.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Navid Ali Khan, Sarfraz Nawaz Brohi, and Noor Zaman, “Ten Deadly Cyber Security Threats Amid COVID-19 Pandemic.”

## Pragmatic Response

Among the hardships of being dispersed from Jerusalem to a foreign land, Babylonia, there were practical responses to continuing their life in the new environment. They had to adapt to the new environment and overcome their economic blow from national destruction. Alstola's work asserted that some Judeans made their careers as merchants in Babylonia while in exile. Prosopographical research showed that some exiled Judeans were closely connected with the community of merchants in Sippar.<sup>41</sup> Some of these Judeans found their place among the community of merchants in Sippar.<sup>42</sup> They had a good social standing in Sippar as so-called *tamkaru*, which literally means merchant.

The past existence of individual Judean landholders and land-cultivators in Babylonian exile is also attested through the texts from *Yāhūdu*, the town of Judeans in Babylonia. "Royal land was granted to individual landholders who in exchange had to pay taxes to perform military or corvée services."<sup>43</sup> In this regard, these kinds of lands were called "the land-for-service sector." Additionally, "the term *šušānu* appears in the texts from *Yāhūdu* and its surroundings in the reign of Darius I when it becomes a common keyword in texts refereeing to the royal lands cultivated by Judeans."<sup>44</sup>

A similar structure of land-for-service in the *Yāhūdu* text also appears in other

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<sup>41</sup> Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 95. Sippar was an ancient Near Eastern Sumerian and later Babylonian city on the east bank of the Euphrates river. These Judean merchants' names are recorded as descendants of Arih, one of Judean names found in Babylonian cuneiforms.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>44</sup> Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 110.

excavations such as *the Murašu archive* documents.<sup>45</sup> “Like in *Yāhūdu*, the farmers of the state lands are occasionally called *šušānus* in the documents, and they were part of a complex hierarchical structure of land tenure.”<sup>46</sup> In the *Murašu* archive documents, terms such as *hatru* and *saknu* appear, referring to landlords and officials in charge of land tenure.<sup>47</sup> Judean names appear in the *Murašu* archive associated with these occupations. Thus, in the *Yāhūdu* texts and *Murašu archive*, Judeans seemed to have made their practical adjustments to live out their lives in the foreign land. Alstola makes the following conclusion after his study on in *Yāhūdu* texts and *Murašu archive*: “There seems to be no reason to doubt that most Judean deportees worked in the land-for-service sector in Babylonia. The picture emerging from the *Murašû* archive is consistent with that from the environs of *Yāhūdu*: Judeans were settled in communities and assigned to certain administrative units which were still observable 150 years after the deportations from Judah.”<sup>48</sup>

Adapting to new economic environments was not much different while undergoing the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic blow due to the virus has been an ongoing struggle since it had struck our lifestyles. Jobs that involved in-person meetings had to find their way into and adapt to online stages. Students and faculty members had to adjust to online environments.

Governments had to find ways to aid in compensating for the lost jobs due to lockdown. This

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<sup>45</sup> The *Murašu* archive was the most important source for the study of Judeans in Babylonia until the publication of the texts from the environs of *Yāhūdu*. The members of the *Murašu* family are an example of people who worked as middlemen between the state administration and landholders. Judeans names appear in the *Murašu* archive who dealt with the *Murašu* family; names such as *Pili-Yāma/Šillimu*, *Yadi-Yāma/Banā-Yāma*, and *Yadi-Yāma’s son Yāhu-natan*. See Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 164, 170.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 202.

lockdown may have protected peoples' health, but it was done with a price. The following paragraphs are some examples of these responses and adjustments made under the COVID-19 pandemic.

For online professors, there was a development in providing lessons on using Zoom and workshops on creating multiple-choice questions (MCQs).<sup>49</sup> An article regarding farmworkers under the COVID-19 pandemic noted that “the COVID-19 pandemic has shone a harsh light on the historical inequality, lack of labor and social protection, and precarious and exploitative labor conditions that farmworkers face.” “Some estimates suggest that about 50% of the US workforce is now working from home [as of April 2020].” Farmworkers were at risk of losing their jobs and needed some form of compensation.<sup>51</sup>

Theological responses were attempted and provided to help Christians view the COVID-19 pandemic with its relation to Christianity. There were also practical responses to dislocation in aspects of spiritual lives as communities. For example, Helen Froud presented the

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49 Ayat Nabil Eltayar, Noha Ibrahim Eldesoky, Hoda Khalifa and Soha Rashed, “Online faculty development using cognitive apprenticeship in response to COVID-19,” accessed on July 13, 2021, <https://web-a-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=14787e8f-109b-46f7-9f60-fec3c06ef317%40sdc-v-sessmgr01>

<sup>51</sup> Handal, Alexis J., Ph.D., M.P.H., Iglesias-Ríos, Lisbeth, Ph.D., M.P.H., Paul J. Fleming Ph.D., M.P.H., Valentín-Cortés, Mislael A., MSW, M.P.H., and Marie S. O'Neill Ph.D. ““Essential” but Expendable: Farmworkers during the COVID-19 Pandemic—the Michigan Farmworker Project.” *American Journal of Public Health* 110, no. 12 (12, 2020): 1760-2, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fessential-expendable-farmworkers-during-covid-19%2Fdocview%2F2462178428%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

reconciliation process of exile derived from the text in Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>52</sup> Froud added two meanings to exile and returned as follows:

First, there is a Godly imperative for Christians to reconcile with one another when they return together (Ezra 10, Neh. 9). A failure to reconcile produces human sins of division and exclusion. Secondly, it is the responsibility of those who lead the Church militant to remind the people of their guiding spiritual principles (Neh. 8) and to lead this process through a process of repentance, forgiveness (2 Cor. 2), and reconciliation (2 Cor. 5). For the contemporary church returning to gathered fellowship and worship after a pandemic, the same principles apply to all members of that fellowship as they return and in the years ahead.<sup>53</sup>

During the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, aspects of ministry, serving, and worship had changed substantially. “For most denominations, the Christian practices of worship, pastoral care, and hospitality became three key priorities of lockdown.”<sup>54</sup> Helen Froud observed that there were two categories that Christians put their place into; Insiders and Outsiders.<sup>55</sup> Insiders were “a minority of individuals who have remained actively engaged in their church.”<sup>56</sup> These people were relatively healthier and younger volunteers who took part in producing online worship. However, Froud reported that outsiders who were excluded from being actively involved in church “may have experienced loneliness or loss; others endured physical isolation

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<sup>52</sup> Helen Froud (2021) “Returning from exile? Reconciliation within the church after COVID-19,” *Practical Theology*, 14:1-2, 123-131, DOI: 10.1080/1756073X.2020.1861402, accessed on July 14, 2021, <https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/1756073X.2020.1861402?needAccess=true>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Helen Froud (2021) “Returning from exile? Reconciliation within the church after COVID-19.”.

or poverty.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, in these circumstances, pastoral care and hospitality became a critical element for ministers whether they would minister through online or offline platforms.

### **Re-establishing Spiritual Identity through the Word of God**

As one of the pragmatic responses to adapting to the Babylonian culture, there seems to have been chances of compromise in retaining Judean identity, in some cases, even in worshipping Yahweh. Ahīqam, whose name was recorded in the *Yāhūdu* cuneiforms as one of the Judean landlords, adapted to Babylonian culture. Although the Ahīqam’s family did not adopt local name-giving practices to their offsprings, it can be verified in the *Yāhūdu* cuneiforms that “Ahīqam used a stamped seal that fully conforms to the style of contemporary Babylonian seals (B9, 12 Dar). It depicts a worshipper standing before a spade and an eight-pointed star, the symbols of Marduk and Ištar.”<sup>58</sup> Now, it is not plausible to conclude that the Ahīqam family fell for idol worship, but it can at least be speculated that Babylonian culture and religion were permeating the lives of Judean deportees under exile. There was a need to preserve spirituality and faith in Yahweh when worshipping idols was pervasive.

That Idol-worship-culture having been permeating into Judean deportees can be corroborated in Bible texts. When examining chapter 10 of Ezra, readers encounter a rather radical passage of “sending away all the foreign wives and their children (Ezra 10:3)” as one of the ways to reconstruct the covenant with God in the process of returning from exile. Having married to foreign wives in Babylon was depicted as “unfaithfulness (v.2)” in the book of Ezra.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 141. Marduk was a god from ancient Mesopotamia and patron deity of the city of Babylon and Istar was goddess of war and sexual love in Mesopotamian religion.

The notion of unfaithfulness in Ezra chapter 10 is directly connected with idol worship. When examining the Hebraic root word of “have been unfaithful (v.2)”, *m’l*, Hebrew lexicon designates “breaking or violation of religious law as a conscious act of treachery” and “according to Ezekiel 39:23 it was the cause of the exile.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, according to Ezra and Ezekiel, being married to foreign wives meant a considerable chance of idol worship. The danger of idol worship was to be excluded in the process of returning from exile. Returning from exile meant re-establishing pre-exilic spiritual identity. It is noteworthy that retaining and re-establishing spiritual identity as God’s people under exile was mainly done through God’s Word to retain and re-establish spiritual identity.

Ezra and Nehemiah are two key texts that depict the return of the exiled. When reading this returning and reconstructing process of Judeans, readers encounter a spiritual reformation executed through the Word of God in Nehemiah chapter 8. In Nehemiah 8:1-12, scribe Ezra reads the Word of God, the Torah, to the people. The reading lasted until midday (v.3a). “All the people listened attentively to the book of the law (v. 3b).” After Ezra had read the Torah, the Levites, whose names are listed in verse 7, elaborated the meanings of the Torah to the people who listened. In response to listening to the Torah and its elaboration, people cried (v.9), rejoiced, and celebrated when having understood the word of the Torah (v.12b). Reading, listening to, learning, and understanding the Word of God, the Torah, was the milestone in the process of return from exile. It was not only the walls of the temple they had to reconstruct but also the spiritual identity. “No social reconstruction is possible without spiritual renewal first.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> CSB Study Bible: Notes.

<sup>60</sup> Bob Wielenga,. "Renewal and Reconstruction: Holy Writ in Ezra-Nehemiah - A Missional Reading." *In Die Skriflig* 47, no. 1 (2013): f1-9,

Scribes such as Ezra played an essential role in re-establishing spiritual identity under exile and considering the exilic situation when only one percent of the population could read.<sup>61</sup>, the role of scribes who could read and declare the Word of God was critical in spiritual formation. The Word of God was at the center of spiritual formation in the idol-worshipping world. This applies to today's world.

The issue of retaining spiritual identity under the COVID-19 pandemic was also one of the elements that the ministers had to put into their endeavor. Ministers needed to look after and provide pastoral care to the scattered church congregation. Theologians needed answers to not-able-to-gather situations so that the congregation could remain faithful worshipers even in the scattered circumstances. These pastoral endeavors aided the scattered congregation in retaining their Christian spirituality. Worship gatherings had to be re-interpreted so that the scattered worship communities would make sense in worshiping via online platforms. Among various theological and biblical interpretation attempts under the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher will present two that seemed worthy to consider. One is an interpretation regarding the scattered worshiping community, re-considering the scattered nature of the worshiping community, and the other is how that scattered community continued to worship in scattered mode: Paul's action during the time of famine.

Bachelard Kaze Yemtsa shows one of their endeavors in re-establishing spiritual identity under the COVID-19 pandemic. Yemtsa provides his "fresh lens" in viewing the season of "the

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<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Frenewal-reconstruction-holy-writ-ezra-nehemiah%2Fdocview%2F1368186749%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

<sup>61</sup> W.M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible became a book? The textualisation of ancient Israel*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004), 98.

scattered church.” Yemtsa adheres to Neil Hudson’s argument on how “churches are traditionally seen as ‘gathered’ when their members and adherents physically get together for worship, “ and yet, “believers spend most of their time in ‘scattered’ mode, during which the church still exists as a ‘scattered’ entity.”<sup>62</sup> Then, Yemtsa adds his assertions that “the current scattered mode of the congregation has as much to say about their identity.”<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, “if congregations are always both scattered and gathered to start with, then their identity traits do not simply become obsolete when they switch to a wholly scattered mode.”<sup>64</sup>

As one of the biblical answers to pandemics, Stephanus J. Joubert focused on how Paul took action to aid the poor in critical circumstances. As stated in his journal, Joubert interpreted Paul’s aiding-the-poor-action as “Embracing an embodied theology in the time of corona.”<sup>65</sup> His journal discusses how biblical interpretation of today’s phenomenon should lead to actions of love of Christ. Joubert concludes that “theology can no longer be about subjecting the Bible to yet another wave of rational scrutinization, but vice versa” and hopes that “by being creatively ‘reread and redefined’ by the Bible, contemporary theologians will turn into first responders yet again to effectively address the needs, suffering, and well-being of people during this time of

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<sup>62</sup> Bachelard Kaze Yemtsa (2021) “Using the COVID-19 pandemic as fresh lenses to generate a thicker analysis of four research theories on discipleship within a Reformed congregation,” *Practical Theology*, 14:1-2, 58-71, DOI: 10.1080/1756073X.2021.1874647.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Bachelard Kaze Yemtsa (2021) “Using the COVID-19 pandemic as fresh lenses to generate a thicker analysis of four research theories on discipleship within a Reformed congregation.”

<sup>65</sup> Stephanus J. Joubert, "Embracing an Embodied Theology in the Time of Corona: Mimetic Synchronisation with the Theological Rhythms and First Responder Stance of the Apostle Paul during the Time of Famine." *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 76, no. 4 (2020), <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fembracing-embodied-theology-time-corona-mimetic%2Fdocview%2F2470840375%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

corona.”<sup>66</sup> In this regard, scattered worshipping communities are to continue to worship through helping others in need in pandemics.

Through observations above, the researcher argues that there are similar endeavors in re-establishing spiritual identity, primarily through reading and interpreting the Word of God, both in the exilic era and in the COVID-19 pandemic. These procedures have been and are an ongoing process.

### **Anxiety and PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder)**

Anxiety is a feeling of fear, dread, and uneasiness.<sup>67</sup> It is believed that anxiety was experienced among many Judeans under exile. Among many other reasons, this anxiety was due to having many constraints on Judeans from Babylon. As stated above, Judeans adjusted practically and effectively in continuing their lives under Babylonian exile, but, in reality, they were still seized people from Jerusalem who were under the control of Babylon. Eventually, they had no choice but to be subjected to Babylonian their daily lives. Alstola argued that “although some Judeans held large plots of land and they could work as minor officials and engage in business activities, the constraints of landholding effectively limited their freedom.”<sup>68</sup> The impact of exile was critical to fragile people such as children.

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<sup>66</sup> Stephanus J. Joubert, "Embracing an Embodied Theology in the Time of Corona: Mimetic Synchronisation with the Theological Rhythms and First Responder Stance of the Apostle Paul during the Time of Famine."

<sup>67</sup> MedlinePlus, accessed on July 2, 2021, <https://medlineplus.gov/anxiety.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 212.

Through war, deportation, and adaptation to Babylon, Judeans experienced exile in the physical and psychological realms. Hugo Kamyra indicated this psychological impact of displacement and exile on children. Kamyra argues that “the context of war has created forcible crossings of physical boundaries—a physical side—and has become the fabric of psychological exile for many children and families.”<sup>69</sup> Kamyra found the parallel connection of the Babylonian exilic period and other recent studies that show how the exiled must have experienced what Joseph H. Albeck calls “intergenerational consequences of trauma.”<sup>70</sup> Kamyra reports Albeck's work which included children's report: “physical, psychological, emotional effects related to these war experiences, strong feelings of fear, confusion, loss of meaning in life.”<sup>71</sup> Kamyra added that “these accounts showed symptoms related to complex PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder).”<sup>72</sup>

Anxiety and PTSD were present among people during the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent study conducted by Cindy H. Liu et al. found “factors associated with depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptomatology in U.S. young adults (18-30 years) during the COVID-19 pandemic.”<sup>73</sup> This study stated respondents reports as following; Respondents reported high levels of depression (43.3%, PHQ-8 scores  $\geq 10$ ), high anxiety scores (45.4%, GAD-7 scores  $\geq 10$ ), and high levels of PTSD symptoms (31.8%,

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<sup>69</sup> Hugo, Kamyra, “The Impact of War on Children: The Psychology of Displacement and Exile,” *Interpreting Exile: Interdisciplinary Studies of Displacement of Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 235.

<sup>70</sup> This is a term from Joseph H. Albeck's work, “Intergenerational Consequences of Trauma: Reframing Traps in Treatment Theory—A Second Generation Perspective,” that Kamyra used to illustrate how “the children of war experienced a form of exile that went beyond the physical.” See, Hugo, Kamyra, , *Interpreting Exile: Interdisciplinary Studies of Displacement of Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts* “The Impact of War on Children: The Psychology of Displacement and Exile,” (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 242.

<sup>71</sup> Hugo, Kamyra, , “The Impact of War on Children: The Psychology of Displacement and Exile,” 243.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Cindy H. Liu, Emily Zhang, Ga Tin Fifi Wong, Sunah Hyun, Hyeouk Chris Hahm, “Factors associated with depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptomatology during the COVID-19 pandemic: Clinical implications for U.S. young adult mental health,” *Psychiatry Research*, Volume 290, 2020, 113172, ISSN 0165-1781, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113172>.

PCL-C scores  $\geq 45$ ). High levels of loneliness, high levels of COVID-19-specific worry, and low distress tolerance were significantly associated with clinical levels of depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms. Resilience was associated with low levels of depression and anxiety symptoms but not PTSD. Most respondents had high levels of social support; social support from family, but not from partners or peers, was associated with low levels of depression and PTSD.<sup>74</sup>

PTSD had been reported globally during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Torales et al., prevalence among infectious severe disease outbreaks, PTSD accounted for ranges between 4% to 40%.<sup>75</sup> Felten Fekih-Romdhane et al. conducted studies from a Tunisian community and found that “the probable PTSD estimate in our sample was 33.0%, indicating that posttraumatic symptoms were common among the respondents.”<sup>76</sup> The sample were participants who were “above 18 years of age, Tunisian origin living currently in Tunisia” and “a total of 603 responses were recorded (74.0% females, mean age=29.2  $\pm$  10.4 years).”<sup>77</sup>

Considering the parallel structures between the exilic period and the COVID-19 pandemic, following biblical and historical examinations on how the worshipers responded in the exilic period will provide insights into how worshipers respond in the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Disobedience, Unacceptable Worship, and Restoration through Exile

Observing the book of Jeremiah, the researcher will illustrate why Judah had to go through

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<sup>74</sup> Cindy H. Liu, Emily Zhang, Ga Tin Fifi Wong, Sunah Hyun, Hyeouk Chris Hahm, “Factors associated with depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptomatology during the COVID-19 pandemic: Clinical implications for U.S. young adult mental health,”

<sup>75</sup> Torales, J., O'Higgins, M., Castaldelli-Maia, J.M., & Ventriglio, A. (2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 coronavirus and its impact on global mental health. *Int. J. Soc. Psychiatry*, 20764020915212.

<sup>76</sup> Feten Fekih-Romdhane, Farah Ghrissi, Bouthaina Abbassi, Wissal Cherif, and Majda Cheour, “Prevalence and predictors of PTSD during the COVID-19 pandemic: Findings from a Tunisian community sample,” *Psychiatry Research*, Volume 290, 2020, 113131, ISSN 0165-1781, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113131>.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

exile. It is presented through the book of Jeremiah that God wanted them to recover, restore, and reconstruct the essential elements of worship through exile. God wanted their lives and hearts to be acceptable to worship Him. Before examining what Jeremiah had to say about worship, understanding the background of the exilic period will aid in determining what acceptable worship is in biblical terms. In this regard, this part of the study will expound on the background of exile from the contents of Jeremiah's book. A similar approach to examining selected passages in the New Testament will also be addressed following the Old Testament illustration.

Our research approached this illustration by depicting the *reason, resolution, and restoration of exile*. This depiction will show why God was not pleased with selfish and pretentious worship that was not acceptable to God and how the restoration of worship was in need. The reason for exile in Jeremiah is presented as disobedience. There is no parallel claim that the COVID-19 pandemic is due to disobedience; the Biblical narrative, however, suggests that God permits disaster for a reason: restoration. Resolution in the book of Jeremiah is depicted as listening and obeying the Word of God. Finally, in the restoration process, Jesus Himself is the ultimate restoration.

In conclusion, it is possible to establish a parallel analysis of how people in the current era view the COVID-19 pandemic concerning its reason for exile, resolution of exile, and restoration from exile.

### **Reason for Exile in the Book of Jeremiah**

Before arguing on why the people of God were exiled as depicted in the book of Jeremiah, it is essential to understand the basic structure of the book. The book Jeremiah consists

of twofold genres of writing; poetry and prose.<sup>78</sup> Brueggemann states how two genres supplement each other by stating that “there stands alongside the poetry, however, a body of prose material that at times parallels, at times supplants, and at times comments on the poetry.”<sup>79</sup> The identification of cognizing the twofold styles of writings in the book of Jeremiah is essential in understanding why the people of God had to be exiled for a judgmental reason. Through understanding the blended juxtaposition of these poetic and prose sections in Jeremiah, the readers acknowledge the reason for the 70 year-exile. For example, judgment is explicitly prophesied and announced in chapter 29<sup>80</sup> through the prose section, and severe sorrow and lament from Jeremiah from this illustrative judgmental prose are expressed through poetic forms sporadically in the book.

One of the dominating themes in the book of Jeremiah is divine judgment. Louis Stulman presents this judgmental theme in Jeremiah by stating, “throughout the book of Jeremiah, but especially in the first twenty-five chapter, we witness divine judgment at almost every juncture.”<sup>81</sup> God’s Judgment is presented as the principal reason for the prophecy of exile. The following paragraph will explain the reasons for God’s judgment.

This judgment was due to disobedience. Forgetting God<sup>82</sup> and not listening to Him (Jer. 25:7) are mentioned several times by Jeremiah, and these matters reproach the recipients. God’s judgment due to disobedience is deeply connected to and grounded in the covenantal traditions of

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<sup>78</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 35

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>80</sup> Jeremiah Chapter 29, In this chapter, Jeremiah tells the exiles in a prose form to embrace the judgement of God through carrying on with their lives in the foreign cities.

<sup>81</sup> Louis Stulman, *Jeremiah*, ebook, Loc. 73.5/912.

<sup>82</sup> Jeremiah 23:39.

Israel.

To comprehend the sense of Israel's covenantal tradition, the book of Deuteronomy is considered. Observing Deuteronomy, chapter 28 clearly announces that blessings (28:1) and curses (28:15) of God are each consequence of obedience and disobedience. Description in Deuteronomy regarding disobedience and its following curses are dreadfully illustrated to which directly leads nation's fall. Richard D. Nelson argues about this national and critical result of Israel regarding disobeying God. He states as following in his initiation of interpreting Deuteronomy chapter 28. "Moses recounts the consequences of obedience and, especially, disobedience in excruciating detail, ranging thematically from narrow household concerns to national annihilation"<sup>83</sup> Hetty Lalleman also adheres to this reasoning by stating that "there are many links between Jeremiah and Deuteronomy, not only in the language of the prose sections but also in the overall message of the doom and judgment as a result of sin."<sup>84</sup>

However, readers of Jeremiah today need to cognize a slightly different notion of covenantal tradition from Deuteronomy in connection with the book of Jeremiah. There is a difference between the Deuteronomy covenant and judgmental announcement from Jeremiah in terms of time. While Deuteronomy covenant is future-oriented, this covenant notion presented in the book of Jeremiah has already happened. The first readers, the recipients of the book of Jeremiah, were experiencing the curse from disobedience regarding the Deuteronomy covenant. In other words, the curse and destruction were impending and present. The Deuteronomy covenant was

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<sup>83</sup> Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 326.

<sup>84</sup> Hetty Lalleman, and Winkel H. Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, (InterVarsity Press, 2013).  
ProQuest

Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=2050709>.

revealed through the temple's destruction and having to live dispersed from hometown due to disobedience.

Having comprehended the status of recipients of the book of Jeremiah and the notion of Deuteronomy covenant, Jeremiah's announcement on the divine judgment is also intelligible. This divine judgment resulted in national annihilation and subordination to Babylon. Stillman describes Judah's national fall regarding being scattered as nation/religion-lost-people in the following paragraph.

God threatens to deliver Judah "into the hands of adversaries" (34:30; cf. 21:7) who will scatter the nation on the day of calamity (18:17). A holy convocation from the north will usher in disaster on account of Judah's unfaithfulness and idolatry (1:13-16). This alien horde will descend upon Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah in a grand display of military might. Judah's trusted social and symbolic structures will be overthrown, and its sacred pillars-inducing temple, covenant, land claims, election, and Davidic dynasty-will be toppled. Without land, king, shrine, and privileged position, Judah will lead the doomed nations to the fountain of Yahweh's cup of wrath (25:15-18).<sup>85</sup>

It is most likely that these dispersed people experienced trauma from the loss of their nation, religious community, and venue for practicing worship as a community. These losses and dispersion must have left an extensive trauma affecting their daily lives and spiritual lives as one nation's people. Considering how they were exiled after a disastrous war loss and resettled as subordinate people, this trauma must have lasted dreadfully and in the long term. Kelly E. Brad, who studied trauma from was associating with the exilic period in the Bible, addresses a notable argument. His argument presents an idea of how severe and critical the trauma was for the scattered people of Judah in the exilic period. He argues as following.

Although refugee studies and trauma studies have been tended to emphasize response to a

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<sup>85</sup> Louis Stulman, *Jeremiah*, ebook,

contemporary crisis, there is increasing evidence for long-term, and indeed multi-generational, impacts of such crisis. Attention to the social, economic, and traumatic context at work in circumstances of subordination, disaster, warfare, or political oppression (either individually or in a group) has also led in recent years to increased consideration of PTSD(post-traumatic stress disorder) as a means of understanding cultural groups who suffer as entire peoples.<sup>86</sup>

Considering these investigations for discerning the reason for exile and people's status in exilic period, they must have been experiencing regrets for disobedience; loss for their nation; acute trauma socially, economically, psychologically, physically, and spiritually; and-most significant issue for the scope of this study, radical change in spiritual life practice as well as their way of worshipping God.

The scattered people of Judah experienced the Deuteronomic curse due to disobedience, and thus, a simple guess is plausible that they must have needed a worshipping venue for them to conduct a ritual to repent, confess, and turn back to God. However, their worshipping venue, the temple that represented the presence of God, was gone. The traditional worship rituals needed to be adjusted to their condition to continue spiritual life, repentance, and discipline. Observing this worship reconstruction in the exilic period, the researcher will present the essential elements of worship that were to be restored considering God's will toward His people. It is anticipated that this study will present how the exilic period illustrates which elements of worship had to be destroyed and reconstructed to be a renewed and acceptable worship to God.

In comprehending the reason for exile, the timeline of Jeremiah's book is an essential aspect of the understanding. Brueggemann asserts that scholars show consensus on this matter that "the corpus was written near the end of the seventh and into the sixth-century BCE-somewhere

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<sup>86</sup> Brad E Kelle, *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation In Biblical and Modern Contexts*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011). <https://hdl-handle-net.ezproxy.liberty.edu/2027/heb.31321>. EPUB.

related to the death of Josiah (587 BCE), and the final not on Jehoiachin (562 BCE).”<sup>87</sup> This means that “this corpus was shaped and written.....according to the common interpretation, to trace the failed history of Israel from the moment it entered the land (Joshua 1-4) until the final destruction of 587 BCE at the hand of Babylonians-one long tale of disobedience that led inexorably to destruction.”<sup>88</sup> At this period, Israel’s abject status needed God’s direction, chastisement, and discourse so that the Israelites could restore their identity as God’s people. Thus, it can be said that the book of Jeremiah was written when theological interpretation and discourse for the abject reality were necessary. Comprehending and embracing seeming-hopeless reality needed a theological interpretation. This interpretation and its resolution were presented and announced by God through the prophet Jeremiah.

The Word of God came to Jeremiah to preach and announce the judgment and its resolution. The Word of God plays a significant role in the book of Jeremiah as Judah’s resolution from the exilic status.

### **Resolution from Exile: The Word of God & Building and Replanting in Overthrown Land**

“Their<sup>89</sup> judgment is indeed punishment for their sin, but it is a chastisement, not an execution.”<sup>90</sup> The book’s first part shows this notion of judgment being a chastisement to correct and guide people to restoration as God’s people. Observing Jeremiah 1:10, there explicitly lies the hope for restoration from the judgment. Lallemand states this notion as following in his commentary on Jeremiah.

Although Jeremiah is called a prophet to uproot and tear down, destroy and overthrow,

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<sup>87</sup> Walter Breuggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 144.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>89</sup> People of Judah and Israel in the exilic period.

<sup>90</sup> Thremper Longman III, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, ebook, Loc. 432.9/935.

there is a time when he can finally preach words to build and plant (Jer. 1:10 Against the backdrop of the laws and commandments given to the people by Moses, Jeremiah preaches repentance and judgment as a consequence of disobedience to the regulations of the Sinai covenant, in accordance with the curses of Deuteronomy 27-28.<sup>91</sup>

Brueggemann added a sparking hopeful notion to the restoration of Judah and Israel regarding the book of Jeremiah. He presented how hope for God's initiation of restoration glistens amid a hopeless world and circumstances. He states, "the remarkable truth of the voice of hope in the Book of Jeremiah is that this claim is made while the world is set in sickening disorder and while Israel enters an abyss, which from some angles is seen to be its termination."<sup>92</sup>

Considering the chastisement assertion from Longman and the hope notion from Brueggemann, it is possible to suggest that God is in His process of reconstructing the way His people live and worship. God was destroying to reconstruct and restore. God's initiation of this procedure was executed through His Word and His chosen prophet Jeremiah.

The Word of God was the powerful tool of God's resolution for the hopeless exiled people. This was verified by the frequent expression "The Word of the LORD" used in Jeremiah's book. CSB Study Bible notes that "of the 349 times the OT uses the phrase 'thus says the LORD,' Jeremiah accounts for 157 of them."<sup>93</sup> The Word of the LORD was at the center of God's plan for restoring His people from disobedience and the following Deuteronomic curse. Jeremiah was called for this specific duty; to convey the Word of the LORD. Dearman notes in his commentary on Jeremiah that "Jeremiah's 'call' in chapter 1 sets the power of God's spoken message at the

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<sup>91</sup> Hetty Lalleman, and Winkel, H Lalleman-De. *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, (InterVarsity Press, 2013). ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=2050709>, 59.

<sup>92</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 133.

<sup>93</sup> CSB Study Bible, 1138.

center of the prophet's work."<sup>94</sup>

The significant role of the Word of God to the exiled people can be verified when reading chapters 36 and 51. Chapter 36 of the book of Jeremiah illustrates Baruch's initial transcription of a scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies and how they were to be read in front of King Jehoiakim. However, when Jehoiakim listened to the Word, he burnt the scroll and destroyed it.<sup>95</sup> However, God did not leave the scroll to be destroyed because it had its purpose. It was to be read and heard by the people and the house of Judah so that they "will hear all the evil that God plans to do to them in order that they will repent, each one from his evil way." (36:3). Thus, the scroll was re-transcribed with other Words from God. (36:32) In Jeremiah 51:59-64, Jeremiah orders Seraiah to read the written scroll aloud when he goes to Babylon. The scroll, the book of Jeremiah, had its explicit initial purpose of being read to the people living in exile in Babylon.

The only resolution for the restoration of the exile was through listening to the Word of God and obeying it. The Word of God, the written prophecies of Jeremiah, was initially written down to read to people under exile to return to God.

### **Restoration from Exile: Return and Repent**

As stated previously, the restoration plan was initiated from the Word of God through the prophets urging the Judeans to obey it. The only hope amid abject reality was obeying the Word of God. Through the obedience of Judeans, God executes his divine restoration plan: God is the one who destroys worldly superpowers, not Judeans.

To state the general atmosphere and description that the Book of Jeremiah culminates,

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<sup>94</sup> J. Andrew Dearman et al., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 94.

<sup>95</sup> Jeremiah 36:23 NASB, "When Jehudi had read three of four columns, the king cut it with a scribe's knife and threw it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier."

readers can verify the notion of hope for restoration that God will initiate. Walter Bruggemann states the following regard this “hope for recovery” notion. “So it is that the Book of Jeremiah culminates in an anticipation that YHWH will destroy the ultimate superpower of the times: that destruction maneuver will be an opening for the restoration and future well-being of Jerusalem.”<sup>96</sup>

God’s restoration plan is not something that popped out merely from the book of Jeremiah. Restoration from curses due to disobedience is stated throughout the Old Testament sporadically. The book of Jeremiah applied these restoration prophesies and notions from the Old Testament to the exilic situation that the Judeans were about to encounter.

Brueggemann offers an insightful chart in his book “The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah” on how the Book of Jeremiah consists of various notions from the Old Testament. Comprised of pieces of books from the Old Testament, the chart below attests to the following statement that Brueggemann culminates in: “This deep access to both loss and newness places the Jeremian tradition, and its vibrant interpretive stream in deep conflict with the royal and priestly traditions of the Old Testament that seek to maintain the static givenness of life in Israel and the world and that celebrate a God-guaranteed continuity despite all trouble.”<sup>97</sup> This statement is a decisive assertion that presents how Jeremiah prophesied hope of restoration from God under dismal circumstances. Having gathered all the knowledge for the Old Testament, Jeremiah cognized and prophesied the restoration from God despite the coming exile. The collection and compilation of Jeremiah’s prophetic corpus, most likely executed during the Babylonian exile, must have served as a theological ground for the exiled to put their faith in scattered situations.

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<sup>96</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 109.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

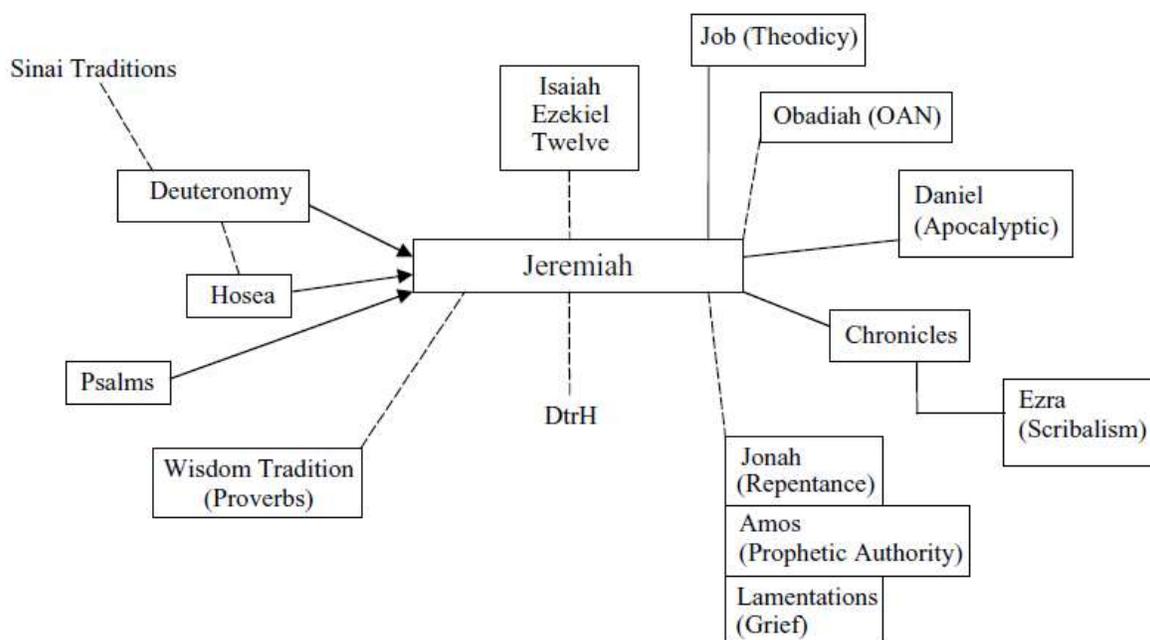


Chart 1. Jeremiah in the midst of Old Testament literature

Figure 1. Jeremiah in the midst of Old Testament Literature

This notion affirms a significant role in the book of Jeremiah itself in the exilic period. This written scroll of Jeremiah's prophecy and homilies to be read in Babylon to God's people was an essential source for ongoing spiritual life during exile: having a hope of restoration.

Jeremiah 52:31-34 presents this explicit hope of restoration as it ends the book of Jeremiah. Jehoiachin, King of Judah who had been imprisoned in Babylon for thirty-seven years, was brought out of prison by Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon.<sup>99</sup> Jehoiachin's fame was partially

<sup>99</sup> Jeremiah 52:31, NASB, "Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, showed favor to Jehoiachin king of Judah and brought him out of prison."

recovered by having meals in the king's presence and receiving an allowance from the king.<sup>100</sup> Hays J. Daniel states that "Jehoiachin serves as the representative or perhaps the symbol of those exiled in 597 BC<sup>101</sup>" and that "the positive account of what happened to Jehoiachin in 52:31-34 illustrates the short-term fulfillment of Jeremiah 29."<sup>102</sup> Leslie C. Allen et al. interprets this positive account as following: "the intention here is to pick up a key term in the book that has connoted the positive, future work of God on Israel's behalf."<sup>103</sup> Hope for restoration was increasing among the exiled through reading the Torah and the book of Prophets.

### **Disappointed Hopes in the Postexilic Period**

As much as hope increased, disappointment among the exiled and the dispersed was not slight as they had to wait for the fulfillment. When reminiscing the history from the post-exilic period until the early church days, Israel's endeavor for restoration was continuous. This endeavor, along with disappointments from failing, came from misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the Word of God. Their notion of restoration and its next endeavor was to restore the land, which illuminated the Davidic kingdom's glory. Attempts of independence and reconstruction for Israel took place. Jewish war followed for this kind of restoration. As these attempts and wars failed, disappointment among those who hoped for restoration emerged.

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<sup>100</sup> Jeremiah 52:33-34, NASB, "So, Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes, and had his meals in the king's presence regularly all the days of his life. For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king of Babylon, a daily portion all the days of his life until the day of his death."

<sup>101</sup> There were three exiles to Babylon: 597 BC mentioned in Jer. 52:28, 582 BC mentioned in 52:30, and fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

<sup>102</sup> Daniel J. Hays, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016) Accessed July 26, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. 321.

<sup>103</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*. (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2008), Accessed July 26, 2021, ProQuest Ebook Central, 540.

Some of these kinds of disappointments are attested in the Bible. There was disappointment for restoration when king Josiah's reformation through observing the Law (Torah) came to naught after his death at Megiddo.<sup>104</sup> Jeremiah wrote a lament on his death.<sup>105</sup> Habakkuk's question represented how the people were struggling to wait for God's restoration: "How long, O LORD, will I call for help. And You will not hear? (Habakkuk 1:2a, NASB)."

This disappointment lasted until the days after Jesus' ministry on earth and after that. Jews, waiting for their Davidic kingdom to be restored, saw this restoration through the redevelopment of "the land." The First Jewish-Roman War, also known as the Jewish War, culminated in the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Jews were scattered all around the world, known as diasporas.

N.T. In the following paragraph, Wright urges that Israel was still experiencing an exilic state even in the postexilic period.

Most Jews of this period, it seems, would have answered the question of where are we?' in language which, reduced to its simplest form, meant: we are still in exile. They believed that, in all the senses which mattered, Israel's exile was still in progress. Although she had come back from Babylon, the glorious message of the prophets remained unfulfilled. Israel still remained in

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<sup>104</sup> 2 Chronicles 35:24, NASB, "So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in the second chariot which he had, and brought him to Jerusalem where he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah."

<sup>105</sup> 2 Chronicles 35:25, NASB, "Then Jeremiah chanted a lament for Josiah, And all the male and female singers speak about Josiah in their lamentations to this day. And they made them an ordinance in Israel; behold, they are also written in the Lamentations."

thrall to foreigners; worse, Israel's god [sic] had not returned to Zion.<sup>106</sup> The notion of exile was lingering among Jews.

Nevertheless, the early Christians showed different expectations about restoration. Even though early Christians were experiencing the similar notion of still-in-exile as the Jews, they were convicted within their faith that Jesus fulfilled the oracles of restoration. While Jesus was a high symbolic figure of the fulfillment of God's oracle from the Old Testament, Jews were still under exile, waiting for their "land" to be restored. While the Jewish version of God's fulfillment was about the nation of Israel being reconstructed, for Christians, God fulfilled his oracles through Jesus, in which its nature was restoration for all nations, "transcending all race and nationhood."<sup>107</sup>

### **Ultimate Restoration from Exile through Jesus**

Despite many scholars' opinions that exile ended at the return of a few thousand Jews, as in Ezra and Nehemiah,<sup>108</sup> this was not a complete restoration. The researcher argues that the ultimate restoration from exile was through Jesus. This argument will be structured upon

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<sup>106</sup> N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (coqg, 1; London: spck, 1992), 268-69.

<sup>107</sup> Wright well elaborated how the Jews and Christians each had different view about God's restoration in the early church days; or in the Second Temple era in Jewish viewpoint. For Christians, it was completed through Jesus while, for Jews, it was incomplete and had to be through restoration of "the land." God's restoration plan for Jews was only for the nation of Israel while, for Christians, it was for the whole world. See N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (coqg, 1; London: spck, 1992), 367.

<sup>108</sup> Brant Pitre adheres to the argument that exile ended at the return of a few thousand Jews. See. Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 35.

presenting and adhering to Douglas S. McComiskey's journal: "Exile and Restoration from Exile in the Scriptural Quotations and Allusions of Jesus."<sup>109</sup>

McComiskey focuses on Jesus' scriptural quotations allusions that imply that Jesus himself was the ultimate restoration from exile. He presents 13 passages from the New Testament for his argument. The researcher will present two representative passages of McComiskey and his arguments: 1) Mark 1:14-15 (Isaiah 9); 2) Mark 4:12, Matt 13:13-15, Luke 8:10 (Isaiah 6:8-10);

Mark 1:14-15, states, "Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'(NASB)" Jesus is referring to Isaiah's prophecy with the utilization of Isaiah's terminology. McComiskey pays attention to Jesus' usage of Isaiah's terminology, "the time is fulfilled." He contends that "Jesus is speaking of effective completion of the time described in Isa. 9:1 (8:23 LXX), a period of disgrace for Zebulun and Naphtali indicated by "former time," in other words, exile."<sup>110</sup> He adds to state, "Jesus, Mark's estimation, must mean that some commonly known period of time is completed and that times are most

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<sup>109</sup> Douglas S. McComiskey, "EXILE AND RESTORATION FROM EXILE IN THE SCRIPTURAL QUOTATIONS AND ALLUSIONS OF JESUS." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 4 (12, 2010): 673-96, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fexile-restoration-scriptural-quotations-allusions%2Fdocview%2F835123204%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid. 676.

likely the aspect of the exile described in Isa. 9:1.”<sup>111</sup> Jesus is depicted in Mark 1:14-15 as the fulfillment of God’s restoration from exile.

Some themes are presented in this passage. McComiskey argues that “the meaning of Jesus’ quotation of Isa 6:9-10 in Mark 4:12 (par. Matt 13:13-15; Luke 5:10) is grounded in exile theology.” Mark 4:11-12 writes: “And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND. OTHERWISE, THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN." The capitalized writings represent Jesus’ quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10.

McComiskey focuses on how Isaiah used the word “otherwise.” He pays attention to how this word can be translated into “for the aversion of.”<sup>113</sup> In this sense of interpretation, it meant that some rebellious Judeans are to be forgiven. According to Isaiah, those who did not have the hearts to return to God and hear Word were judged. When Jesus applied this notion to his ministry, he offered the ultimate restoration from the exile: salvation through Jesus Himself.

McComiskey addresses how Jesus quoted and applied Isaiah 6:9-10 as following:

It seems likely that Jesus adopts a meaning virtually identical to the original meaning within Isaiah. The fundamental differences are that Jesus applies the passaged to his own ministry and speaks the words at a different stage of salvation history. The first difference is significant. Jesus attributes an Isaianic character to his own preaching. Certainly, the words of Isa 6:9-10 originally applied to the prophet Isaiah and, I would suggest, not to Jesus. Nevertheless, it is legitimate for Jesus to employ the quotation as a means of declaring that his preaching bears the identical function as that of Isaiah. Regarding the different stages of salvation-history, Isa 6:9-10 itself, especially in the broader context of the book, likely encompasses the messianic period. If so, the temporal disjunction is

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<sup>111</sup> Douglas S. McComiskey, "EXILE AND RESTORATION FROM EXILE IN THE SCRIPTURAL QUOTATIONS AND ALLUSIONS OF JESUS,"

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 680.

insignificant, even non-existent, because God's word in the passage would be intended for rebellious Jews from Isaiah's day through to Jesus' day and probably beyond. Accordingly, Jesus' preaching had the identical function and audience essentially as Isaiah's but occurred at a later time.<sup>114</sup>

It is presented through Jesus' quotations from Isaiah that Jesus was aware of the exilic experiences that the Jews were undergoing and that he offered ultimate restoration from that exile: salvation through Jesus Himself.

### Acceptable Worship and Unacceptable Worship

Due to restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic, churches had to go through a transition in worship platforms. When the congregation could not physically gather for worship during online worship, acknowledge the essence of worship. Scattered online worshipers in their homes had to be provided with legitimacy that their home-online worship was acceptable to worship to God. In this regard, what could be some biblical principles worthy of information for the online worshipers?

Acceptable worship should be defined from God's point of view and undergirded by God's revelation through the Bible. Grounded in the reviews of how God initiated exile to restore the hearts and lives of worshipers, The researcher argues that reading, comprehending, and living out the Word of God is to be at the center of worship and that acceptable worship could only be offered only through Jesus.

To review the unacceptable worship from the exilic period and the early church, people's worship was unacceptable to God and needed reconstruction due to unworshipful

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 680-81.

lifestyles and hypocrisy. An unworshipful lifestyle meant participating in worship rituals, but their hearts were far from worshiping YHWH. Even when the temple was extant-which is to say that they could gather for worship in a fancy building-, some worship services offered were not acceptable to God because their lifestyles and conduct were far from people to be called worshipers of YHWH. After that, God initiated exile so that their hearts and lifestyle could be drawn back to God. Even after some diasporas returning from exile, many Jews did not fully comprehend how authentic restoration will be executed through the Messiah: Jesus Christ.

The focus of returned diasporas was on recovering the national position at the summit illuminating the Davidic kingdom. As time passed, this notion was fixed in Jews' heads: the notion that their eagerness to observe the law would bring restoration from the exilic status from which was not yet fully recovered. Reading the gospel of Matthew chapter 15, some Jews such as the Pharisees and the scribes are depicted as hypocrites who preserved the law and worship rituals from small to big; however, their "hearts were far away from God." Their observance of the Law and rituals was far from acceptable worship towards God. Their eagerness to recover the Davidic kingdom as a kingdom on this earth led to independence movements such as the Jewish War.

D.H. Synder draws a clear line about how worship could be acceptable to God. One who believes in Jesus as his or her savior and Lord becomes a qualified worshiper. Synder states that "The unsaved cannot please God or do anything acceptable to the Father until they place their

faith and trust in the risen Lord Jesus,”<sup>116</sup> and that “since the Pharisees rejected Jesus, anything they offered to the Father was unacceptable.”<sup>117</sup>

This notion applies the same in the current situation. Even under COVID-19 pandemic when worshiper cannot gather for worship. If the congregation or an individual worships with faith in Jesus, their worship is acceptable to God regardless of environment. The criteria for acceptable worship surpass the concept of venue. John chapter 4 endorses this notion. Jesus redirects and defines the concept of true worship in John chapter 4. Through a conversation with a representative worshiper of the Jews, Jesus Himself taught that true worship transcends worshipping venues. John Paul Heil elaborated this notion comprehensively:

The Samaritan woman spoke as a representative of her people to Jesus as a representative of the Jewish people when she pointed to the different geographical places of worship for each people (4:20). But Jesus pointed to worship that transcends the worship at these places (4:21), worship whose source is from the Jewish people (4:22). As Jesus declared, “But an hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for indeed the Father seeks such as these worshipping him. God is Spirit, and those worshipping him must worship in Spirit and truth” (4:23–24). To worship in “Spirit and truth” means to worship in close association with Jesus. He is the one upon whom the “Spirit” descended and remains (1:32). God gives him the “Spirit” without measure (3:34). He baptizes with the “Spirit” (1:33) so that one may be reborn to divine life eternal by being baptized from water and the “Spirit” (3:5), symbolized by the “living water” Jesus offers (4:10).<sup>32</sup> And Jesus is full of a gift of “truth” (1:14), the gift of the “truth” that came to be through him (1:17).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> C.H. Synder et al., *Acceptable Worship: What Kind of Worship Does God Accept?*, (Bloomington, IN, Westbow Press, 2016), [https://books.google.com/books?id=FKGNDAQAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=ko&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=FKGNDAQAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=ko&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> John Paul Heil, "Jesus Reveals True Worship in the Spirit and Truth (John 2:1—4:54)." *In The Gospel of John: Worship for Divine Life Eternal*, 29-48. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Lutterworth Press, 2015). Accessed August 3, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt1p5f1s4.7.

Jesus stated that God the Father seeks worshipers whose heart is directed to the Spirit and Truth that Jesus offers. This implies that, although many worshipers have conducted rituals at a designated worshiping venue, God could not find true worshipers. While the Jewish people could have fooled themselves that they were in God's favor because they were worshiping according to rituals, their hearts and lifestyle were far from living as true worshipers. Jewish people could have asked the same question that the lawyer, one of the representative leaders of Jewish people, asked Jesus; "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"<sup>119</sup> the lawyer knew the answer: to love God with all this heart, soul, strength and mind, and love neighbor as himself.<sup>120</sup> Jesus said to him, "you have answered correctly: DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE."<sup>121</sup> Acceptable worship that Jesus taught was about having worshipers' hearts directed to God and living out their lives accordingly. Hearts and Action were to be one accord as true worshipers of God. Zechariah chapter 7 presents a similar principle of worship.

Reading Zechariah chapter 7, readers encounter a conversation between God and the people. The exiled people were asking if they should keep fasting and weeping during worship.<sup>122</sup> As God answered this question, God asked back, "was it actually for Me that you fasted?"<sup>123</sup> Snyder illustrated this story as follows:

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<sup>119</sup> Luke 10:25

<sup>120</sup> Luke 10:27

<sup>121</sup> Luke 10:28.

<sup>122</sup> Zechariah 7:3.

<sup>123</sup> Zechariah 7:5.

What God wanted to know was this: What is the motive behind your action? Are your actions honoring to God or self? The correctness of the people's activities was determined by their hearts and their reason for doing what they were doing.<sup>124</sup>

Through reading Zechariah chapter 7, it is clear that God is interested in the heart of worshipers rather than rituals.

Parallel circumstantial figures between the exilic period and the COVID-19 pandemic were attested through biblical and historical examinations. Regarding the reason for the exile in the Bible, exile was due to disobedience to God, and the biblical resolution on exile was through reading and obeying the Word of God. When applying this notion to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is worthy of considering the resolution from troubled times; through the Word of God. As for theological response for God's intention or reason for coronavirus emergence, this is whole another debate that cannot be quickly concluded as "disobedience is the reason for the COVID-19 pandemic."

It is also noteworthy to consider how protagonists in the exilic period in the Bible have struggled from executing the resolution on exile: obeying the Word of God. There were several failures in the endeavor in doing so. This pointed to Jesus as their ultimate restoration. Thus, acceptable worship under exile or COVID-19 pandemic is to put hope in Jesus and follow His steps, not putting hope in people, plans, or endeavors. Jesus mentioned true worship; in Spirit and Truth. This notion is relevant to apply to situations when worshipers cannot gather for in-person worship. Through worshipful lifestyles that trace the way of Jesus, acceptable and true worship can still be offered to God regardless of venues or buildings.

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<sup>124</sup> C.H. Synder et al., *Acceptable Worship: What Kind of Worship Does God Accept?*.

## Online Worship and Family Worship

### Online Education and Online Worship

As online education platforms have been developing online content even before the COVID-19 pandemic, it is worthy of examining some developed online content that could be applied to online worship. There have been acknowledgments of the benefits and challenges of online education as content has been developed. Sally Hill Jones noted some positive aspects of online education, such as student access and flexibility, while there were still challenges in student/teacher relationships and academic honesty.<sup>125</sup>

One of the common challenges of online education is preparing with appropriate tools and skills to operate. This applies to both students and instructors. “Online learning requires computers with the correct hardware and software, webcams, microphones, and internet connections that allow access to all required course elements.”<sup>126</sup> Those who are neglected from such sources are likely to have struggles in getting a proper education.

Trouble increased due to not being equipped with online tools for online worship, troubles increase. It has been reported that older people who are relatively neglected from fluently employing online technology have difficulty actively engaging in worship through online platforms. Eurostat reported that “87 percent of people aged 75 years and over have never

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<sup>125</sup> Sally Hill Jones, "Benefits and Challenges of Online Education for Clinical Social Work: Three Examples." *Clinical Social Work Journal* 43, no. 2 (06, 2015): 225-35, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fbenefits-challenges-online-education-clinical%2Fdocview%2F1668192227%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

been online.”<sup>127</sup> Baptist Standard reported some examples of how senior adults could not access online worship during the COVID-19 pandemic and included interviews with some seniors stating that they experienced a sense of isolation and loneliness.<sup>128</sup> When conducting online worship, it needs to be well planned in association with offline activities so that the senior groups will be compensated from being neglected in online platforms.

Additionally, online education needs to be well planned in terms of schedule and time management. Both students and instructors are to commit their fixed time to learn and teaching online. Because online education is predisposed to be initiated voluntarily, no inspector or supervisor, participants’ spontaneity is required to manage educational times. When spontaneity is well trained to engage worship online, online worship is anticipated to replicate in-person worship experiences.

Examining the areas where online education has been putting its endeavor for development, much of its portion is developing interactive communication. This endeavor is to be applied in online worship as well. Speaking theological terms, Koinonia is abundantly conducted in online worship, which was substantially neglected due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions. Jessica Jones presented some ideas that could compensate for the neglect of Koinonia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Jones having her background in both ministry and education, suggested four areas of practice in online worship: Length (shorter segments), Imagery and imagination (interspersing speaking and images), presentation (including speaker’s

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<sup>127</sup> Eurostat (2018). Your key to European statistics. European Commission. EU.

<sup>128</sup> Tess Schoonhoven, “Pandemic causes many senior adults to feel isolated,” *Baptist Standard*, accessed on August 4, 2021, <https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/faith-culture/pandemic-causes-many-senior-adults-to-feel-isolated/>

face when needs to be used), and Engagement.<sup>129</sup> Jones suggested some areas of Koinonia in online worship that could be developed in her illustration of “Engagement.”

Get interactive as much as you can. Don’t be afraid to use conferencing platforms for Sunday morning services rather than just live streaming. You can show videos of people reading Scripture (collected from different households each week) or musical worship during the conference call and intersperse the sermon with discussion questions. Churches can use the breakout rooms to pray for each other. The thing to remember is to engage the people by being yourself, not a rehearsed, polished performer.<sup>130</sup>

Online education has been developing ways to have interactive communication with teachers and students. When similar approaches and endeavors are applied to online worship, congregations will encounter more abundant worshipful experiences. If the congregation could experience the presence of other members, it would vitalize their engagement in worship. Worship is essential to be conducted with other members’ presence; together. Worshipers are to remember how they should gather and worship together, whether through online or offline platforms. Hebrews 10:25 states: “not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” In this regard, the sense of togetherness should be emphasized, and strategies about this notion should be developed when worshiping online.

### Family Worship

In this thesis, the researcher will argue that family worship has been described as the basic unit for worship in the Bible. Considering how the “together” notion is essential in

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<sup>129</sup> Jessica Jones, “What the Online Church can Learn From Online Education,” *American Anglican Council*, accessed on August 4, 2021, <https://americananglican.org/featured/what-the-online-church-can-learn-from-online-education/>.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

worship, family worship could be one of the pivotal alternatives to worship under the COVID-19 pandemic. The biblical and historical examination will provide biblical principles and insights applicable to family worship today.

George E. Horr provides the pros of family worship. He stated that “in the home, the Christian father and mother, simply by the use of their divine privileges, may easily accomplish that which the pastor or Sunday-school teacher is powerless to effect.”<sup>131</sup> He added that “when family worship sincere and vital, it will reinvigorate the Christian temper, and it will prove one of the most potent forces toward resisting the inroads of selfishness and compromise with low standards which are the besetting sins of most of us, no matter what our professions.”<sup>132</sup>

According to Horr, family worship is a powerful medium through which a Christian lifestyle is installed within a person. Whole members of a family learn to worship God through their daily life conduct. “God deserves to be worshiped daily in our homes by our families,”<sup>133</sup> and Bible attests that God is pleased with family worship.

### **Family Worship in the Bible**

The Bible does not mention the exact term; family worship. However, scholars often employ this term to depict how daily worship was conducted in homes and families in the Bible. Donald S. Whitney offers a good summary of family worship in the Bible. The researcher will briefly present Whitney’s work about family worship in the Bible.

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<sup>131</sup> George E. Horr, "Family Worship." *The Biblical World* 27, no. 2 (1906): 104-11. Accessed August 5, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3141311>.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019) Accessed August 5, 2021. Pst Ebook Central.roQue.

Whitney notes Isaac's question as Abraham brings no sacrifice animal when taking him as a burnt offering. Isaac asked his father Abraham, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"<sup>134</sup> Isaac was familiar with offerings and worship. Whitney makes a plausible assumption by stating that "Isaac must have often seen the wood split and piled for sacrifice."<sup>135</sup> "Isaac knew when an element of the worship of God was missing because Abraham must have frequently led his family in the worship of God."<sup>136</sup>

In Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Moses commands the families of Israel to teach God's Word to their children. In Joshua 24:15, Joshua declared, "as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Whitney illustrated Job 1:4-5 as following: "whenever one of his (Job's) sons had a feast, afterward Job would send for his children, and when they were all together he would get up early the next morning and lead his family in the worship of God by offering sacrifices to the Lord on their behalf."<sup>137</sup> Whitney paid attention to how the recipients or the initial listeners of Psalm 78 were fathers in each house. He argued that there is evidence in Psalm 78 that fathers taught praises to children at home, which is undergirded by verse 5: "He (God) commanded our fathers to teach their children."

Following verses are listings of Paul's writings about principles of conducting family worship: Ephesians 5:25-26; Ephesians 6:4; and 1 Timothy 3:4-5. In 1 Timothy 3:4-5, one of the qualifications for an elder is depicted as one who manages his household well. A similar notion

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<sup>134</sup> Genesis 22:7.

<sup>135</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship*.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

stated in 1 Peter 3:7 regarding how husbands treat their wives is directly connected to a prayerful lifestyle. Christian edification is much connected with how to manage his or her house. This is evidence that houses were the main venue for Christian meetings and worship. In the New Testament and the Early church days, Christian meeting venues were primarily houses.

### **The Early Church House Worship**

Houses were the most used venue for worship in the Early Church era. Jenn Cianca asserts that “the Christians continued to meet in domestic spaces, without purpose-built structures of their own, until the peace of Constantine and the massive building programs that followed.<sup>138</sup> Wayne Meeks argued that the first-century Roman church consisted of house church cells.’<sup>139</sup> Harley T. Atkinson and Joel Comiskey depict how the house churches became dominant in the Early Church era.

As the apostles proceeded to carry out the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), they utilized a two-fold approach of meeting in the temple courts for large-group meetings and in the homes for more intimate small-group encounters. Very quickly, the house church became the definitive expression of church in the early Christian movement. In the wake of the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys, numerous churches sprang up, and virtually all of the New Testament churches mentioned in the letters of Paul were in private homes. The house church remained the most significant context for early church worship, fellowship, and Christian education up to the early part of the fourth century when Constantine legitimized Christianity.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Jenn Cianca, "The Context of House-Church Christianity." In *Sacred Ritual, Profane Space: The Roman House as Early Christian Meeting Place*, 13-33. (MONTREAL, KINGSTON; LONDON; CHICAGO: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018). Accessed August 6, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctv1nhhg.6.

<sup>139</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christian: A Social World of the Apostle Paul*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 9-10.

<sup>140</sup> Harley T. Atkinson and Joel Comiskey. "Lessons from the Early House Church for Today's Cell Group" *Christian Education Journal* 11, no. 1 (Spring, 2014): 75-87, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Flessons-early-house-church-todays-cell-groups%2Fdocview%2F1517636268%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

Considering the arguments above, it is plausible that family worship was pervasive in the Early Church era.

### **Biblical Principles of Family Worship**

According to the Bible, family worship is to be consisted of reading, praying, and singing. Whitney stated that “the earliest record of Christian family worship describes a pattern of reading Scripture, praying together, and singing praise to God.”<sup>141</sup>

“God should be worshiped by daily reading and instructions from His Word.”<sup>142</sup>

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 states, “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.” According to 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Christians are to “pray without ceasing” which suitably involves family members.

Considering how Abraham committed family worship, as stated earlier, singing praises was an essential element of family worship. Abraham’s sacred songs were connected to his worship times, where he poured out his heart to God. David W. Stowe stated that “the Abrahamic faiths that trace their origins to the Hebrew Bible have a long history of linking the sacred song to the struggle against injustice and oppression.”<sup>143</sup> It can be assumed that

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<sup>141</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship*.

<sup>142</sup> Beeke, Joel R. *Family Worship Bible Guide*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016).

<sup>143</sup> David W. Stowe, "Songs of Worship: Why we Sing to the Lord." *Pastoral Music* 41, no. 4 (05, 2017): 17-9, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Ftrade-journals%2Fsongs-worship-why-we-sing-lord%2Fdocview%2F1904167329%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

Abraham's family must have learned to sing to God by expressing their daily praises to God as well as feelings.

### Benefits of Family Worship under COVID-19 pandemic

As examined above, family worship was the basic unit of worship gathering in the early church era. This small group gathering benefits such as educating children through scripture, prayer, and singing. Margaret Y. MacDonald attests how family worship or house churches functioned as home schools where spiritual discipline was conducted.<sup>144</sup>

MacDonald presented “the house church as home school” by elaborating extracted passages from the pastoral epistles of Paul. He elaborated this notion as follows:

Ephesians 6:1-4 reveals an increasing emphasis on the education of children operating within the broader framework of the socialization that occurs through daily interactions. The emphasis on education becomes more pronounced in the Pastoral Epistles. When one approaches 1 and 2, Timothy and Titus, with a focus on children, the house-church context emerges as a home-school context.<sup>145</sup>

Considering how house church and family worship benefited the children regarding spiritual discipline, the researcher argues that this identical notion can be applied to family worship under the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the worshipers cannot gather as a large group, small units of worship gathering are possible such as families under restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing how children were benefited through family worship from the Bible, social restrictions that drive families to have more time on their own could be a platform to practice

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<sup>144</sup> Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Power of Children : The Construction of Christian Families in the Greco-Roman World*, (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), Accessed August 7, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

spiritual discipline to children through family worship. Considering the five essential elements that form a worshipping community: Kerygma, Didache, Koinonia, Diakonia, and Liturgia, the Didache element can be supplemented with family worship.

### **Facets of Online Worship under COVID-19 Pandemic**

The online platform has been a dominant setting as an alternative to in-person worship after social restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study focused on Roman Catholic Church in Poland on how they conducted online Mass during spring 2020. According to Barbara Praywara et al., “40.8% of Polish parishes carried out online Mass broadcasts.” The study of Praywara et al. showed a noticeable result that “There was a statistically significant difference between the parish size and Mass broadcasting—the larger the parish, the more often such activities were performed; a similar correlation was observed between urban and rural parishes.”<sup>147</sup> While this report does not represent all church’s status under the COVID-19 pandemic, it does provide an idea that relatively small churches were likely to be neglected from technical infrastructures and support.

Ideas on how interactive communication could be conducted online will also be addressed. In this regard, the researcher will present some of the representative platforms that online worship ministers have been employing during the COVID-19 pandemic; Youtube, OBS (Open Broadcaster Software), Facebook, and Zoom. This information might provide the tiniest foundational information if ministers were to conduct online worship again and depict how online platforms had been used in 2020 and 2021.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

## Technical Support for Stable Online Worship

### Use of Facebook, Youtube, and OBS (Open Broadcaster Software)

As churches had been closed due to restrictions to prevent the coronavirus from the spread, ministers had to adapt to conducting worship online. In this process, stable and accessible broadcasting infrastructures became essential. Ministers were required to be equipped with skills to live stream, record, edit, and deliver worship services.

Youtube was one of the dominant platforms for live streaming online worship. Kartika Singarimbun stated, “despite the suffering information of technology, the Protestant churches gradually broadcast the worship Livestream Youtube and save the video afterward; so that the congregation can watch the e-church further.”<sup>148</sup> Facebook, in conjunction with OBS software, was also a helpful tool. “Majority of other pastors used Facebook live stream that also proved to be effective, and through software, like Open Broadcaster Software (OBS) studio pastors were able to have their live-stream videos shared between Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.”<sup>149</sup>

### Use of Zoom: Interactive Communication

Giuseppina Addo conducted a noteworthy study on “Worshipping on Zoom.”<sup>150</sup> It is noteworthy because, unlike unilateral worship broadcasting, Zoom creates chances for the

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<sup>148</sup> Kartika Singarimbun, "E-Church as a Virtual Service Communities During COVID-19 Pandemics" *Jurnal Komunikasi Ikatan Sarjana Komunikasi Indonesia* [Online], Volume 6 Number 1 (15 June 2021)

<sup>149</sup> Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, “Religious live-streaming in response to coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown in South Africa,” *Vervum et Ecclessia*, (December, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v41i1.2120>, <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-verbum-v41-n1-a53>.

<sup>150</sup> Giuseppina Addo, “Worshipping on Zoom: a digital ethnographic study of African Pentecostal churches and their liturgical practices during Covid-19,” Master thesis, Malmo University, Spring 2020. <http://hdl.handle.net/2043/32677>.

congregation to respond in worship. Addo observed online worships conducted through Zoom and argued as follows:

It is argued that online affordances such as the chatbox and emojis are used by believers to communicate affective moments during worship services, while the mute button is used as a tool by leaders to wield their power to restore order and surveillance. Thus, some of the traditional power dynamics between worshippers, as well as performative aspects of Christianity, are brought into the digital space. We also find that digital platforms can, in fact, religious constraint practices; however, believers use creative ways to circumvent some of the obstacles by re-appropriating the digital tools available to express spirituality and to intimately connect with fellow worshippers.<sup>151</sup>

While there are technical limitations, there is a chance of the congregation expressing their response online via Zoom. Fellowship among church members online can be anticipated. Using theological terms, the practice of Koinonia can be anticipated in online worship platforms.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented biblical principles of worship with an ecclesiastical perspective. This perspective included Kerygma, Didache, Koinonia, Diakonia, and Liturgia as essential elements that form a worshiping community: the church. Three elements, Kerygma, Didache, and Koinonia, can be preserved in online worship platforms. According to the Bible, Kerygma, the Word of God, was the key to restoration from exile. Preaching, teaching, reading, and obeying the Word of God should be emphasized to overcome the difficulties of unable-to-gather surroundings. Didache can be practiced through family worship. Family worship was depicted as the basic unit of worship in the Bible. There is a chance to exercise Koinonia through technologies such as Zoom, even in online worship settings.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The researcher conducted a mixed-method research for this study. The purpose of this design was 1) to understand what the needs of ministers who conduct online worship are and 2) to suggest strategies that would aid their ministry. We employed a quantitative survey-analysis method to figure out the needs of ministers who conduct online worship. For supplementing the needs found through quantitative study, the researcher implied the qualitative historical research method.

The subsequent qualitative research followed after the quantitative research expounds on the essential elements of worship practiced in the transition of worship in specific eras such as the Bible times and the Early Church. The exposition of selected Bible passages and historical review of the Early Church worship elicits essential elements of worship to be preserved in the transition of worship under and into any platform.

### **Design**

This design focuses on answering the following two questions: 1) What are the most necessary supplements ministers felt after online worship? Furthermore, 2) How can some of the needs of these ministers be supplemented? The following paragraphs will present how the method for this thesis was developed, starting from the survey.

The researcher reached some of the pastors associated with The Council of Korean Churches of Greater Washington (CKCGW) and could get their consent to answer the survey. The pastors were all Korean ministers in the Northern Virginia area.

Yunseop Kim, an adjunct faculty at Liberty University and a research professor at Korea University, initiated “a Study on Ministers’ Psychological burdens from suspending worship service in COVID-19 situation” at the beginning of 2020. I worked with him as a School of Divinity teaching assistant at Liberty University and was part of this project. The researcher was fortunate enough to add some questions to the designed survey derived from the research questions in chapter 1. The survey was conducted in June 2020. Through this procedure, the researcher was able to have access to this raw data.

When raw data survey analysis was made, a vivid need emerged from the ministers who conducted that stood out. Several other needs were expressed by the participants of the survey regarding online worship. The most exigent need in conducting online worship was the education of the essence of worship. However, the researcher narrowed down the scope of this thesis to summarize the theological basis of worship so that ministers who go into transition in worship can have and educate the fundamental ground of worship. In this regard, the following part of qualitative research, or rather a historical examination, is anticipated to supplement the basic foundations of worship that ministers and worshipers can refer to amid rapid and inevitable transitions in worship platforms.

Thus, starting from the expressed need from the survey participants regarding the education of essence of worship, the researcher attempted to find some similar situations and backgrounds in the Bible. The researcher found two eras note-worthy for examination: the Exilic period and the Early Church era when the believers were scattered due to persecution. Examining these two eras is anticipated to allow the ministers, worshipers, and readers to grasp

the biblical principle of worship amid an inevitable environment where the worshipers could not gather. For this examination, biblical exegesis and historical examination were utilized.

In addition, some ministers' needs were found from the survey. Additionally, the dominant need addressed was the education of the essence of worship. The needs we identified were discipline of family worship and practicing Koinonia through interactive ways during online worship practice.

### **Participants**

This study was applied to Korean pastors ministering in the Northern Virginia Area who are associated with the Council of Korean Churches of Greater Washington (CKCGW) in June 2020. The analysis was conducted using R studio software. The sample consisted of 47 pastors who responded to the survey sent via email. Of these 47 respondents, 14 were excluded due to disapplying answers. Hence 33 responses were measured in this analysis (Figure 3 and 4). Excluding the 14 missing values, the 33 people sample show no missing values (Figure 5). The demographic statistic of this sample of 33 pastors is as below in table 1.

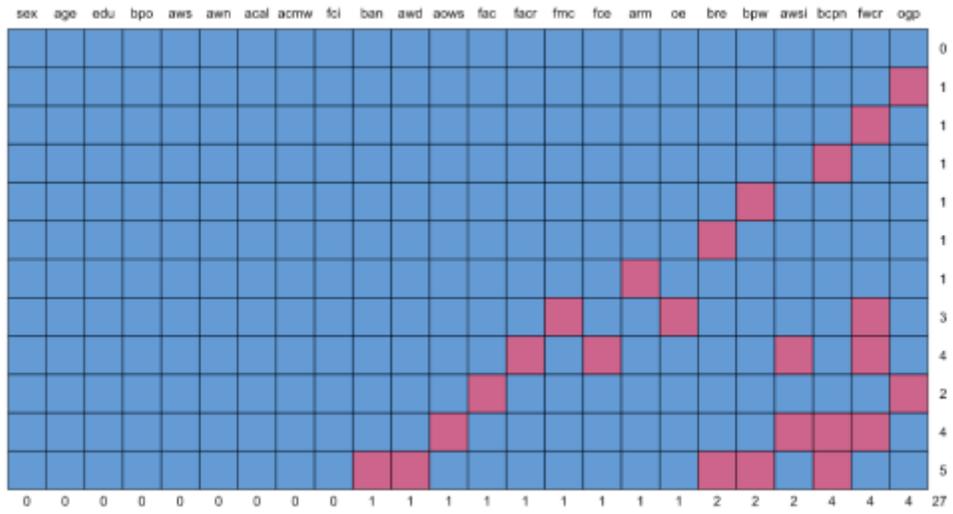


Figure 2. Missing Values

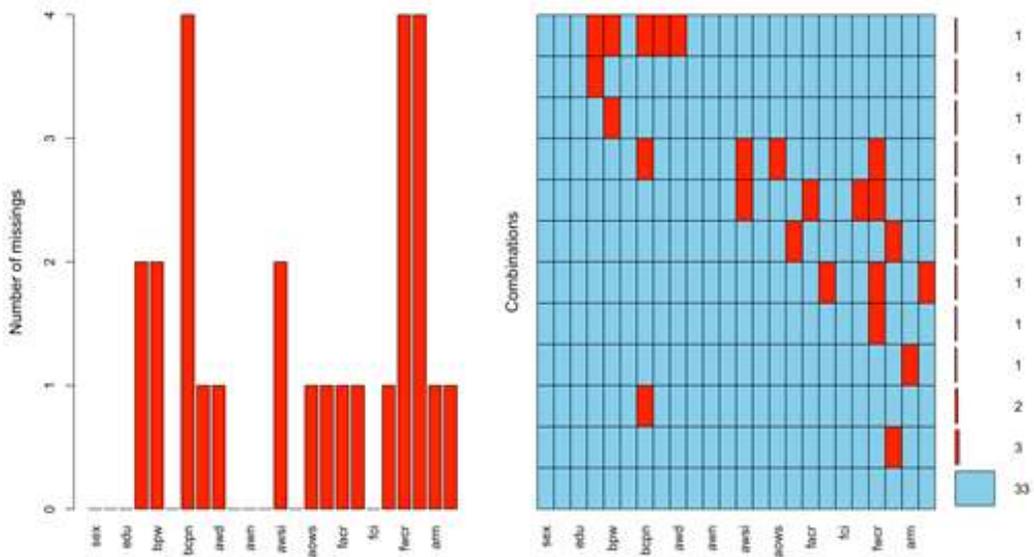


Figure 3. Number of Missing Values

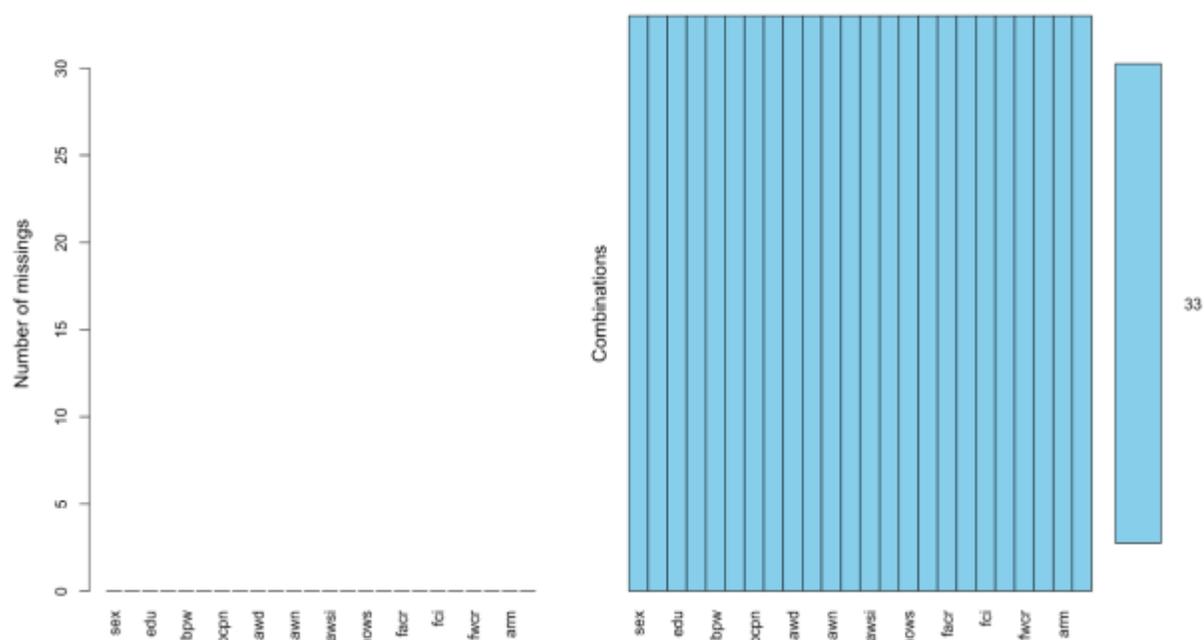


Figure 4. No missing values from 33 samples

Basic Statistic of Dependent Variables							
Variables	Number of Sample	Missing Values	Min.	Max.	Mean	St. Dev.	Code
Past 4 weeks' worship format in COVID-19	33	0	1	4	1.82	0.635	awd
Opinions on suspending offline worship in COVID-19	33	0	1	3	1.3	0.684	aws
Website used for online worship in COVID-19	33	0	1	3	2.24	0.751	awsi
Level of satisfaction of online worship during COVID-19	33	0	1	5	2.79	0.96	aows

Basic Statistic of Independent Variables							
Variables	Number of Sample	Missing Values	Min.	Max.	Mean	St. Dev.	Code
Opinion on whether worship should be offline or online during COVID-19	33	0	1	3	1.79	0.485	acal
Number of church members	33	0	1	3	1.46	0.711	ban
Number of ministers in church	33	0	1	3	1.46	0.794	bcpn

Basic Statistic of Control Variables							
Variables	Number of Sample	Missing Values	Min.	Max.	Mean	St. Dev.	Code
Sex	33	0	1	2	1.21	0.331	sex
Age	33	0	1	3	2	0.791	age
Level of Education	33	0	1	3	2.3	0.529	edu
Denomination	33	0	1	3	1.61	0.704	bre
Length of ministry period	33	0	1	4	2.49	0.755	bpw
Ministry position	33	0	1	3	1.21	0.485	bpo

Table 1. Statistics of Variables

When observing the dependent variables, the mean is 1.82, which is close to answering 2. Answer 1 was offline worship, and answer 2 was online worship. Hence it means that most pastors conducted online worship during COVID-19. Opinions on the decision-making of suspending offline worship during COVID-19 showed 1.3 in its mean. This means most pastors agree that suspending offline worship was a good decision (1. Good decision, 2. Bad decision, 3. Not sure).

### **Procedures**

As stated above, the first procedure for this thesis was to investigate the needs of ministers who conducted online worship under the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher reached out to CKCGW. This is an assembly of Korean pastors who minister in the region of Northern Virginia. The president of CKCGW was able to aid the researcher by reaching out to some pastors associated with CKCGW via email. The survey questions were distributed to these pastors via email. A link to the Google Survey was included in this email. Participants were able to respond to questionnaires in this way.

The collected data through Google Survey was analyzed through R studio software. Some relevant findings caught the researcher's attention regarding the needs of ministers who conducted online worship under the COVID-19 pandemic. They were the need for education of the essence of worship, reflecting congregational feedback and technical support. Having more time with the family was found to be one of the pros of online worship. However, the dominant need was an education of the essence of worship.

With these findings, the researcher conducted exegetical and historical research on providing some answers to the ministers' needs expressed in the survey. The researcher found some similar situations where the congregation could not gather for worship in the Bible era. The researcher collected literature addressing the exegesis of two eras when the worshiper had to be dispersed: the Exilic Period and the Early Church era. This collection included books, articles, commentaries, thesis and dissertations, and periodicals. Reviewing these works of literature, relevant selections were made to present how the worshipers continued to worship God in their dispersion authentically.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Reliability**

The variables for questions regarding worship during or after COVID-19, the reliability of these variables was certified. "Reliability in statistics and psychometrics is the overall consistency of a measure."<sup>152</sup> For measuring this consistency of the variables, Cronbach's alpha was applied. "It is the characteristic of a set of test scores related to the amount of random error from the measurement process that might be embedded in the scores. Highly reliable scores are precise, reproducible, and consistent from one testing occasion to another. If the testing process were repeated with a group of test-takers, essentially, the same results would be obtained. Various kinds of reliability coefficients, with values ranging between 0.00 (much error) and 1.00

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<sup>152</sup> William M.K. Trochim, , (Cornell University, 1999).

(no error), are usually used to indicate the amount of error in the scores."<sup>153</sup> Variables show reliable levels from 0.31-0.45 as below.

Reliability		
	Cronbach alpha	Number of Items
fmc, fci, fce	0.3197714	3
awd, aws, awn, acal, awsi, acmw, aows	0.4502642	7
ogp, arm, oe	0.4283405	3

Table 2. Reliability

FMC: Need for change in method for offering due to transition to online worship

FCI: Elements that churches should focus on COVID-19

FCE: Education direction that churches should focus on after COVID-19

AWD: Online worship or Offline worship during COVID-19

AWS: Opinions on suspending offline worship during COVID-19

AWN : Need of retaining offline worship during COVID-19

ACAL: Opinions of attending offline worship during COVID-19

AWSI: Websites used for online worship

ACMW: Contents of ministry after the transition to online worship

AOWS: Level of satisfaction of online worship compared to offline worship

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<sup>153</sup> National Council on Measurement in Education  
[http://www.ncme.org/ncme/NCME/Resource\\_Center/Glossary/NCME/Resource\\_Center/Glossary1.aspx?hkey=4bb87415-44dc-4088-9ed9-e8515326a061#anchorR](http://www.ncme.org/ncme/NCME/Resource_Center/Glossary/NCME/Resource_Center/Glossary1.aspx?hkey=4bb87415-44dc-4088-9ed9-e8515326a061#anchorR).

OGP: Pros of online worship

ARM: Methods to retain fellowship without gathering

OE: Effectiveness in delivering sermon content through online worship

The reliability analysis shows that the sources are reliable to be utilized to elicit findings for this thesis.

### Analysis of Selected Questions from the Survey

Analysis of selected five questions is addressed in this chapter that is directly related to giving ideas to research questions and qualitative studies conducted in Chapter 2.

1. What is the educational direction that churches should focus on after the COVID-19 situation?

COVID-19 종식 후, 향후 교회 공동체가 집중해야 할 교육의 방향성은?

응답 54개

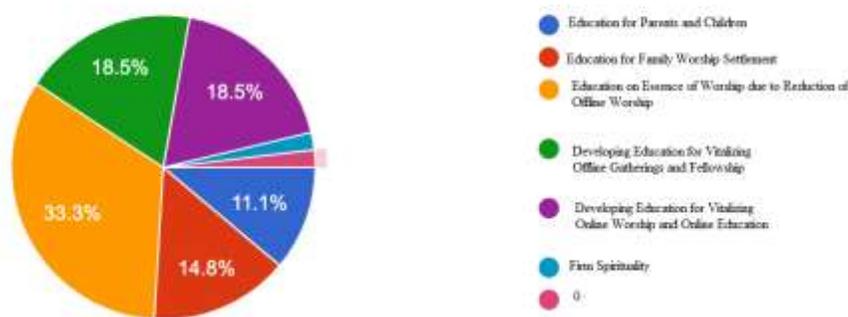


Figure 5. Analysis of Selected Question 1 from the Survey

33% of the participants answered that education on the essence of worship when expecting offline worship had been reduced.

2. What should the church community be interested in after the COVID-19 situation?

COVID-19 종식 후, 향후 교회 공동체가 관심을 가져야 할 사항은?

응답 54개

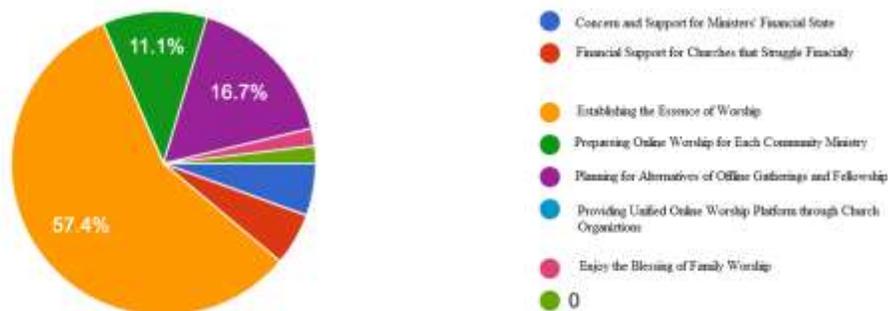


Figure 6. Analysis of Selected Question 2 from the Survey

This response also shows that 57.4% of the ministers experienced the lack and need of congregation's cognition in the essence of worship, and it needs to be addressed and educated.

3. If one conducted online worship during the COVID-19 situation, what areas need to be improved regarding online worship?

COVID-19 기간 중 비대면예배를 운영하였다면, 온라인예배의 개선이 요구되는 부분은?

응답 50개

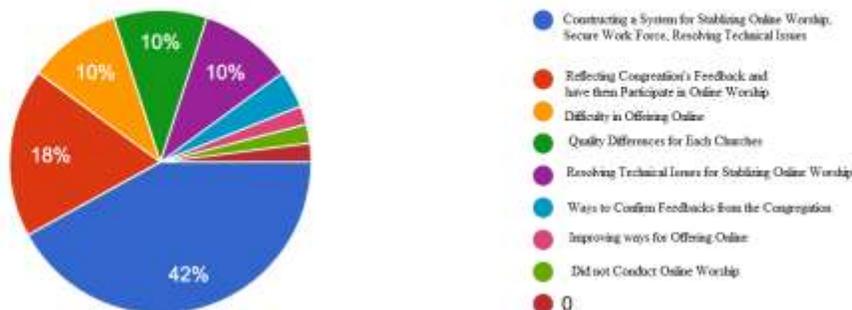


Figure 7. Analysis of Selected Question 3 from the Survey

42% of the participants answered that technical support is needed in conducting online worship. Reflecting congregation feedback is also shown as a critical issue in online worship platforms.

4. How did you have the fellowship between the congregation be sustained while being unable to gather offline for worship?

귀하는 대면예배로 모일 수 없는 상황에서 어떻게 성도간의 교제가 유지되도록 했는가?

응답 45개

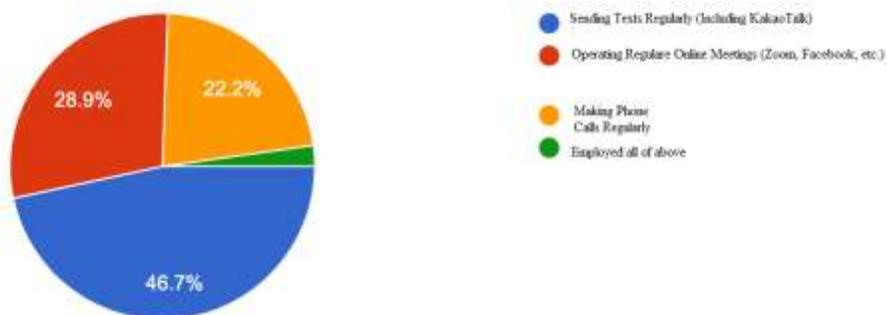


Figure 8. Analysis of Selected Question 4 from the Survey

5. What were the pros of conducting online worship?

비대면 예배 진행으로 인해 좋았던 점은?

응답 43개

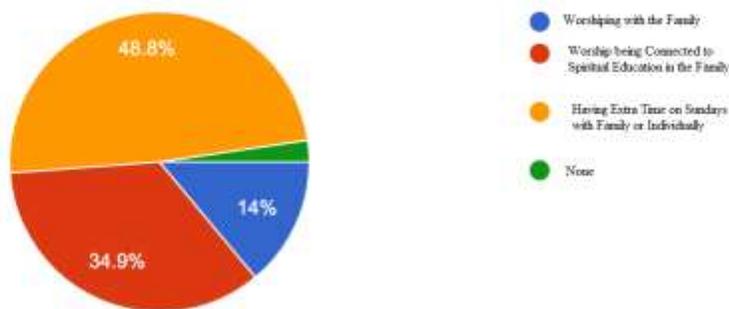


Figure 9 Analysis of Selected Question 5 from the Survey

## **CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to examine the needs of ministers who conducted online worship and supplement the found needs with relevant literature; if situations like the COVID-19 pandemic were to happen again, ministers would have appropriate references to conduct biblical worship in online platforms. The first three chapters of this thesis presented an introduction to the background of online worship during the COVID-19 pandemic; a literature review pertained to parallel structure between the exilic period and COVID-19 pandemic, biblical principles of worship that are appropriate for applying to online worship settings; and a survey that showed the needs among ministers who conducted online worship. This chapter will present the findings derived from the data collected and analyzed and a brief review of qualitative research done in chapter 2 to answer the research questions. The biblical principle of worship derived from historical examinations and biblical exegesis will apply to online worship settings under the COVID-19 pandemic, which is undergirded by the legit illustration of parallelism between the exilic period and the COVID-19 pandemic in chapter 2.

### Essential Elements of Worship to be preserved in online worship

According to the data and analysis from chapter 3, Korean ministers in Northern Virginia who conducted online worship during the COVID-19 pandemic expressed the dominant need for “education of essential elements of worship.” This was directly connected to the first research question, “What are essential elements of worship that should be preserved whenever there is a need for a transition to remote worship when the congregation cannot gather for in-person worship?” In response to this question, the literature review involved the following essential

elements of worship that were urged to be applied to online worship: *Kerygma*, *Didache*, and *Koinonia*.

### Practicing Kerygma through Online Worship

*Kerygma*, the Word of God, was the key to restoration from exile. According to the book of Jeremiah, God initiated the restoration plan through delivering His Word. Brueggemann argued that this plan is verified and had been developed through the whole Old Testament. Brueggemann's Chart on "Jeremiah in the Old Testament," Figure 2 in this thesis, attests to this argument. In other words, God's plan for restoration from the scattered time, such as the Babylonian exile, was through His Word, which is sporadically stated in the Old Testament.

Jesus came as the Word<sup>154</sup>, and it was argued that Jesus was the ultimate restoration from exile. McComiskey provided passages from the New Testament that implies the notion that Jesus regarded Himself as the ultimate restoration from exile. In John chapter 4, Jesus presents Himself as the living water to the Samaritan woman. Jesus teaches the Samaritan woman about true worship and how it is offered in Spirit and Truth. This worship transcends physical place. True worship that Jesus taught was not about a specific physical venue or rituals but rather about the hearts and lifestyles of worshipers.

Reading, teaching, comprehending, and obeying the Word of God is an essential element in online worship settings. The element of obeying the Word of God implies how a worshipful lifestyle daily is also essential. Through Jesus, the Word of God, and through practicing

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<sup>154</sup> John 1:1

worshipping in Spirit and Truth, true worship can be offered to God during online worship services.

### Practicing Didache through Family Worship

Biblical examinations pertained to family worship were argued in chapter two. According to analysis from chapter three, many survey participants mentioned “having more family time” as one of the pros of online worship. This makes an excellent platform to practice biblical family worship. This will also potentially answer the third research question, “What are the pros of online worship?”

As in chapter two, family worship was verified in the lives of protagonists in the Bible, such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Job, and recipients of Psalms 78. Regarding family worship in the New Testament, Paul and Peter presented principles of conducting family worship through his writings in epistles. Biblical principles of family worship were identified as reading, prayer, and singing.

There was a substantial benefit of family worship in regards to educating children. MacDonald presented how family worship positively affected the spiritual discipline of children.<sup>155</sup> In this regard, *Didache*, which is being trained in the way of Christ, is to be emphasized and exercised through family worship in situations when the congregation cannot gather in person.

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<sup>155</sup> Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Power of Children : The Construction of Christian Families in the Greco-Roman World*. (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014) Accessed August 7, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.

### Practicing Koinonia through Online Worship

According to analysis from chapter three, many survey participants expressed the need for interactive communication and ways for the congregation to respond in online worship platforms. Fellowship among worshipers, *Koinonia*, is an essential element of worship that was easily neglected in online worship due to technology limitations. However, there were noticeable studies on how *Koinonia* took place even in online worship services. Giuseppina Addo conducted a study on “Worshipping on Zoom”<sup>156</sup> and stated some positive results on aiding the congregation to respond and actively participate in online worship. Endeavors of online education pertained to methods for interactive education have also been verified as essential elements that could be positively applied to online worship. This illustration of ways to practice *Koinonia* through online worship answers research question number 5, “What are areas that could be improved in online worship?” This adheres to the related hypothesis: “Developing ways for interaction and feedback will help with the most difficult and neglected element of online worship: fellowship.”

### Worshipful Lifestyle under COVID-19 Pandemic

The second research question was, “What are some ways worship leaders can make online worship most effective?” Considering how the participants expressed dominant needs in understanding the essential elements of worship, the response to the following question must be

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<sup>156</sup> Giuseppina Addo, “Worshipping on Zoom: a digital ethnographic study of African Pentecostal churches and their liturgical practices during Covid-19,” Master thesis, Malmo University, Spring 2020. <http://hdl.handle.net/2043/32677>.

answered: “Can the essential elements of worship be practiced in online worship?” In other words, “Can true worship be offered even in online worship?”

The essential elements of worship that need to be preserved in online worship platforms were all about how the worshipers should practice *Kerygma*, *Didache*, and *Koinonia* in their lives. This notion transcends the rituals or physical venue of worship. Listening to the Word of God, being spiritually disciplined, and having interactions among worshipers, whether online or in-person, can be practiced in the daily lives of worshipers.

Though the troubled times of the covid pandemic seem to limit our experience in worship, it can be a time for the hearts and lives of worshipers to be evaluated. Ministers should be open to change strategies to reach out to individual worshipers and encourage them to live worshipful lifestyles, practicing *Kerygma*, *Didache*, and *Koinonia*.

### **Technical Support for Online Worship**

Research question number four was, “What are some areas that could be improved to address the needs of ministers who conduct online worship?” According to the survey in chapter three, the most pressing need was technical support for conduction online worship. Technical analysis of tools for online worship was beyond the scope of this research. In the literature review section of this,study there are suggestions of platforms employed. Some tools were accessible to ministers and adaptable resources to any sized church. The presented tools included Youtube, Facebook, OBS, and Zoom. Usages and evaluations of these tools under the COVID-19 pandemic are briefly provided through works of literature in chapter two.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter will include a summary of the study, which illustrates an overview of the purpose and procedures of this study, discussions of the research findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further study

### Summary of the Study

The survey for this study was applied to Korean ministers in the Northern Virginia area who conducted online worship during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data analysis showed the participant's needs in online worship: education on the essence of worship, technical support for regular online worship, and ways for interactive communication in online worship. The participants' challenges were supplemented by the researcher's literature reviews in chapter 2, which included parallel structure between the exilic period and COVID-19 pandemic and biblical principles of worship appropriate for applying to online worship settings. A parallel structure between the COVID-19 pandemic and the exilic period was suggested through Biblical texts.

For the scope of the study, the researcher approached the biblical principles of worship with an ecclesiastical view because the church is a worshipping community. The five ancient marks of the church are *Kerygma*, *Didache*, *Koinonia*, *Diakonia*, and *Liturgia*. Out of these five marks, *Kerygma*, *Didache*, and *Koinonia* were mainly addressed in this study. The reason for selecting these three elements was due to findings from biblical examinations on the exilic period and analysis of the survey. Biblical examinations suggested that *Kerygma* was an essential element regarding restoration from exile. Analysis of the survey showed that practicing *Didache* through family worship could be one of the benefits of online worship platforms. Analysis of the survey also showed a lack of *Koinonia* in online worship services. The researcher provided ways

to supplement the lack of *Koinonia*, such as ministers reaching out to individual worshipers or worshipping through online platforms.

### **Discussion of the Research Findings**

Through biblical examinations of the exilic period, it was substantiated that reading, teaching, comprehending, and obeying the Word of God was essential in being restored from the exile. Applying this notion to current or future days when worship cannot gather in person, various methods relevant to each local church should be developed. The following questions can be considered: how can the Word of God be effectively delivered through the online platform? How could ministers effectively conduct Bible study online? How can ministers help the worshipers obey the Word of God lives worshipful lives daily?

The legitimacy of conducting family worship was verified through biblical examination. Relating this notion to online worship settings, the following questions emerge: how can ministers help each family conduct family worship, how can ministers educate parents with family worship contents in online settings, and how should broken families approach family worship?

Online platforms such as Zoom created chances for the congregation to respond to and participate in online worship services interactively. It is anticipated that methods for interactive communication through the online platform will improve as technology develops. In this regard, more interactive ways in online worship services can be developed as well. If online worship is inevitably conducted in a much more developed future, there might be more chances to replicate the vitality of in-person worship and intimacy among worshipers.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The following limitations of this study must be considered. While the participants needed technical support for conducting online worship, a technological analysis of online platforms and applications is beyond this study's scope. As the survey was conducted on Korean ministers in the Northern Virginia area, it may be unlikely to generalize the survey results.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Further studies providing specific engineering and maintenance of live streaming, recording, and editing that aid ministers who conduct online worship are recommended, especially for churches and ministers that lack budget or men power. This study will contribute as a practical aid to ministers who conduct online worship. Surveys to more populations that could legitimately generalize the results are recommended. It is recommended that further studies employ different views to elaborate the biblical principles of worship that could be applied to online worship settings.

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**APPENDIX: IRB APPROVAL****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

2020-10-19

Yunseop Kim  
Young Choi

Re: Modification - IRB-FY19-20-390 A STUDY ON MINISTERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDENS FROM SUSPENDING WORSHIP SERVICE IN COVID-19 SITUATION

Dear Yunseop Kim, Young Choi:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has rendered the decision below for IRB-FY19-20-390 A STUDY ON MINISTERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDENS FROM SUSPENDING WORSHIP SERVICE IN COVID-19 SITUATION.

Decision: Exempt

Your request to add Nakjung Kim as a co-investigator has been approved.

Thank you for complying with the IRB's requirements for making changes to your approved study. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

We wish you well as you continue with your research.

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**