

Welcome Back – Part 2 Jerusalem Is Rebuilt

Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Jerusalem Is Rebuilt

- ◆ Permission to go home included all the tribes of the Israelites. Ezra 1:3
- ◆ Israel (Northern tribes) was scattered throughout the Assyrian empire
- ◆ Judah (Southern tribes) scattered in Babylon



Jerusalem Is Rebuilt

- ◆ Persia now controls all the territories once held by Assyrian and Babylonian empires



Captives Free to Return 536 B.C.

- ◆ Many Israelites stayed where they were
 - ◆ It has been almost 200 years since the first captives have been taken from Israel. 721 BC
 - ◆ The most recent captives have been gone 50 years
 - ◆ They built homes and were content to stay
 - ◆ It was their choice whether to return or not.

Captives Free to Return 536 B.C.

- ◆ Approximately 50,000 Jews gathered in Babylon to start home (Ezra 2:64-65)
 - ◆ Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8, 11; 5:14-15) and Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2; 3:2,8; 4:3; 5:2) are named as leaders (perhaps same man).
 - ◆ Many valuable vessels taken from the temple and palace in Nebuchadnezzar's day are returned. Ezra 2:68-69
 - ◆ 5,400 gold and silver vessels returned
 - ◆ Jews who stayed behind helped their brethren with gifts to make their trip easier. Ezra 1
 - ◆ It was a day of great joy as they began the trip
 - ◆ However, the tasks ahead would not be easy

The People of Palestine

- ◆ They profited from the Jews' absence
 - ◆ **Samaritans, Ammonites, Edomites and Nomadic tribes** moved into and nearer the fertile lands

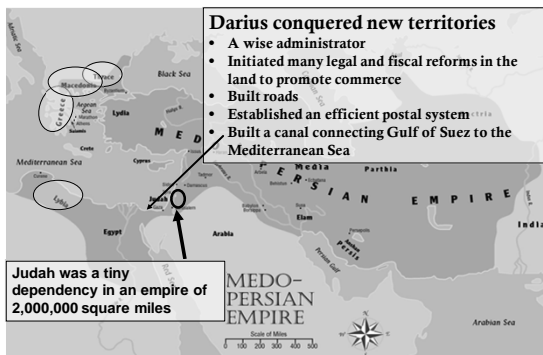
The “three returns” in Ezra and Nehemiah:

1. **Jews** return home under the leadership of **Zerubbabel** to build the temple. (Book of Haggai) cf. Ezra 3:10ff; cf. Haggai 2:3
2. **Ezra** returns with the Priests to start the spiritual reform. Ezra 3
3. **Nehemiah** returns to build the walls. (Book of Nehemiah)
 - ◆ Adversaries: Samaritans desired to help build the temple. Ezra 4:1ff; Nehemiah 2:17ff; cf. 2 Kings 17:32.
 - ◆ Jews accused of treason. Ezra 4:6ff; 11ff

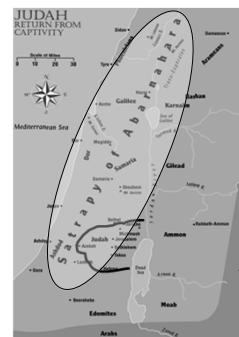
Return Number ONE

- ◆ Enemies wrote a letter to the new king **Cambyses** (Cyrus' son) after Cyrus had died
- ◆ Asked the king to check the records to see if Jerusalem had not always been rebellious. Ezra 4:15
 - ◆ Cambyses checked and he found that Jerusalem had been rebellious. Ezra 4:17ff
 - ◆ As a result, he had the work stopped and nothing more was accomplished for 16 years. Ezra 4:21
 - ◆ The people built for themselves houses, yet did not prosper. Haggai 1:2-11

Return Number ONE



Return Number ONE



- ◆ When king **Darius the Great** (Cyrus' grandson) came to power, **Haggai** and **Zechariah** urged the people to resume work
- ◆ The people really needed this encouragement

Return Number ONE

- ◆ A new letter is sent to the king telling the story of Jerusalem correctly (Ezra 5)
 - ◆ Darius checked the records and found the original decree from Cyrus in the palace of Achmetha in Media
 - ◆ He gave orders for the work to be finished and he forbade ANY opposition. (Ezra 6:1-2)
- ◆ The temple was finished 20 years after it was begun
 - ◆ A total of 4 years labor time (515 BC)

Esther

- ◆ Takes place approximately between chapters 6 and 7 of the book of Ezra
 - ◆ After king Darius I (521-486 BC)
 - ◆ **Xerxes** comes to the throne (486-465 BC)
 - ◆ **Esther** becomes queen to Xerxes
 - ◆ Risks her life and spares her people from annihilation
 - ◆ Her uncle **Mordecai** is raised to a highly responsible position in the kingdom – Jews treated with more respect

Esther

“For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

(NKJV) Esther 4:14

Return Number TWO

- ◊ In the 7th year of **Artaxerxes**, the son of Xerxes, he grants permission for Ezra to go to Jerusalem
- ◊ Ezra’s primary task was to inquire into the religious conditions in Judah and Jerusalem
- ◊ He was a teacher and a scribe

Return Number TWO

- ◊ He was authorized to purchase whatever he needed for the religious welfare of his people (Ezra 6:8)
- ◊ Nearly 2,000 people (mostly priests and Levites) returned with him

*“For Ezra had **prepared his heart** to seek the Law of the LORD, and **to do it**, and to **teach statutes and ordinances** in Israel.”*
KJV Ezra 7:10