

## RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY

### 1) Introduction

- a) Though Israel's sin removed them from Canaan, God had promised to bring them back (Deut 30)
  - i) He brings them back in order to complete His purpose for them from the beginning (Gen 3:15)
  - ii) Babylon has been replaced by the Medo-Persian empire as the dominant world nation (Dan 5:30-31)
  - iii) In the Medo-Persian era, all foreign nations were allowed to return to their nation of origin

### 2) The First Return (Ezra 1 – 4)

- a) King Cyrus allows Israel to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4; Isa 44:24-45:7)
  - i) All the original temple articles were returned to the exiles to take with them (Ezra 1:5-11)
  - ii) ~50,000 Israelites returned to Jerusalem from exile (Ezra 2)
  - iii) Other Israelites, having been treated well in exile, decided to remain
- b) Israel was led by Zerubbabel (governor) and Joshua (high priest) (Ezra 3:1-2)
  - i) Upon their return, they rebuild the brazen altar and celebrate the Feast of Booths (Ezra 3:1-7)
  - ii) In the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, they lay the foundation of the temple (Ezra 3:8-9)
  - iii) There was great rejoicing yet weeping by those old enough to remember the former (Ezra 3:8-13)
- c) Israel's enemies seek to prevent the temple's completion (Ezra 4:1)
  - i) Zerubbabel and Joshua stand up to the enemies, though they continue to discourage (Ezra 4:2-5)
  - ii) The enemies write a letter to the new Persian king accusing Israel of rebelling (Ezra 4:6-16)
  - iii) Upon seeing evidence of past rebellion, the new king orders a halt to construction (Ezra 4:17-22)
  - iv) Rather than fighting back, the Jews halt construction for ~16 years (Ezra 4:23-24)

### 3) Haggai & Zechariah (Ezra 5:1)

- a) Haggai is sent to rebuke and encourage Israel to finish the temple
  - i) Israelites were busy building their own houses and fields while neglecting His house (Hag 1:1-6a)
  - ii) Therefore God prevented them from reaping because of their indifference to His house (Hag 1:6-11)
  - iii) Haggai's rebuke worked as Israel commences its work on the temple (Hag 1:12-15)
  - iv) Those who saw the former temple are encouraged that something even better is coming (Hag 2:1-9)
    - (1) Messianic Promise – God will build a spiritual temple which cannot be shaken (Heb 12:26-29)
  - v) Israel is reminded that not finishing the temple had defiled all other service (Hag 2:10-19)
  - vi) Messianic promise restated. Nations will be shaken, but God's kingdom will endure (Hag 2:20-23)
- b) Zechariah calls Israel's attention to an infinitely greater spiritual temple that would one day be built
  - i) The new temple will be as big as it needs to be. God will protect it (Zech 2:1-5)
  - ii) Israel is called to leave the influence of evil Babylon behind (Zech 2:6-13)
  - iii) A prediction of a new high priest called "The Branch" is foretold (Zech 3:1-10)
  - iv) In the new temple, wickedness will not be tolerated (Zech 5)
  - v) In the new temple, the office of king and high priest will be combined (Zech 6:9-15)
  - vi) Blessings in the land, withheld for of their ceasing to rebuild the temple, will resume (Zech 8:9-13)
  - vii) God will defend Israel through the Messiah to come (Zech 9:8-17)

### 4) Temple Work Resumes (Ezra 5 – 6)

- a) When the temple work resumed, the regional governor, Tattenai, inquired about it (Ezra 5:3)
  - i) The Jews inform him of Cyrus' previous ordinance granting permission to rebuild (Ezra 5:4-5)
  - ii) Tattenai sends a letter to King Darius to crosscheck the Jews' story (Ezra 5:6-17)

- iii) After searching the records, Darius confirms that the Jews' story is true (Ezra 6:1-5)
- iv) Darius commands the temple work to resume and be financed by the adjacent nations (Ezra 6:6-12)
- v) The temple is completed and the Passover is observed amidst much rejoicing (Ezra 6:13-22)

## 5) Esther

- a) The story of Esther occurs in the time period between Ezra 6 & 7
  - i) Remember that the Jews had become well-known and respected in the world as a result of this story

## 6) The Second Return (Ezra 7 – 10)

- a) 75 years after the first return, Ezra leads a 2<sup>nd</sup> smaller group of Jews back to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:1-7)
  - i) Ezra's purpose was to teach the law to the children of Israel (Ezra 7:8-10)
  - ii) Artaxerxes sends a letter w/Ezra granting permission and anything else he needed (Ezra 7:8-26)
  - iii) Ezra praises God for His working in moving the king's heart to issue this decree (Ezra 7:27-28)
- b) Ezra and a small group of Jews depart for Jerusalem (Ezra 8:1-20)
  - i) Ezra calls for a fast and prayers that God would protect them from bandits (Ezra 8:21-23)
  - ii) Though they carried a vast fortune, God protected them on their journey (Ezra 8:24-36)
- c) Shortly after arriving, Ezra is informed that certain Jews had intermarried with foreigners (Ezra 9:1-2)
  - i) Distraught, Ezra penitently prays to God, fearing a repeat of their captivity (Ezra 9:3-15)
  - ii) The people decide to make it right by putting away their foreign wives (Ezra 10:1-4)
  - iii) Ezra leads the people in their efforts; great sacrifices are made to obey God (Ezra 10:5-44)

## 7) The Walls Are Rebuilt (Neh 1 – 13)

- a) Nehemiah hears that Jerusalem's walls were still down (Neh 1:1-3)
  - i) He weeps over the news and prays to God that he'd be granted permission to return (Neh 1:4-11)
  - ii) As cupbearer to the king, he seeks and is granted permission to build Jerusalem's walls (Neh 2:1-8)
  - iii) Nehemiah travels to Jerusalem and discreetly evaluates the situation (Neh 2:9-16)
  - iv) Nehemiah informs others of his plan and contends w/enemies (Neh 2:17-20)
- b) Nehemiah assigns portions of the wall by family (Neh 3)
  - i) Nehemiah defends the Jews from those wishing to halt the project (Neh 4)
  - ii) Nehemiah deals with the problem of usury (Neh 5)
  - iii) Nehemiah evades the enemies wishing to entrap him (Neh 6)
  - iv) The Feast of Booths is observed (Neh 7:73b-8:18)
  - v) Public sin is rebuked, repented of, and the covenant is renewed (Neh 9, 10)
  - vi) City inhabitants are selected and the walls are dedicated (Neh 11, 12)
  - vii) Nehemiah fixes several problems amongst the people (Neh 13)

## 8) Malachi

- a) Malachi rebuked Israel for ritualistic worship and vain formality (Mal 1)
- b) The priest are rebuked for forsaking their covenant with God (Mal 2:1-9)
- c) The marital sins of the people are rebuked (Mal 2:10-16)
- d) The forerunner to the Messiah is predicted (Mal 2:17-3:6)
- e) The people are called to repentance (Mal 3:7-18)
- f) The Day of the Lord is again predicted (Mal 4)