

Welcome Back – Part 1 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.
 - ◆ Jews from various tribes mentioned in the NT (cf. Luke 2:36)

Captives Free to Return 536 B.C.

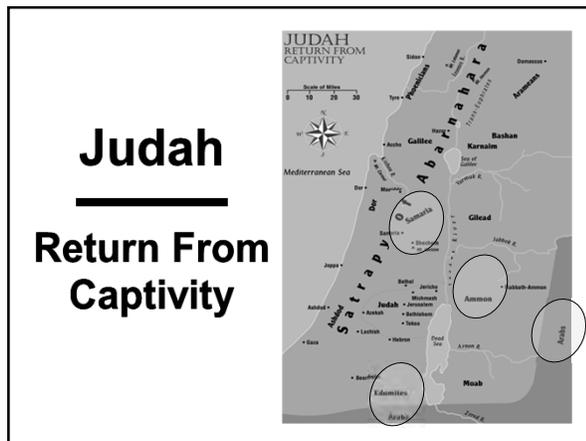
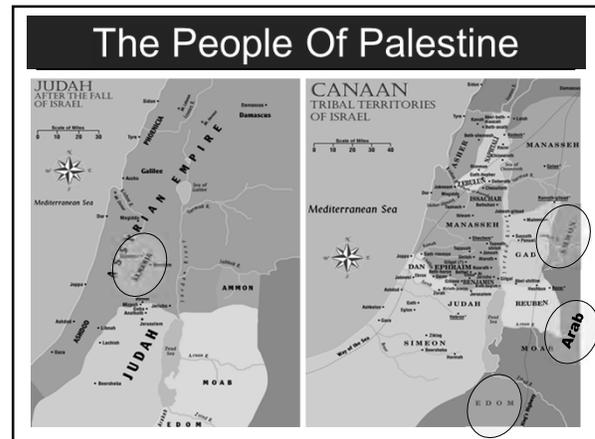
- ◆ Approximately 50,000 Jews gathered in Babylon to start home (Ezra 2:64-65)
- ◆ Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8, 11; 5:14-15) and Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2; 3:2,8; 4:3; 5:2) are named as leaders.
 - ◆ Unknown whether these were two different men or two names for the same man

Captives Free to Return 536 B.C.

- ◆ No “gods” to return to the Jews, WHY? However:
 - ◆ 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** had grown in power
 - ◆ Claimed the territory around the ruins of Jerusalem
 - ◆ **Ammonites** moved out of their near-desert territory into the fertile highlands of Gilead
 - ◆ **Edom** moved out of the dry Negeb into land once belonging to Judah
 - ◆ They took the city of Hebron
 - ◆ **Nomadic tribes** moved nearer the fertile lands
 - ◆ Established a more settled way of life



Judah

Return From Captivity

3 Returns

- ◆ The “three returns” in Ezra and Nehemiah:
 1. Jews return home under the leadership of **Zerubbabel** to build the temple. (Book of Haggai)
 2. **Ezra** returns with the Priests to start the spiritual reform.
 3. **Nehemiah** returns to build the walls. (Book of Nehemiah)

Return Number ONE

- ◆ Jews return to Palestine under Zerubbabel. Ezra 3
 - ◆ Begin to work on their temple as soon as they reach Jerusalem
 - ◆ Rebuilt the altar of burnt offering and began their regular sacrifices
 - ◆ Celebrated when the foundations of the temple were laid.

Return Number ONE

- ◆ Praised God for His mercy
- ◆ Grief that day also
 - ◆ Some present who could remember the splendor of the temple Nebuchadnezzar had burned
 - ◆ This one would never compare to it!
- ◆ cf. Ezra 3:10ff; cf. Haggai 2:3

Return Number ONE

- ◆ Adversaries began trying to stop their work
- ◆ **Samaritans** desired to help build the temple. Ezra 4:1ff; Nehemiah 2:20
 - ◆ Note who the Samaritans were and their understanding of God. 2 Kings 17:32

Return Number ONE

- ◆ Adversaries began trying to stop their work. Nehemiah 2:17ff
 - ◆ Wrote a letter to the new king **Cambyses** (Cyrus' son) after Cyrus had died
 - ◆ Called by the titles of Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes in the letter
 - ◆ Accused the Jews of treason. Ezra 4:6ff; 11ff

Return Number ONE

- ◆ 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
 - ◆ Yet the people built for themselves houses, yet did not prosper. Haggai 1:2-11

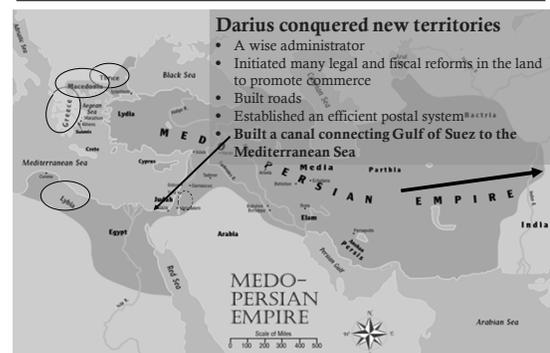
Return Number ONE

- ◆ Cambyses continued to push the borders of his kingdom outward
 - ◆ Succeeded in taking **Egypt** and ended the reign of the Pharaohs forever
 - ◆ Learned of problems at home
 - ◆ Started back to secure his hold on the kingdom, but he died on the way

Return Number ONE

- ◆ **Darius the Great** (Cyrus' grandson) came to the throne
 - ◆ Divided the empire into 20 satrapies with an officer over each one – answerable to him
 - ◆ Each satrapy was subdivided into provinces with rulers

Return Number ONE



Return Number ONE



- ◊ **Judah** was a tiny dependency in an empire of 2,000,000 square miles
- ◊ A Persian governor ruled the fifth Satrapy
- ◊ Extended from northern Syria down to the border of Egypt
- ◊ Called **Abarnahara** "the land beyond the Euphrates"

Return Number ONE

- ◊ When king Darius 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)