

Welcome Back – Part 3 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

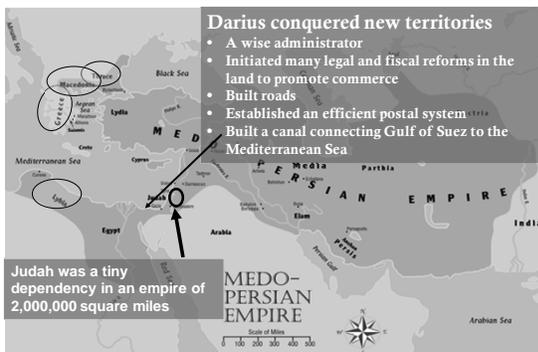
The “three returns” in Ezra and Nehemiah:

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

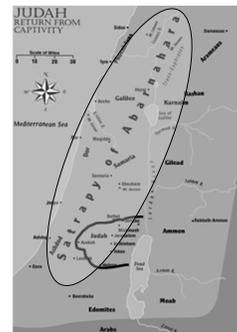
Return Number ONE

- ◆ 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 houses for themselves, 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

God's Providence: The Story of Esther

"Then Mordecai bade them return answer unto Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther 4:13-14

Reminder

- **Ecclesiastes 9:1**, *"For all this I laid to my heart, even to explore all this: that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God."*
- **Ecclesiastes 3:11**, *"Man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end."*

Reminder

- **Deuteronomy 29:29**, *"The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."*
- Therefore we *"walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Corinthians 5:7), we *"Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths."* (Proverbs 3:5-6)

King Xerxes "Ahasuerus"

- **Made up of 127 provinces**
- **Jews scattered as result of Babylonian captivity (2:5-6)**
- **Reigning King of Persia (486–465 BC)**
- **Unsuccessful war against Greece.**

Background

- **483 BC – royal feast given in Shushan**
- **Lasted 180 days**
- **Women being entertained by Queen Vashti.**
- **King sought to parade Vashti's beauty after becoming *"merry with wine."***
- **Queen refused the order**
– Esther 1:12, 19

New Queen

- **Process took four years. (2:15-20)**
- **Esther is chosen – not yet revealed her Jewish heritage. (2:10)**
- **Each woman prepared for one year. (2:12)**
- **Then each spent one night with the King.**
- **Those not chosen placed with king's concubines**

Mordecai

- Served as the king's gatekeeper
 - Esther 2:5-7
- Would not bow down and give homage to Haman.
- Revealed plot to the Queen about assassination attempt on the king
 - Esther 2:19-23

Haman

- Served as the king's Prime Minister
 - Esther 3:1-2
- Devised a plot to kill all the Jews
 - Esther 3:6-9; cf. Genesis 12:1-3
 - Note Mordecai's faith in God. (4:14)
- King consents to the plot
 - Esther 3:10-15

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Step #1

- Esther's commitment.
 - Esther 4:14-17
- Mordecai's insistence for her to go before the king
- Esther's choice. Life or riches
- Esther's noble character.
- A special banquet
 - Esther 5:4

Step #2

- Events the night before the 1st banquet
 - Esther 5:9-14 – Haman's pride / Plot to hang Mordecai
- King could not sleep and asked the chronicles be read
 - Esther 6:1-3; cf. 2:21-23
- King's question to Haman
 - Esther 6:4ff
- Haman's forced to honor Mordecai
 - Esther 6:7-12
- Wife's statement
 - Esther 6:13

Step #3

- The 2nd banquet
 - Esther 6:14 – 7:1
- Esther reveals her request to the king
 - Esther 7:3-6
- Haman pleads for his life
 - Esther 7:6-8
- Haman hanged on his own gallows
 - Esther 7:9-10

Step #4

- **Mordecai given Haman's position**
– Esther 8:1-2
- **What about the decree?**
– Esther 8:3-6 – Esther again risks her life.
- **King sends out a new decree**
– Esther 8:8-10
- **Jews given permission to defend themselves**
– Esther 8:11-17

Can We See God in All of This?

- An orphan taken by Mordecai (2:7)
- What if she had ended up in the home of other relatives?
- What if Esther revealed her identity to the king other than when Mordecai had instructed?
- How did it happen that Mordecai sent out the decree that averted the effects of Haman's decree? (8:3-4, 7-9)
- How did Mordecai happen to be the man of wisdom and intelligence involved in this plan?

Can We See God in All of This?

- How did Mordecai happen to even be alive at the time to be appointed as Prime Minister?
- How come the king had trouble sleeping and asked for the chronicles?
- How did the king happen to hear about Mordecai saving his life?
- How did it happen that until now the good deed of Mordecai had been overlooked?
- How did a young Jewish orphan become Queen over a world empire?

Can We See God in All of This?

- Though never named in the book, God is there ... in every chapter and every verse; in every event we have looked at, all to the bringing about of good for His people.
- *"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* **Esther 4:13-14**

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