Return from Exile

Rebuilding the Temple
Ezra 4-6
Lesson 2

Trinity Bible Church Sunday School
September 12, 2010
Background

- Nation Israel in captivity
  - Assyria – Northern Kingdom of Israel – 722 B.C.
  - Babylon – Judah – 586 B.C. (also 605 and 597 B.C.)
  - Medo-Persia
  - Cyrus the Great, Darius I, Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and Artaxerxes

- Promise to Abraham
  - Genesis 12:1-3 – blessing, great nation, Gentiles, Seed Promise
  - God’s wrath displayed
  - Jeremiah – 70 years of captivity
  - Literal Israel v. Spiritual Israel
The Final Word

- 3 history books:
  - Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

- 3 not-so-minor prophets:
  - Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

- Faithfulness of God
  - Re-affirms the Promise
  - Preparation for Messiah
The image contains a historical timeline and a diagram of the historical setting of the Book of Ezra. The timeline spans from 550 B.C. to 423 B.C., with significant events marked for Ezra 1-6 and Ezra 7-10.

**Ezra 1-6**
- **539**: Fall of Babylon
- **536**: First Return of Exiles (under Zerubbabel)
- **534**: Temple Begun
- **530**: Temple Resumed
- **521**: Temple Finished
- **520**: **CYRUS**
- **516**: **SMERDIS**
- **486**: **DARIUS I**

**Ezra 7-10**
- **464**: Second Return of Exiles (under Ezra)
- **458**: **XERXES**
- **445**: Third Return of Exiles (under Nehemiah)
- **423**: **ARTAXERXES I**

The diagram shows the historical context and key events related to the Book of Ezra.
Ezra 1-6

- Decree of Cyrus (1)
- Remnant who returned (2)
- Rebuilding begins (3)
- Adversaries (4:1-23)
  - Passive and active opposition by locals (4:1-5)
  - Accusation to Ahasuerus (Xerxes) in (4:6)
  - Accusation to Artaxerxes in (4:7-23)
- Rebuilding stopped (4:24)
Ezra 1-6

- Rebuilding begins (5:1-5)
  - Haggai, Zechariah, Zerubbabel, Jeshua (5:1-5)
- Appeal to King Darius (5:6-6:12)
- Temple completed (6:13-22)
  - Temple completed (6:13-15)
  - Temple dedication (6:16-18)
  - Temple service (6:19-22)
Preparing to Build the Temple

- Altar set up “in its place” – burnt offerings
- Feast of Booths
- Daily burnt offerings, regular burnt offerings
- Purchase cedar trees from Lebanon
- Laid the foundation in second year
- Celebration – tears and cheers
“Let us build with you . . .”

- Adversaries (4:1)
- Fear (3:3)
- The danger of cooperation
  - Ezra 9:1-2
  - Ezra 9:11-14
  - 2 Kings 17:33, 41
- A holy work
  - A spiritual battle
- A dangerous union
Active opposition

- Discouraged them
- Made them afraid
- Bribed counselors against them
They succeeded! (Ezra 4:24)

- Proverbs 29:25
- Romans 11:33
- 2 Timothy 3:12
- John 15:18-25
Flash forward

• A letter to Xerxes (Ahasuerus) – 50 years
  • Ezra 4:6

• A letter to Artaxerxes – 80 years
  • Ezra 4:7-23
  • Work on the wall ceased (4:23)

• The work on the temple stopped (4:24)
Construction resumes

- How to overcome fear?
- The Word of the LORD by Haggai & Zechariah
  - Ezra 5:1 and 6:14
Haggai

- Rebuke
- A promise of future glory for this new Temple
- A promise of a future world-wide Kingdom
Zechariah

• “Return to Me”
• Zeal for Jerusalem (Zech. 1:15-17)
• Sing and rejoice – I will return and dwell in your midst (Zech 2:10-12)
• A coming Priest/King (Zech. 6:9-14)
• Will dwell in Jerusalem (Zech. 8:1-3)
• Wrath on enemies (Zech. 9)
• A universal King/Kingdom (Zech. 9:9-10)
• Restoration of Israel (Zech. 10)
• The coming Day of the LORD (Zech. 14:1-9)
• Holiness will be the hallmark of that Day (Zech. 14:20)
A demonstration of sanctification

- John 17:17
- Proverbs 2
- Hebrews 4:12
Opposition resumes

- Intimidation again
- A different response by the people
- A letter to King Darius – Was there a decree?
- A new decree: rebuild this house of God
The Temple is completed

- **Dedication**
  - 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats” (1 Kings 8:63)
  - 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, 12 male goats (Ezra 6:17)

- **Temple service and religious duty**
  - Purification of the priests
  - Passover
  - Feast of Unleavened Bread

- **Great expectations**
Lessons from Ezra 4-6

- A spiritual warfare
- The primacy of God’s Word
- The wisdom of God v. the wisdom of man