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A God-Stirred Spirit

Ezra 1-3

Key Dates in the Period of the Return and Restoration*

538/37 B.C. first return of the Jews under Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-2)

537/36 B.C. the altar built and the foundation laid (Ezra 3)

536-520 B.C. the work on the temple ceases (Ezra 4)

520 B.C. the preaching of Haggai (1-2) and Zechariah (1-6)

520 B.C. the temple construction resumes (Ezra 5)

518 B.C. the preaching of Zechariah (Zechariah 7-14)

516/15 B.C. the temple is completed (Ezra 6)

486 B.C. the Jews opposed in the beginning of Xerxes (Ezra 4:6)

483 B.C. Xerxes holds a feast (Esther 1)

479 B.C. Esther is made queen (Esther 2)

474/73 B.C. Haman plans to kill the Jews (Esther 3-10)

464-423 B.C. the Jews opposed in Artaxerxes' reign (Ezra 7:7ff)

458/57 B.C. the second return of the Jews under Ezra (Ezra 7-10)

445-433 B.C. Nehemiah returns & rebuilds the walls (Neh. 1-12)

433-432 B.C. Nehemiah's recall and return (Nehemiah 13)

432-425 B.C. the preaching of Malachi (1-4)

* all dates are approximate

Ezra 1 Overview

- Introduction (1:1)
- The first return permitted (1:3-4)
- The first return rewarded (1:5-11)

Ezra 2 Overview

- The first return recorded (2:1-70)
- Leaders (2:2)
- Listed by families (2:3-19)
- Listed by towns (2:20-35)

Ezra 2 Overview

- Temple workers: priests (2:36-39), Levites (2:40), singers and porters (2:41-42), Nethinim (2:43-54), children of Solomon's servants (2:55-58)
- People without genealogy (2:59-63)

Ezra 2 Overview

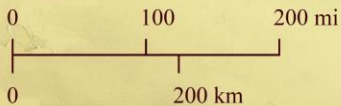
- Totals of those who returned (2:64-67)
- Gifts offered (2:68-69)
- Those who lived in their cities (2:70)

- - - - - ▶ Zerubbabel's route
- — — — — ▶ Ezra's route
- - - - - ▶ Nehemiah's route

1) In 539 B.C. King Cyrus decreed that all Jews exiled to Babylon could return to their homeland. A contingent of Jews returned under Zerubbabel's leadership.

2) Around 458 B.C. the scribe Ezra led a smaller group of Jews back to Judea, taking the shorter, more dangerous desert route that passed through Tadmor.

3) Around 445 B.C. while Nehemiah was in Susa, King Artaxerxes I granted him permission to travel to Jerusalem to rebuild the city.



Ezra 3 Overview

- Temple work started (3:1-13)
- The altar is rebuilt and sacrifices are offered (3:1-7)
- The foundation of the temple is laid and the Lord is praised (3:8-13)

God Stirs Up

- Stirred the Assyrians (1 Chron. 5:26)
- Stirred the Medes (Isa. 13:17)
- Stirred others (2 Chron. 21:16; Isa. 9:11; 19:2; Jer. 50:9)

Lessons Learned

1. The human spirit needs stirring

- Why? To accomplish God's will
- It would be hard, but they had a purpose to fulfill: to build the house (Ezra 9:9)

Lessons Learned

- Complacent, settled, apathetic, indifferent (Amos 6:1; Zeph. 1:12)
- Selfishness (Hag. 1:4, 14)
- Challenging times (Mt. 24:12)

Lessons Learned

- Asleep (Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 15:34; Eph. 5:14)
- Worldly (Jas. 4:8)
- Cold (Rev. 2:4)
- Dead / lukewarm (Rev. 3:1, 16)

Lessons Learned

2. Stirring results in good actions

- Cyrus made a proclamation and the Jews returned and rebuilt
- The tabernacle was built because the Jews were stirred up (Ex. 35:21, 26; 36:2)

Lessons Learned

- Conversion (Acts 2:37)
- Repentance (2 Cor. 7:11; Rev. 3:19)
- Good works (Tit. 2:14)
- Growth (2 Pet. 1:5)

Lessons Learned

3. How God stirs both directly and indirectly

- Cyrus; possibly through the teaching of Isaiah (45:1, 13), Jeremiah, or Daniel (9:2)

Lessons Learned

- Today through his preaching (Mt. 21:10; Lk. 23:5), his people (2 Cor. 9:2; Heb. 10:24), and his written word (2 Pet. 1:13; 3:1 = to arouse completely)

Lessons Learned

- We must do our part to “stir up” (2 Tim. 1:6; lit. “fan into flames”, NIV, NLT, ESV; “kindle afresh”, NASV; “rekindle”, CSB, NET)
- Will you be stirred to return, to revive, and to rebuild today?