

Handout Ezra Lesson 1

This is what Yahweh says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares Yahweh, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:10-11

BIBLICAL PERIOD	#9 THE REMNANT OF JUDAH RETURNS			
FOCUS	The Return from Exile and Rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple		The Organization of the Community by Ezra and Nehemiah	
COVENANT	The Sinai Covenant and Davidic Covenant			
SCRIPTURE	1:1-----3:1-----7:1-----9:1-----10:44			
DIVISION	The Edict of Cyrus and registry of the first returning exiles	Restoration of worship and rebuilding the Temple	Ezra’s mission and the registry of the second returning exiles	Ezra’s spiritual restoration of the covenant people and opposition to mixed marriages
TOPIC	Sheshbazzar, Jeshua, and Zerubbabel		Ezra	
	First return = 49,897		Second return = 1,754	
LOCATION	Babylon to Jerusalem		Babylon to Jerusalem	
TIME	22 years (539/8 -517/6 BC) Edict of Cyrus to the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem		1 year during the reign of Artaxerxes I (ruled 465-424 BC)	

Persian Kings of the Achaemenid Dynasty

1. Cyrus II the Great ruled from 559-530 BC and conquered Babylon in 539 BC
2. Cambyses II, son of Cyrus the Great, ruled from 530-522 BC
3. Bardiya, son of Cyrus the Great or imposter, ruled 522 BC but assassinated by Persian nobles
4. Darius I, son of Hystaspes (a kinsman of Cyrus), ruled 522-486 BC
5. Xerxes I, son of Darius I, ruled 486-465 BC
6. Artaxerxes I, son of Darius I, ruled 465-424 BC
7. Xerxes II, son of Artaxerxes I, assassinated in 424 BC by Sogdianus
8. Sogdianus, son of Artaxerxes I, ruled 424-423 BC
9. Darius II, son of Artaxerxes I, ruled 423-404 BC
10. Artaxerxes II, son of Darius II, ruled 404-358 BC
11. Artaxerxes III, son of Artaxerxes II, ruled 358-338 BC
12. Artaxerxes IV, son of Artaxerxes III, ruled 338-336
13. Darius III, a descendant of Darius II?, ruled 336-330 BC, killed by Artaxerxes V
14. Artaxerxes V, probably a son of Artaxerxes II, ruled 330-329 BC, killed by Greek King Alexander the Great

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Some of the prophecies fulfilled by the return of the covenant people of Judah from exile:

Scripture Reference	Prophecy	when made	date fulfilled	Significance
Isaiah 44:28 And 45:1-7	God would anoint a Gentile named Cyrus to guarantee the return of a faithful remnant of Israel to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.	c. 688 BC	539 BC	God named Cyrus, "shepherd," even before he was born. God knows everything. God controls history! Cyrus, king of Persia 559-530 BC
Jeremiah 25:12	God will punish Babylon for injustices against the covenant people.	605 BC	539 BC	Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC.
Jeremiah 29:10	The citizens of Judah will spend 70 years in exile, after which God will bring His people back to their homeland.	594 BC	539/8 BC	Cyrus allows the return of the Jews to their homeland. The 70 years of captivity can span the years from the 605 BC deportation to the first resettlement or from the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 587/6 BC to the building of the Second Temple in 517/6 BC.
Daniel 5:17-30	God judged Babylon and decreed her empire to be conquered by the Medo-Persians, the next regional power.	539 BC	539 BC	Babylonian ruler Belshazzar was killed the night of the prophecy in a surprise Persian invasion.

The Exodus out of Egypt	The Exodus out of Babylon
The Israelites endured a period of tribulation in Egypt.	The Judahites endured a period of tribulation in Babylon.
An Egyptian king with a hard heart resisted God's call to free the Israelites from bondage (Ex 5:1-2).	A Persian king with a receptive heart responded to God's call to release the Israelite/Judahite captives (Ezra 1:1).
The Israelites left Egypt with treasure and goods supplied by their Egyptian neighbors (Ex 12:12:35-36).	The returning exiles left Babylon with treasure and goods supplied by their neighbors (Ezra 1:4).
Moses led the twelve tribes Israelites out of Egypt as a free people.	Sheshbazzar led twelve groups of exiles out of Babylon as a renewed people.
There was a registry of the men making the journey (Num 1:27-28, 36-37).	There was a registry of the men making the journey (Ezra Chapter 2).

The twelve tribes of Israel and their leaders returned to the Promised Land of Canaan.	Twelve groups of people and their twelve leaders from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin returned to the Promised Land of Judah (Ezra Chapter 2).
The exodus out of slavery in Egypt prefigures Jesus Christ leading the New Covenant people of God out of slavery to sin and death and into the Promised Land of Heaven.	The exodus out of Babylon prefigures Jesus Christ leading the Kingdom of His Church on their journey of salvation to the Promised Land of Heaven.

The return of the exiles to their Promised Land also prefigure the mission of Jesus Christ:

1. Before the advent of the Messiah, humanity was held captive by sin and death.
2. Jesus is the Davidic heir who led His people out of captivity to sin and death.
3. Twelve men became the spiritual fathers of the newly restored people of God.
4. The liberated take with them the treasures of the seven sacraments on their journey to salvation.
5. The names of the liberated are in a registry of the baptized in Christ.
6. Those who are spiritually restored by Jesus Christ are citizens of His Kingdom of the Church.
7. Jesus and His Church continue to guide the faithful of every generation on their journey to the Promised Land of Heaven.

The forgetting of the Law and the infidelity to the covenant end in death: it is the Exile, apparently the failure of the promises, which is in fact the mysterious fidelity of the Savior God and the beginning of a promised restoration, but according to the Spirit. The People of God had to suffer this purification. In God's plan, the Exile already stands in the shadow of the Cross, and the Remnant of the poor that returns from the Exile is one of the most transparent prefigurations of the Church.

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