



Minor Prophets

Lesson 13

Ezra 1-3 The Return

Jeremiah 25:8-9,11-12a

“Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Because you have not obeyed My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, and against its inhabitants, and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them a horror, and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation... And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will be when seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 29:10-11

“For thus says the Lord, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’”

Just as the northern kingdom of Israel rebelled against God and was sent into captivity by the Assyrians, 150 years later the southern kingdom of Judah followed suit. The Babylonians had decimated Jerusalem and the Temple of God, and either murdered or captured thousands to take back to Babylon. God had disciplined His people using their wicked enemies just as He said He would. But, alongside the promise to send them into captivity came the promise to restore all that had been ruined. The nation would once again rise, and God would bless them after their 70 years of discipline. The people that held them captive would be moved to return them to their land and rebuild. Daniel the prophet was the one who recognized the soon coming end to the 70-year detention (approximately 608-538 BC) and began to petition God to begin the restoration. Daniel 9:1 states, “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom

of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.”

In 539 BC Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered the Babylonians and began to rule over that empire as was prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 13:17-19). In the first year of Cyrus the decree was made, and God’s people were stirred up to return to their land. Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar thought to be the Chaldean name for Zerubbabel) would lead the first group of returnees to Jerusalem and the surrounding areas to begin the rebuilding process. Ezra the priest would lead the second group, and Nehemiah whom the

Persians had appointed governor, would lead the last group. The post-exile prophets Haggai and Zechariah were active during the initial time of rebuilding. Ezra and Nehemiah were considered as one book by the Jews, and they

document the struggle for the Jewish people to regain their national heritage back in the land. Most scholars believe Ezra was the author of 2 Chronicles and that Ezra/Nehemiah are the continuation of that document.

READ EZRA 1-3

1. *What did Cyrus say was the reason he was sending the captives back to their land? 1:1-4*
2. *What did the people gather to take with them? Vs. 5-11*
3. *Who were the leaders of the first group to go to Jerusalem? 2:2*
4. *How did they classify the people by groups? 2:2,36,40, 41,42,43, 55*
5. *Why were some of the priestly line not allowed to serve? 2:59-63*

6. *What was the first thing to be rebuilt in Jerusalem? 3:1-3*

7. *What was the first feast they observed (3:4), what was its purpose, and according to the Law of Moses, how was it to be celebrated? Leviticus 23:33-44*



There were several purposes for these annual celebrations. The first was to remember God's activity on the people's behalf. The second was to celebrate God's goodness. The third was to teach the next generation about God's goodness. Children growing up in up in godly homes were to have regular times to celebrate and to enjoy God and family. Growing up in such happy homes inclined children to embrace their parent's God for themselves.

~Experiencing God Bible

8. *When did they finally begin rebuilding the Temple? 3:8-9*

9. *Describe the praise celebration in vs. 10-11.*

10. *What were the differing responses to this progress? Vs. 12-13*

Prayer requests:

Group time notes:
