

God's People Return to Jerusalem

Cyrus sends a Remnant Home

Ezra 1:2-3

“I, Cyrus, king of Persia, hereby announce that Jehovah, the God of heaven who gave me my vast empire, has now given me the responsibility of building him a Temple in Jerusalem, in the land of Judah. All Jews throughout the kingdom may now return to Jerusalem to rebuild this Temple of Jehovah, who is the God of Israel and of Jerusalem. May his blessings rest upon you.”

Zerubbabel

Zerubbabel was the Governor of the Jews in Jerusalem. He was the grandson of the last Jewish King. He dedicated God's altar first, then began rebuilding the temple of God. He withstood much opposition. He became an ancestor of Christ.



Ezra

Ezra was a priest and scribe who went to Jerusalem after the people had been there for a while. He taught the people to live righteously and worship correctly. He worked with Nehemiah to finish rebuilding Jerusalem.

Samaritans Attempt to Stop the Israelites

Ezra 4:1-4

When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles had returned and were rebuilding the Temple, they approached Zerubbabel and the other leaders and suggested, “Let us work with you, for we are just as interested in your God as you are.”

But Zerubbabel and the High Priest Jeshua and the other Jewish leaders replied, “No, you may have no part in this work. The Temple of the God of Israel must be built by the Jews, just as King Cyrus has commanded.”

Then the local residents tried to discourage and frighten them by sending agents to tell lies about them to King Cyrus. This went on during his entire reign and lasted until King Darius took the throne. ■

Kings of Persia

Cyrus

God prophesies that Cyrus will send the Jews back to Jerusalem.

Appointed Zerubbabel governor.

First King of the Persian empire, that destroyed Babylon just as the handwriting on the wall predicted.

Darius

Darius succeeded Cyrus and helped the Jews rebuild the temple and walls.

Responded to Ezra and Nehemiah's call to read the history of Persian support for the Jews.

Artaxerxes

Took pity on Nehemiah and sent him to Jerusalem.



Nehemiah

Nehemiah 4:1-3, 2:1-6, 17-20

Nehemiah was a servant of King Artaxerxes who was sad to hear that Jerusalem was vulnerable because the walls had not been rebuilt.

The King allowed him to go to Jerusalem and lead the people in rebuilding the walls. ■



Sanballat

Nehemiah 4:1-3

Sanballat was very angry when he learned that the Jews were rebuilding the wall. He flew into a rage, and insulted and mocked and laughed at them, and so did his friends and the Samaritan army officers. "What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they are doing?" he scoffed. "Do they think they can build the wall in a day if they offer enough sacrifices? And look at those charred stones they are pulling out of the rubbish and using again!"

Tobiah, who was standing beside him, remarked, "If even a fox walked along the top of their wall, it would collapse!" ■

Prophets Encourage

Zechariah

Preaches to the remnant in the time of Ezra.
Contemporary to Haggai.

Encourages the remnant of Israel to finish rebuilding the temple, because they are rebuilding their future as God's people.

Zechariah 8:3a "I am returned to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem."

Haggai

Preached to the remnant during the reign of Ezra, contemporary to Zechariah.

Encourages the people to rebuild the temple and praises Zerubbabel for his efforts on it.

The people's priorities were on their needs.
God said he would bless them if they saw to his work first.

Haggai 1:4 "Is it time for you to dwell in your own houses and the temple to lie in waste."

Malachi

Preached to the remnant in the days of Nehemiah.

The last prophet to speak to a people who have become so hypocritical God won't talk to them.

Malachi criticizes their confidence in their specialness as God's people while committing sins.

Malachi 1:6 "A son honoreth his father and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is my honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear?"

