

Destin Church of Christ

July 30, 2023

Chapter 19: The Return Home

Ezra 1 – 6; Haggai 1 – 2; Zechariah 1; 8

Introduction:

In *The Story*, the people of Israel waited for their “resurrection” from exile, not hours, or days. Not even weeks, months, or a few years. The people of God waited for seventy years until they would return to the Promised Land, rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and experience the grace of God in ways they had longed for over their decades of exile.

Lesson Breakdown:

- Coming Home Again (Ezra 1)
- Building the Temple (Ezra 3-4)
- Priorities (Haggai 1-2; Zechariah 1, 8)
- Whatever Is Needed (Ezra 5-6)

Plot Points:

- The Sovereign Lord can move the heart of an emperor to accomplish his purposes.
- The Lord’s steadfast love and covenant faithfulness should never be doubted, and his prophecies always come to pass.
- God’s people will always face opposition in achieving and worthwhile task, but they can rely on the Lord to see them through as they faithfully labor.

As you watch the video for Session 19 , notice some of the main points.

- ✓ The Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia.
- ✓ God’s solution: Access through the shedding of blood.
- ✓ In the Lower Story, God’s big thing became their small thing.
- ✓ There are seasons of God-ordained struggles.
- ✓ “Go up into the mountains and bring down the timber and build the house.”

UNDERSTAND THE STORY:

“The books of Haggai and Zechariah should be read and studied with the book of Ezra, for all three were written in the shadow of the rebuilt temple and were given to encourage the people in building.” ~~ JV Magee

Ezra 1:

In accordance with the prophecy of Jeremiah and inspired by the Lord, King Cyrus of Persia commands and helps Judah to return to and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. (263) [Ezra 1:1]

In his proclamation., Cyrus stresses that he has been given all the kingdoms of the earth by God. (263) [Ezra 1:2]

Temple items are also returned. (264) [Ezra 1:7]

There were: gold and silver platters, knives, gold and silver basins, and other articles. (NIB) [Ezra 1:9]

The Jews are led by Sheshbazzar, prince of Judah, who took 5,400 articles of gold and silver. (264) [Ezra 1:11]

Ezra 2:

Israel returns from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem and Judah, led by Zerubbabel. (NIB) [Ezra 2:2-63]

There were 42,360 returnees in all. (264) [Ezra 2:64]

There were also: 7,337 male and female servants; 200 men and women singers; 736 horses; 245 mules; 435 camels; and 6,720 donkeys. (264) [Ezra 2:65-67]

Ezra 3:

The Jerusalem temple altar is rebuilt on its ancient foundation. (264) [Ezra 3:1-4]

Sacrifices and festivals begin again. (264-265) [Ezra 3:5]

Temple rebuilding begins. (265) [Ezra 3:8-9]

1. Who or whom oversaw the work of rebuilding the temple? (265) [Ezra 3:8]

After the foundation of the temple was laid, there was joyous singing and praising of the Lord while some people wept. (265) [Ezra 3:10-13]

2. Did those that wept weep tears of joy? (265) [Ezra 3:12]

Ezra 4:

The enemies of Judah offer to help rebuild the temple, but Zerubbabel refuses their assistance. (265) [Ezra 4:1-3]

The neighbors of the Jewish people did not want them in Jerusalem and did not want them rebuilding the Temple. (265) [Ezra 4:4-5]

In verses 6-23, a letter is sent to King Artaxerxes with some false accusations. He replies that the work on the temple is to cease. (NIB) [Ezra 4:6-23]

The rebuilding of the temple stopped (536 BC) and was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia (520 BC). (266) [Ezra 4:24]

Haggai 1:

In the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord comes via Haggai to Zerubbabel (governor of Jerusalem) and Joshua (the high priest). (266) [Haggai 1:1]

The Lord says ... The people should remember they live in nice houses while the temple lies in ruins. (266) [Haggai 1:2-4]

The Lord says ... The people should consider their ways ... they are not satisfied. (266) [Haggai 1:5-6]

The Lord says ... The people should consider their ways ... to construct the temple. (266-267) [Haggai 1:7-11]

The people obeyed and feared the presence of the LORD, and construction of the temple began. (267) [Haggai 1:12]

Confirmation comes from God that He is with the people, who enthusiastically worked on the temple. (267) [Haggai 1:13-15]

Haggai 2:

The LORD came to Haggai and told him to tell Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the remaining people to be strong ... that he (God) is with them. (267-268) [Haggai 2:1-5]

The Lord says ... He will shake heaven and earth; the sea and dry land and He will fill this temple (*house*) with glory. (268) [Haggai 2:6-9]

Zechariah 1:

The word came to Zechariah in the eighth month of the second year of Darius.
(268) [Zachariah 1:1]

- Ten visions (all in one night) are described in Chapters 1 – 6.
- Questions concerning fasting are in Chapter 7.

Zechariah 8:

The Lord says ... He is jealous and will return to Zion, dwelling in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain will be called the Holy Mountain. (268) [Zachariah 8:1-3]

The Lord says ... Once again men and women of old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, and the city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.
(268) [Zachariah 8:4-5]

The Lord says ... It may seem marvelous to the people at that time.
(268) [Zachariah 8:6]

The Lord says ... He will save His people from the countries of the east and the west and will bring them back to live in Jerusalem. (269) [Zachariah 8:7-8]

The Lord says ... Do not be afraid. I will save you, and you will be a blessing.
(269) [Zachariah 8:9-13]

The Lord says ... Do not be afraid. Speak the truth to each other, do not plot evil against each other, and do not love to swear falsely. (269) [Zachariah 8:14-17]

Zachariah received the word of the Lord, and the Lord said ... Fasts will be turned back into feast days. (269) [Zachariah 8:18-19]

The Lord says ... Jerusalem will become the religious capital.
(269-270) [Zachariah 8:20-22]

The Lord says ... Jerusalem will become the center of God's government.
(270) [Zachariah 8:23]

Ezra 5:

Haggai and Zechariah urge the people to start rebuilding the temple. (NIB) [Ezra 5:1-2]

Tattenai, the governor of the river, questioned the men chosen to build the temple. (270) [Ezra 5:3-5]

Tattenai writes to king Darius, saying rebuilding has started on the joint authority of the Lord and of Cyrus. (270-271) [Ezra 5:6-17]

Ezra 6:

Emperor Darius searches the records in the archives (*house of the scrolls*), where the treasures were stored in Babylon, where the original decree of Cyrus is found. (271-272) [Ezra 6:1-2]

He orders the rebuilding of the temple to continue. (272) [Ezra 6:3-5]

Tattenai and the Persians are told to stay away so the Jews can work on the temple. (272) [Ezra 6:6-7]

3. Who will pay the costs of rebuilding the temple and where will the funds come from? (272) [Ezra 6:8-10]

4. What will happen to whoever alters the edict or destroys the Temple? (272) [Ezra 6:11-12]

The temple is completed in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. (273) [Ezra 6:13-15]

5. In verse 14, God identified himself as the God of Who or What? (273)

6. What does that signify?

The temple is dedicated. (273) [Ezra 6:16-18]

The Passover celebrated. (NIB) [Ezra 6:19-22]

The bottom line ... A greater day for Jerusalem is coming in the future.

Sometimes, when hope seems dead and the darkness of night closes in strong against us, God is about to do something really big.

Next week we'll look at the story of Esther and how God orchestrated amazing details and timing to save his people from execution. *Read* chapter 20 of *The Story*. (Esther 1-9). How many times in the book of Esther is God mentioned by name?