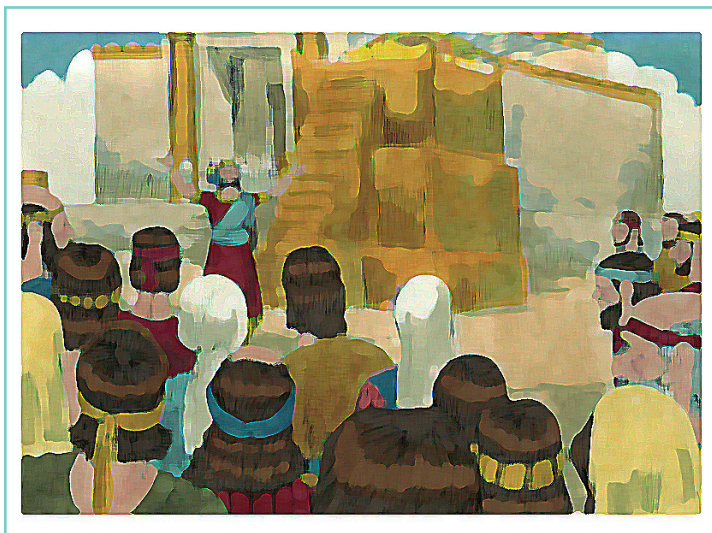


Lesson 5: Restoration



Old Testament

New Testament

Where in the Bible?

The books of *Nehemiah*, *Ezra*, and *Esther* are set in post exilic times.

The Old Testament: History

Israelite history is often broken down into three sections: the **pre-exilic** period, **exilic** period, and the **post-exilic** period — referring to the time before, during, and after the exile to Babylon. There were prophets who taught in each of these periods.

Biblical Time Period: Return

God brought King Cyrus of Persia to power over the Babylonians. God's people were allowed to return home to rebuild their temple and their nation under leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah.

However, the returning exiles were not necessarily welcomed back with open arms. Many of the poorer people who had remained in the land resented the return of the upper class who had left them behind. There was resistance to the restoration of Judea as a kingdom — both from the local people and from the nations in surrounding lands.

Introduction

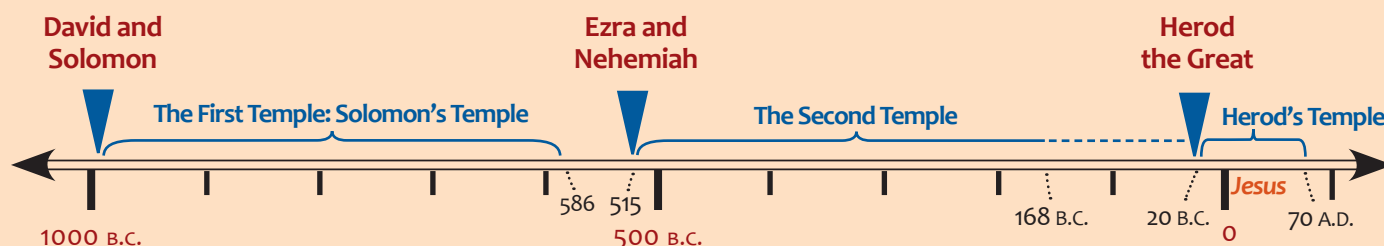
When King Cyrus came to power in Persia, he allowed the exiled Jews to return to their homeland and restore their nation. The Book of Ezra tells the story of how the temple was rededicated and worship of the Lord was reestablished in Jerusalem.

Read: Ezra 3:1-13

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

When in Time?

The first temple was constructed by Solomon around 1,000 B.C. That temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., and a smaller one was rebuilt by around 515 B.C. After partial destruction and restoration at the time of the Maccabees, King Herod the Great began refurbishing and expanding the temple just prior to Jesus' birth. Herod's temple was eventually destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.



Discuss: Ezra 3:1-13

1. What are the names of the two important leaders mentioned in Ezra 3:2? (These two figures are also spoken of by the prophet in Zechariah 3:6-8 and 4:8-10.) Which was the political leader and which was the religious leader?
2. The Feast of Booths (v. 4) was a commemoration of the time when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years. How was that time similar to what the exiles experienced in Babylon? Where did God's promise bring them in the end?
3. How was the expense of rebuilding the temple paid for? Who carried out the work? In what way does *our* worship of the Lord also include offerings of our time and money?
4. Why is the Levite tribe mentioned so often in these verses? What special function did they serve?
5. According to verses 10-11, what was the atmosphere on the day that the temple was rededicated? Are there special times of year when worship in your congregation is particularly festive? Why are times like this important for a community?
6. Why do you think that some of the old-timers wept at the sight of the temple being rebuilt (v. 12-13)? What do you think they were feeling?
7. The theme of *change* runs throughout the Book of Ezra. How can change bring excitement and renewal in faith? In what ways can change also be a scary thing? How do both require trust in God?
8. Read John 2:18-22. The temple was destroyed and rebuilt several times over the years. How did Jesus use this metaphor to give a promise about himself?

