

A ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, DANIEL AND CYRUS.

❖ **The end of the 70 years.**

- God foretold the decree of Cyrus that Ezra mentioned 150 years before it was promulgated. God is always in control of history.
- Daniel interceded for Israel before God (Daniel 9:1-19) and told Cyrus about the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah. This was the key for Cyrus to allow the return of the exiles.

B ZERUBBABEL AND THE PERSIAN KINGS.

❖ **The exiles return.**

- Cyrus was at Ecbatana by September 537 BC. That's where he enacted the decree in Ezra 6:2-5. This decree included the following points:
 - (1) They had to build the Temple in Jerusalem.
 - (2) Every Jew could return (it was not mandatory).
 - (3) They could be helped with silver, gold, cattle...
- According to Ezra 2:1, they were led by Zerubbabel (grandson of king Jeconiah) and the High Priest Jeshua/Joshua.

❖ **The kings of Persia.**

- We'll understand the story told in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah better if we know their relationship with the Persian kings who ruled over the Israelites.
 - (1) Cyrus II the Great (559-530 BC): 536 BC First group of repatriated with Zerubbabel [The rebuilding of the Temple begins].
 - (2) Darius I (522-486 BC): March 515 BC The Temple is finished and dedicated.
 - (3) Artaxerxes I (465-425 BC): 457 BC Ezra returns to Jerusalem with the second group [The 70 weeks in Daniel 9 begin]. 444 BC Nehemiah returns with the third group [The wall of Jerusalem is completed].

C EZRA AND ARTAXERXES.

❖ **The second return.**

- The decree of Artaxerxes in 457 BC (Ezra 7:12-26) contains two main points:
 - (1) The Temple: The priests and Levites are mentioned. They are exempted of taxes (v. 13, 24); a special offering is requested for its restoration. A yearly assignment for the sacrifices is established (v. 15-23).
 - (2) The autonomy of Judah: Ezra is allowed to appoint judges and governors. They are allowed to enact their own laws (v. 25-26).
- This second return involved about 1,500 family leaders in 12 clans (Ezra 8).

❖ **Ezra.**

- He wrote the Bible books of Esther, Ezra, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. He also compiled the Psalms and had a deep understanding of the Scriptures and the Mosaic law.
- The Jewish tradition says that he started the meetings in synagogues and made other improvements in the Hebrew worship and writing systems.
- Ezra is an example of what God can do when we let Him work in us and develop the gifts which He has given us.

THE KINGS OF PERSIA

Cyrus II the Great
559-530 BC

536 BC First group of repatriated with Zerubbabel

The rebuilding of the Temple begins

Cambyses II 530-522 BC

Gaumata (false Smerdis) 522 BC

Darius I
522-486 BC

March 515 BC The Temple is finished and dedicated

Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)
486-465 BC

Esther becomes queen

The rebuilding of Jerusalem halts

Artaxerxes I
465-425 BC

457 BC Ezra returns to Jerusalem with the second group

The 70 weeks in Daniel 9 begin

444 BC Nehemiah returns with the third group

The wall of Jerusalem is completed