

The Exiles Return

Ezra 1-2



Cyrus Cylinder

Cyrus' Edict 538 BC

- Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled
 - "This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste." (Jer. 25:11-12)

Cyrus' Edict 538 BC

- "For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jer. 29:10-11)

70 Years

- In his mercy, the LORD shortened the years of their trial
 - Only about 50 years
 - "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short." (Matt. 24:21-22)

Cyrus' Edict 538 BC

- Persian foreign policy compared to the Babylonian foreign policy was vastly different
- Not simply for self-serving reasons...

Cyrus' Edict 538 BC

- "The LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia..." (1:1; see also 1:5)

Cyrus' Edict 538 BC

- "Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed... I have stirred him (Cyrus) up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward," says the Lord of hosts." (Is. 45:1, 13)

Cyrus' Edict 538 BC

- The LORD was behind the veil of human history
 - Judah's emancipation was not ultimately the result of Persians public policy but of God's providential purposes

Cyrus' Edict 538 BC

- "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth..." (1:2)
 - "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." (Rom. 13:1)
 - An unexpected, yet brilliant insight given to Cyrus

Second Exodus

- "Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth; say, "The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob!" They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and the water gushed out." (Isaiah 48:20-21)

Second Exodus

- "...whose spirit God has stirred to go up." (1:4)
- "...when the exiles were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem." (1:11)

Second Exodus

- Cyrus commanded that goods and funds be given to them before they departed as in the first exodus
- Cyrus himself gives back the vessels for the temple that were stolen by the Babylonians

God Preserved Their Wealth

- "The political kingdom had perished but not the 'kingdom of priests.'" (Kidner, 38)

"This was the number of them"

- They do not add up...
 - Total added = 2,499
 - Total recorded = 5,400

“This was the number of them”

- Three options
 - Total misunderstood by scribes
 - Total misunderstood by us
 - Scribal error

“This was the number of them”

- Biblical numbering is notoriously difficult and was clearly the bane of the scribes trade
- Remember inerrancy applies to the original autographs

Has the inerrant Scripture, erred?

- “Inerrancy requires our confidence not in the reliability of Moses and his knowledge of the cosmos but in the reliability of the historical narratives, laws, and promises that are disclosed in the Pentateuch. Even then, it is truthfulness, not exactness, that we expect when we come to the biblical text.” (Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way*, 178)

Has the inerrant Scripture, erred?

- "There is a vast difference between exactness of a statement which includes an exhaustive rendering of details, an absolute literalness, which the Scriptures never profess, and accuracy, on the other hand, which secures a correct statement of facts or principles intended to be affirmed. . . . It is this accuracy, and this alone, as distinct from exactness, which the church doctrine maintains of every affirmation in the original text of Scripture without exception." (A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield, *Inspiration*)

Ezra 2

"This chapter, however uninviting it may seem, is a monument to God's care and to Israel's vitality. The thousands of homecomers are not lumped together, but (in characteristic biblical fashion) related to those local and family circles which humanize a society and orient an individual. Such is God's way who 'setteth the solitary in families' (Ps. 68:6). And for the people's part, their tenacious memory of places and relationships, still strong after two generations in exile, showed a fine refusal to be robbed of either their past or their future."

Derek Kidner, 39

Person and Place

- "To be rootless and anonymous was the last thing an Israelite could wish to be." (Kidner, 42)
 - Think of the implications for us in the church!

Leaders Identified

- Sheshbazzar
 - “prince” “governor”
 - Possibly same person as Zerubbabel
 - Possibly Zerubbabel's predecessor

Leader's Identified (ch. 2)

- Nehemiah and Mordecai
 - Not the men who appear in Nehemiah's story or the story of Esther
 - Perhaps these were common names

Leader's Identified (ch. 2)

- Zerubbabel
 - Royal descent - king Jehoiachin (I Chron. 3:16-19)

Zerubbabel & Jeshua

- A very close partnership

- Ezra 2:2
- Ezra 3:2
- Ezra 3:8
- Ezra 4:3
- Hag. 1:12-14
- Hag. 2:2
- Zech. 3:9-10

- Jeshua - Ezra
- Joshua - Haggai & Zechariah

Zerubbabel (Royal) Jeshua (Priestly)

- "So close, indeed was this partnership that it was seen by Zechariah as the foretaste of the perfect regime to come, when priesthood and royalty would unite in one man: 'the man whose name is the Branch.'" (Kidner, 41)

Zechariah 6:11-13

- "Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high **priest**. And say to him, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord and shall bear **royal** honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a **priest** on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'"