

Ezra:

Working together in God's service

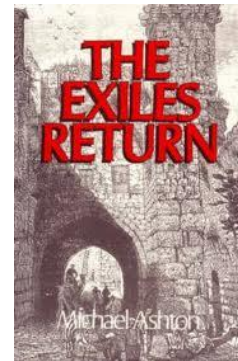
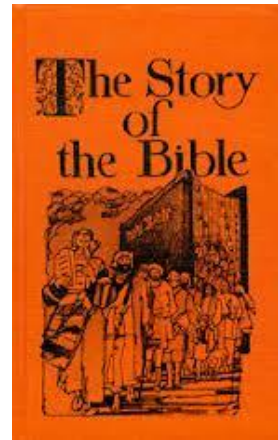


Class 1: God set
us Free to work
in His Service!



Christadelphian Resources on Ezra

- **Story of the Bible** (vol 4) by H.P. Mansfield
- **The Exiles Return** by Michael Ashton
- **Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi** (Expositor) by H. P. Mansfield
- **The Prophets after the Exile** by John Carter



For the audio learners:



- Audio – 8 classes by Jim Cowie
- Audio – 6 classes by Jim Styles
- Audio – 6 classes by John McConville
- Audio – 2 classes by Bernard Burt

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Title	Speaker	Created
Ezra: Working Together in God's Service	Jim Styles	07/02/2021
Story of the Bible	Morrie Stewart	06/18/2021
Hast Thou Considered My Servant Job - Notes	Neville Clark	06/18/2021

Title	Ezra: Working Together in God's Service
Speaker	Jim Styles
Location	MWBS
Year	2021

Attachments

Ext

Size

Attachment 1	Ezra MWBS 2021 ALL	pdf	7.87 MB
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An Exciting Study for Today!

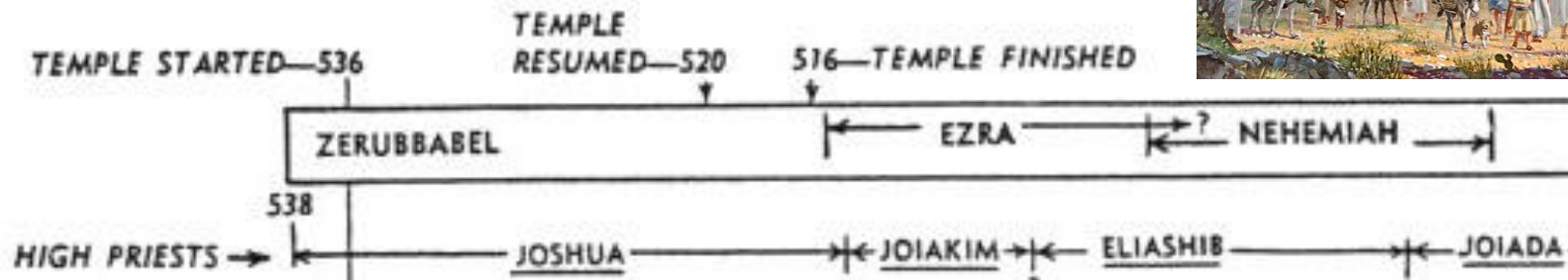
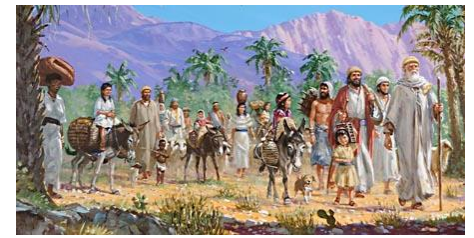
Study
Ezra!



- **Experience brothers & sisters working together** through troubles in ecclesial life
- **Practical lessons** in family life & ecclesial life
- **Parallels to Christ's soon return** to restore & build the everlasting household of God
- **Confidence & peace** that grows as we watch the unseen angels working behind the scenes to carry out God's plan

Everyone will find practical lessons in this study!

Sequence of Events



- 1) Some return with Jeshua & Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-2)
- 2) Rebuilding the temple (Ezra 3-4)
- 3) Zechariah & Haggai motivate the finishing of the temple (Ezra 5-6)
- 4) Ezra Returns with more exiles (Ezra 7-10)
- 5) God uses Haman to convince the Jews to return home (Esther)
- 6) Nehemiah builds the walls of Jerusalem
- 7) Malachi, then time between the Testaments

2 Sections in the Book of Ezra

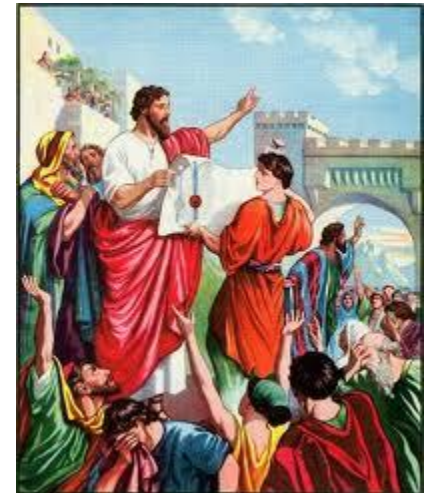
Chapters 1-6 Don't involve Ezra himself

- Continue 2 Chronicles 36:23
- initial return from captivity
- rebuilding of the temple
- Don't involve Ezra himself



Chapters 7-10 involve Ezra himself

- Ezra returns to work in the temple
- Solving the mixed marriages problem



**Ezra probably returned
as soon as the temple
was finished**

Purpose of the Book of Ezra



1) God is faithful
– He will
restore Israel



2) God will build His house
(both physical & spiritual)



3) Illustrates the
cost of Unity



4) Warnings about
marriages with
unbelievers

Reasons for the 70-year Captivity



- 1) **Idol worship was so integrated in the people's minds (Ezekiel 14:1-5)**
(God's plan worked! Idolatry was abolished)

1 Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me.
2 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
3 "Son of man, **these men have set up their idols in their hearts**,
and put before them that which causes them to stumble into
iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?
4 "Therefore speak to them, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord
GOD: "Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his
heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity,
and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him who
comes, according to the multitude of his idols,
5 "that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they
are all estranged from Me by their idols.'"

Reasons for the 70-year Captivity



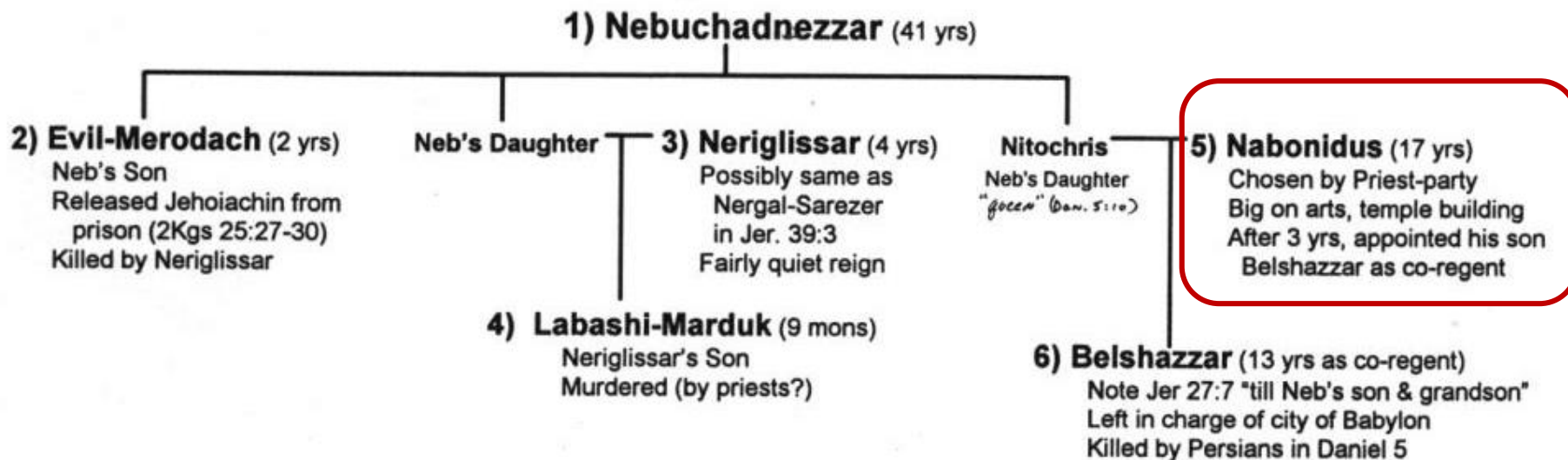
- 1) **Idol worship was so integrated in the people's minds (Ezekiel 14:1-5)**
(God's plan worked! Idolatry was abolished)
- 2) **God wanted to save a remnant**
(He had promised Abraham)
- 3) **United Judah & Israel again** *(the power of adversity!) Sad it takes this to bring unity ☹️*
- 4) **So the land could enjoy its Sabbaths**
(Lev 26:43; 2 Chron 36:21)

Captivity accomplished God's plan

Political Situation: Looked Hopeless for Jews to Return



- **Nabonidus king of Babylon** – very religious – built temples for gods of other nations
- **Belshazzar (Nabonidus' son) left in charge** (Dan 5)
- **Nabonidus brought foreign gods to Babylon** to protect it.
- **This really upset the Babylonian** priests and people!



Political Situation: Looked Hopeless for Jews to Return



- **Cyrus entered Babylon** without a battle & liberated city
- **Different Strategies:** Babylonians exiled people. Persians left people and incorporated existing governments & people.

Similar situation to our day: No angelic visits, No spirit gifts – Yet God still working in the nations for His people!

The Lesson for Us!



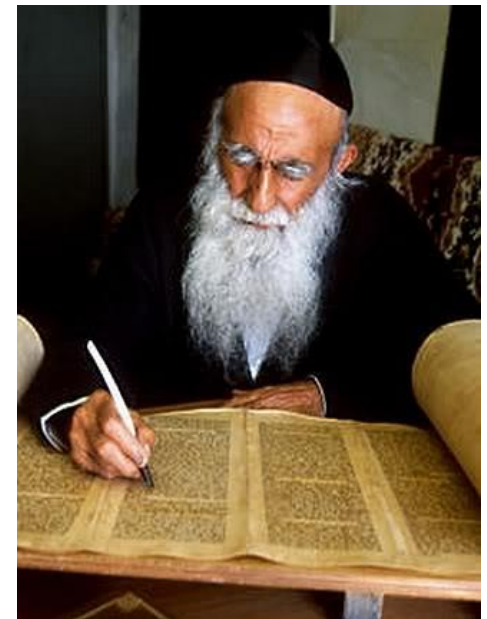
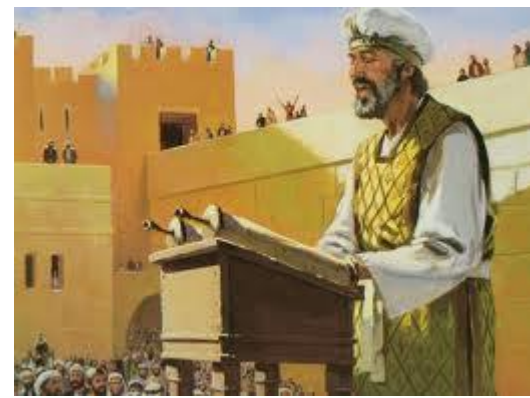
- **Events of the last days** can change and happen fast!
- **We need to watch always, and be ready** at all times *“for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect”* (Mat 24:44)
- **The angels are working tirelessly today** to prepare for the Day of the Lord – they will get it done on time!

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. (1 Thes 5:4-6)

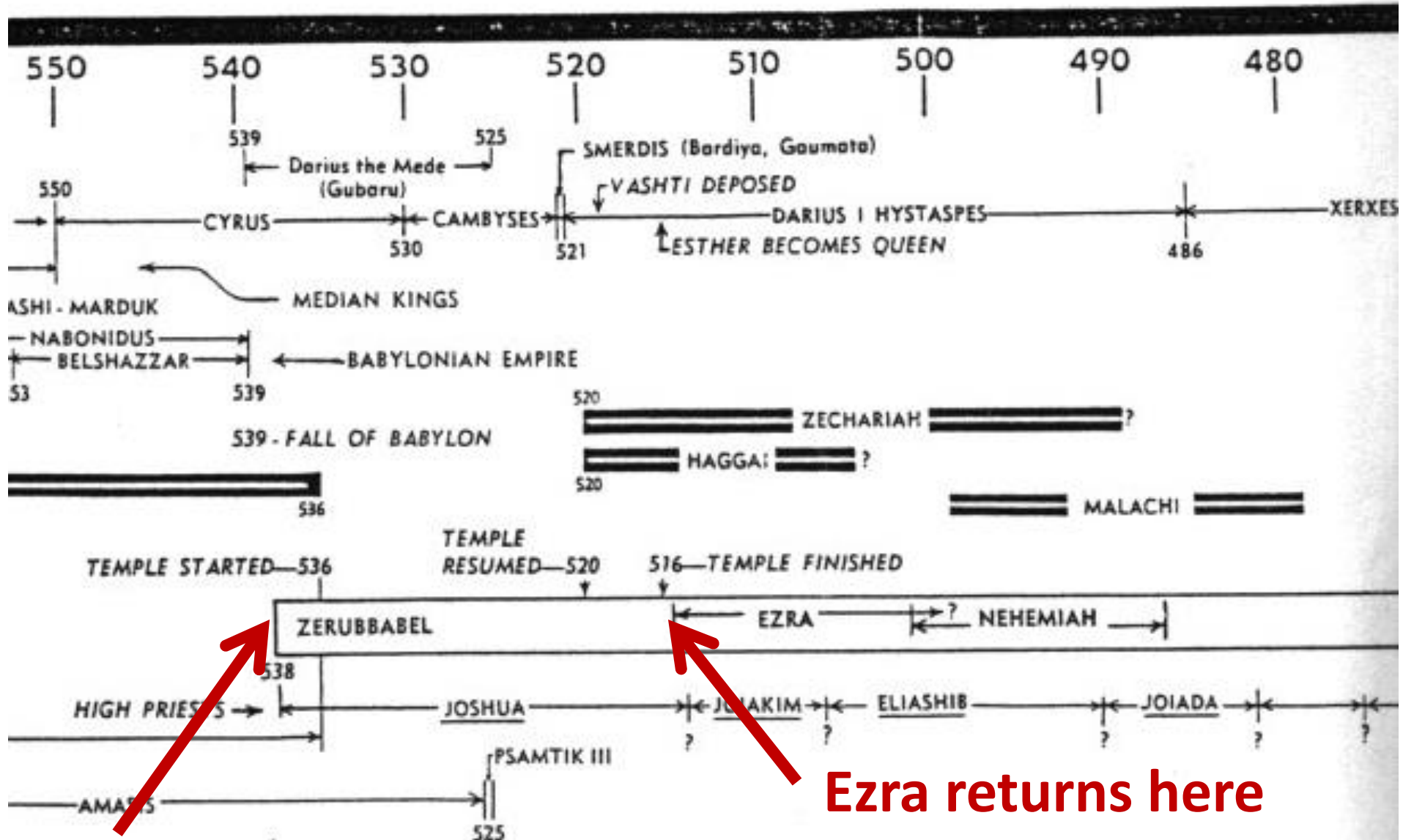
Author of the Book of Ezra

- **Ezra:** note his use of “I”, “me” (8:15, etc.)
- Earlier information was probably compiled later by Ezra
- Clear sections of Hebrew & Aramaic:
 - Hebrew: 1:1 – 4:7
 - Aramaic: 4:8 – 6:18
 - Hebrew: 6:19 – 7:11
 - Aramaic: 7:12-26
 - Hebrew: 7:27 – end

Probably switches because
book was compiled by Ezra



Time Line for Ezra



Book of Ezra starts here

God makes the future happen!

Ezra 1:1-4

1 Now in the **first year of Cyrus** king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, **the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus** king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,

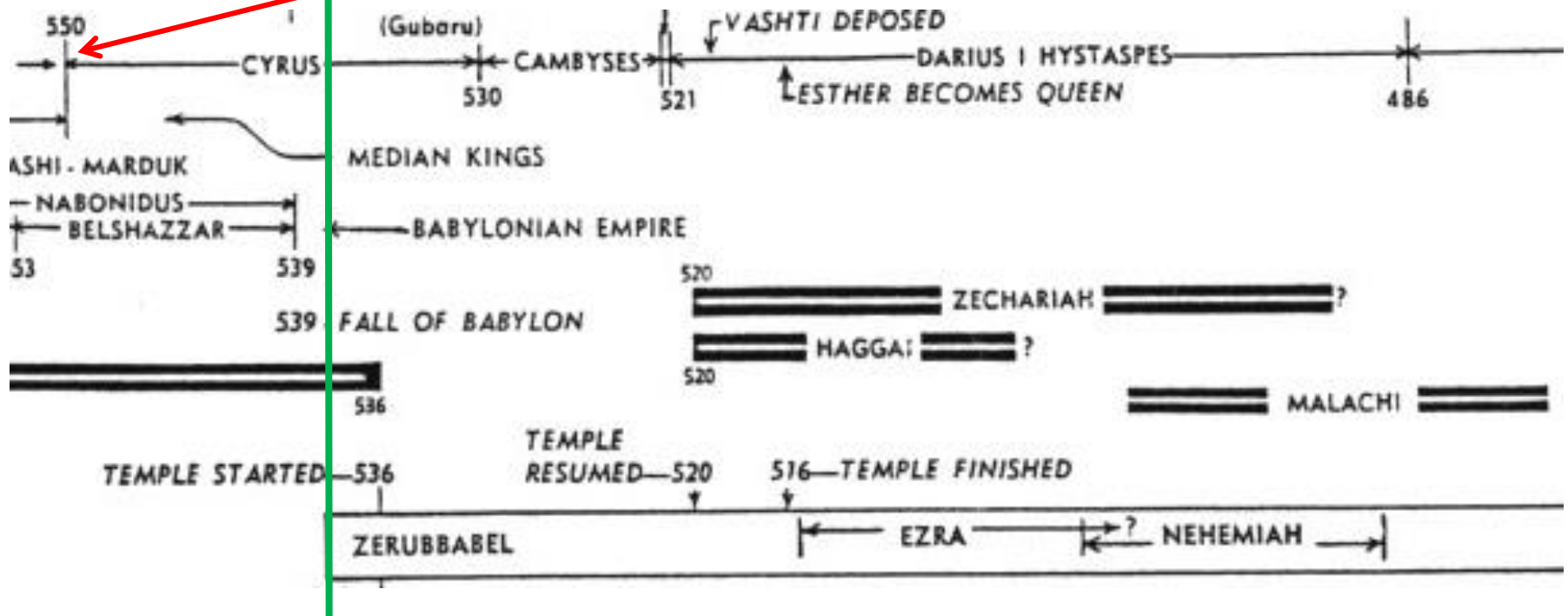
2 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia:

All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. 3 Who is among you of all His people? **May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.** 4 And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

Everyone could be involved

The First Year of Cyrus (1:1)

- The 1st year Persia took over Babylon and Cyrus ruled over Babylon
- Cyrus actually became a Persian ruler about 10 years earlier



God predicted He would raise up Cyrus

Isaiah 44:28 – 45:2

28 Who says of **Cyrus**, 'He is **My shepherd**,
And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying
**to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to
the temple, "Your foundation shall be
laid."**

1 "Thus says the Lord to **His anointed**, To
Cyrus, whose right hand I have held — To
subdue nations before him and loose the
armor of kings, To open before him the
double doors, So that the gates will not be
shut: 2 'I will go before you and make the
crooked places straight; I will break in pieces
the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron.

This was predicted over 100 years earlier!

God makes the future happen!

Isaiah 45:3-6

3 I will give you the treasures of darkness
And hidden riches of secret places, **That you
may know that I, the Lord, Who call you by
your name, Am the God of Israel.** 4 For
Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My
elect, I have even called you by your name;
I have named you, though you have not
known Me. 5 I am the Lord, and there is no
other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird
you, though you have not known Me, 6 That
they may know from the rising of the sun to
its setting That there is none besides Me. I
am the Lord, and there is no other.

God's proof that He is in control

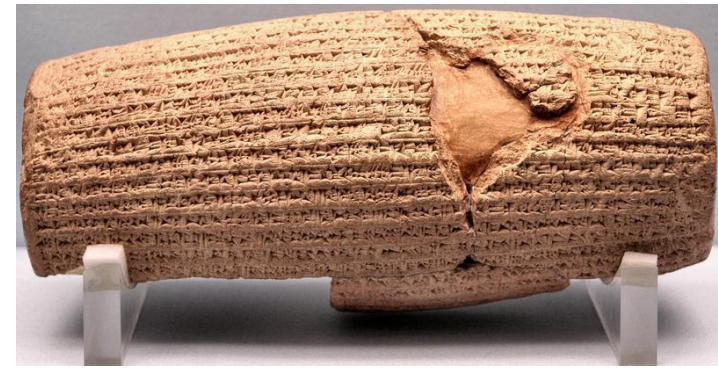
The Cyrus Cylinder



A Great Discovery
in 1879

The Cylinder

- **Dates back to 6th century BC**
- **Discovered in March 1879** in temple ruins of Babylon (now Iraq) by Hormuzd Rassam – an archaeologist
- **Written in cuneiform script** in the name of Cyrus the Great – King of Persia
- **It was created to commemorate the Persian conquest of Babylon** in 539BC when Cyrus incorporated Babylon into the Persian Empire



Cyrus had it made to remind everyone of his conquest

The Persian Empire



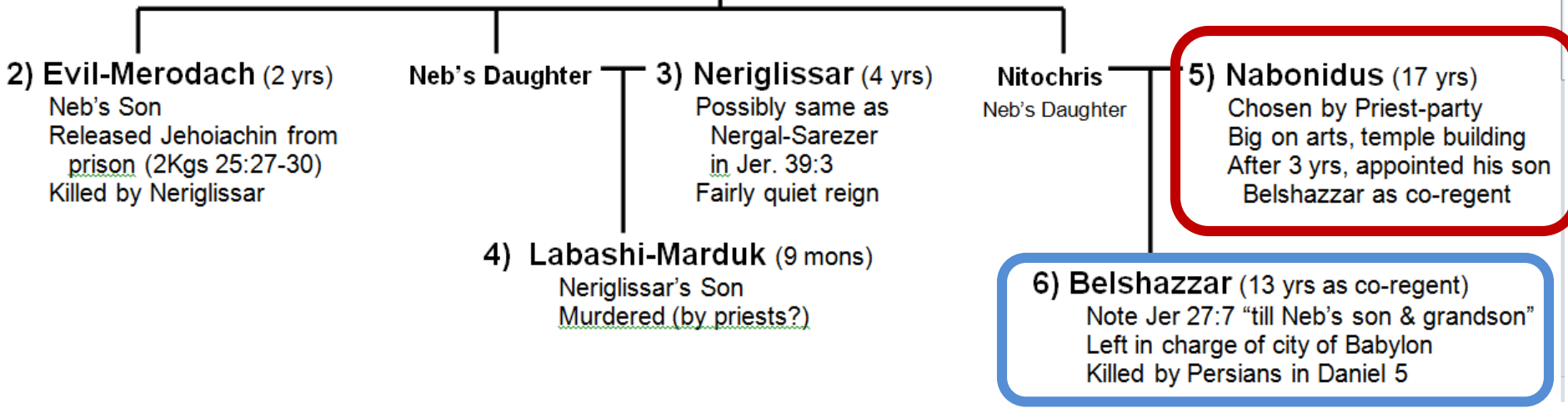
Cyrus' reason for the cylinder



- **A propaganda tool** for the Persians to give legitimacy to their conquest of Babylon
- **Depicts the Babylonian King Nabonidus as an impious failure** and destroyer of the Babylonian people
- **Attempted to present Cyrus' takeover** as the will of the Babylonian god Marduk (Bel)
- **Also attempted to cement** the reign of Cyrus and his son, Cambyses

Kings of Babylon

1) Nebuchadnezzar (41 years)



Nabonidus set up his Son, Belshazzar, as a co-ruler and left him in charge of the city of Babylon. Cyrus killed Belshazzar and exiled Nabonidus.

Significance of the Cyrus Cylinder

- **Iran uses it** to demonstrate the time when the Persians ruled the world
- **Many politicians use** it today as the oldest declaration of “human rights” because Cyrus let many captive peoples return to their native lands
- **Supports the authority of the Bible**, because the Bible predicted that Cyrus would overthrow Babylon and set the Jews free
 - The prophet Isaiah named Cyrus by name about 150 years before Cyrus was born!
 - Isaiah prophesied around 730BC and Cyrus was born about 580BC

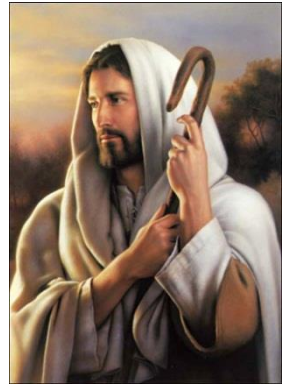
The Cyrus Cylinder
and Ancient Persia
Charting a New Empire



It is evidence of the reliability of the Bible!



Cyrus as a type of Christ

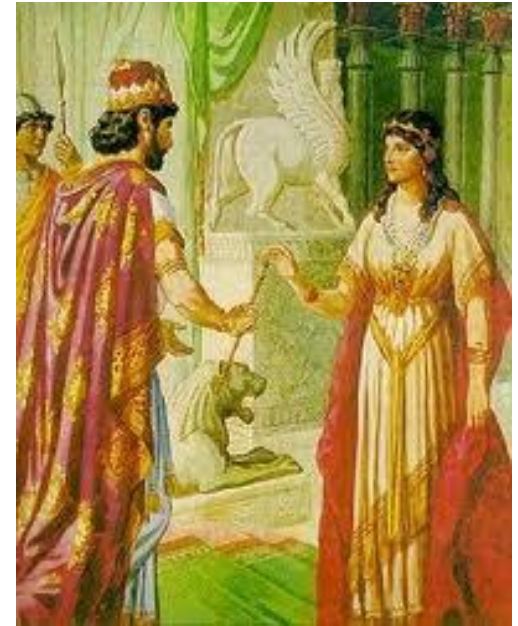


- God's shepherd (Isa 44:28)
- God's anointed (Isa 45:1)
- Illustrated God's ultimate salvation of Israel through God's Son
- This is a study in itself.... Our goal is to focus on lessons from family & ecclesial issues of Ezra's time

Many of the prophecies about the return of the Jews from captivity apply at this time & to Christ's time too

God used Unbelieving Rulers during the Captivity to Illustrate His Redemptive Plan

- **Cyrus** (represented Christ)
- **King Ahaseurus** (represented God)
 - Mordecai (represented Christ)
 - Esther (represented God's faithful remnant)



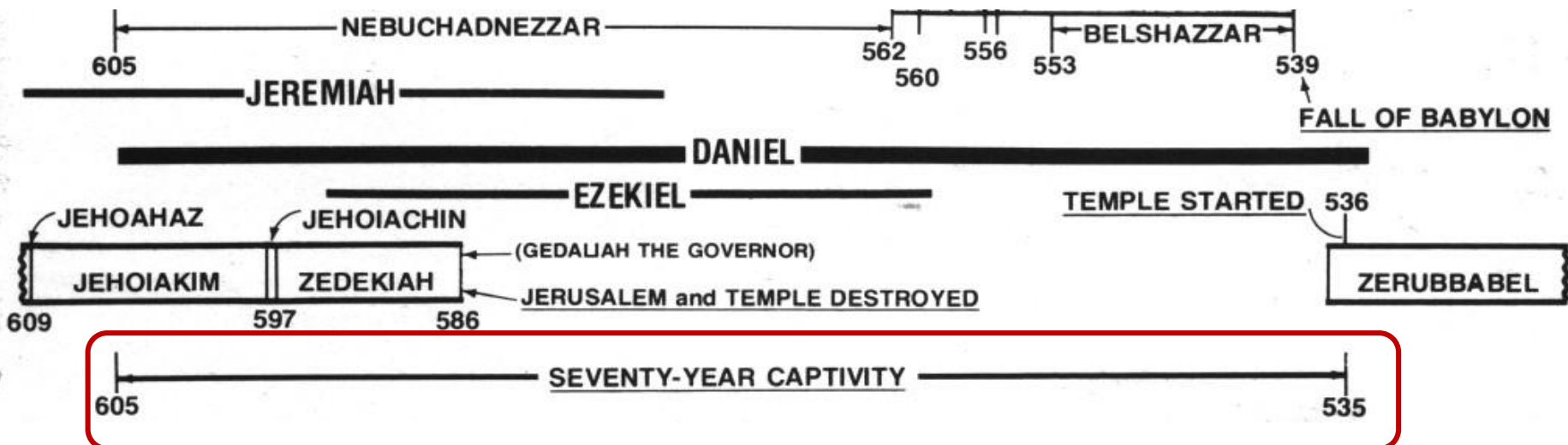
The kingdom of Israel didn't exist during this period

Jeremiah's Prophecies about the 70 Years



Jer 25:11-14 after 70 yrs God will punish Babylon

Jer 29:10-14 after 70 years God will bring Jews back and give them a future with peace and hope



God's Unconditional Promise

Jeremiah 29:10-14

10 For thus says the LORD: *After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.*

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, *thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

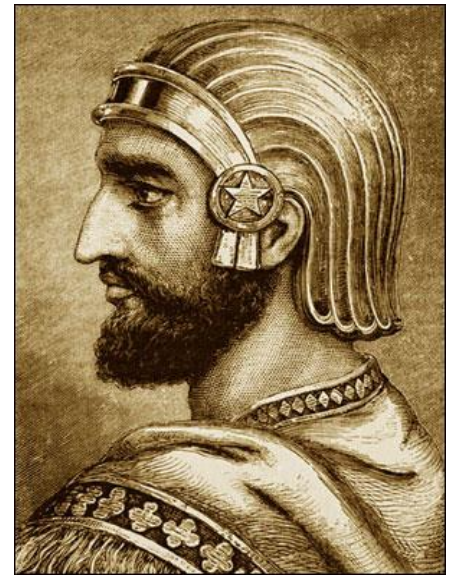
13 And *you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*

14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

God promised to get this done!



Cyrus' Decree was recorded



- **Put it in writing:** worth noting because this was really important later in 6:1-3
- **It was all of God:**
 - Freedom of the Jews from captivity
 - Opportunity to build God's house in Jerusalem

**It's good to reflect daily on our
freedom in Christ & the opportunities
we have to work in God's family**

God was in complete control



Had Cyrus' decree put in writing

God Stirred up the Spirit

Ex 35:21 *LORD stirred up spirits and hearts* of everyone to bring supplies for His tabernacle

Jer 51:11 *LORD has raised up the spirit* of the kings of the Medes against Babylon

Ezra 1:1 *LORD stirred up the spirit* of Cyrus to make a decree

Ezra 1:5 *God stirred up the spirits* of heads of Judah and Benjamin, priests and Levites, to rebuild His house

Hag 1:14 *LORD stirred up the spirit* of Zerubbabel, Joshua and all the remnant to go and work on His house

Thank God daily for initiating our salvation

God Stirs up the Spirit of others Against His People when they go astray



1 Chron 5:26 *God stirred up the spirit* of
Tiglath-Pileser to carry away the 2.5 tribes

2 Chron 21:16 *LORD stirred up the spirit* of
Philistines and Arabians against Jehoram

Whether for good or bad, God is in
control and trying to save a remnant

We know that in everything God works for
good with those who love Him (Rom 8:28 RSV)

Cyrus learned a key Lesson: The God of Heaven has given me all kingdoms (v.2)

- Same lesson God tried to teach Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel
- God wanted all foreign nations to realize that He had allowed other nations to take Jews captive – not that their gods had triumphed over Yahweh!
- **Build Him a house:** Note that the house is 1st priority! The Jews' freedom is a result of God wanted His house built!



This must be a priority in our lives & ecclesias too – build a house unto our God

Time to Act!

Ezra 1:5-6

5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with **all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.** 6 And all those who were around them encouraged them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

God motivated so many to get involved

2 Types of Service:



1. Return to Israel & build

1Cor 12: lots of variety in body of Christ

v.18 God has set members as He pleased

v.24-26 God composed body that there be no schism

2. Stay put: send money & supplies

Rom 12: he who gives....liberally!



We need everyone involved in whatever capacity you can serve! So many jobs to do! Fun & exciting ecclesias tap into all the talents of its members!

Learn to appreciate the help!

It's not just about Bible Study

God had saved the vessels

Ezra 1:7-11

7 King Cyrus also brought out **the articles of the house of the Lord**, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods; 8 and Cyrus king of Persia brought them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and **counted them out to Sheshbazzar [Zerubbabel] the prince of Judah.**

9 This is the number of them: thirty gold platters, one thousand silver platters, twenty-nine knives, 10 thirty gold basins, four hundred and ten silver basins of a similar kind, and one thousand other articles. 11 All the articles of gold and silver were five thousand four hundred. **All these Sheshbazzar took with the captives who were brought from Babylon to Jerusalem.**

God kept His promise - Jer 27:21-22

Vessels of God's House (v.7)

- 1) **Some taken by Nebuchadnezzar** during Jehoiakim's reign (2 Chron 36:7) others taken at end of Zedekiah's (2 Kgs 25:14)
- 2) **God promised** he would bring them back (Jer 27:21-22)
- 3) **Misused by Belshazzar** (Dan 5:2-4)
- 4) **Returned by Cyrus** (Ezra 1:7)



God used the vessels of His house
to represent the people in His house

Sheshbazzar (v.8) = Zerubbabel

more on this in Ezra 5

Set free to serve in God's service

- **Gal 5:1, 13-16 Christ has set us free**
 - Don't use freedom for the flesh
 - Through love serve one another
- **Rejoice in our freedom**
 - Use it to build God's house by working in our ecclesias
 - Conduct ourselves like God's children



Freedom brings the
responsibility to serve
the one who set us free!

God wants us involved in His ecclesia

1 Timothy 3:15

I write so **that you may know
how you ought to conduct
yourself** in *the house of God*,
which is the *ecclesia of the
living God*, the pillar and
ground of the truth.

Let's get building & serve with
love, joy, peace, patience, etc...

Lessons from Today

- God is totally in control of the events of our lives and the world.
- God doesn't just predict the future, He has the power to make it happen.
- As God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus and God's people, He can still do this today!
- All the spiritual development we go through is all the result of God's training program.
- God has set us free from Sin so we can be free to serve Him and His family – now & forever

Next



Class 2:
**We must learn to
work together now!**



Ezra:

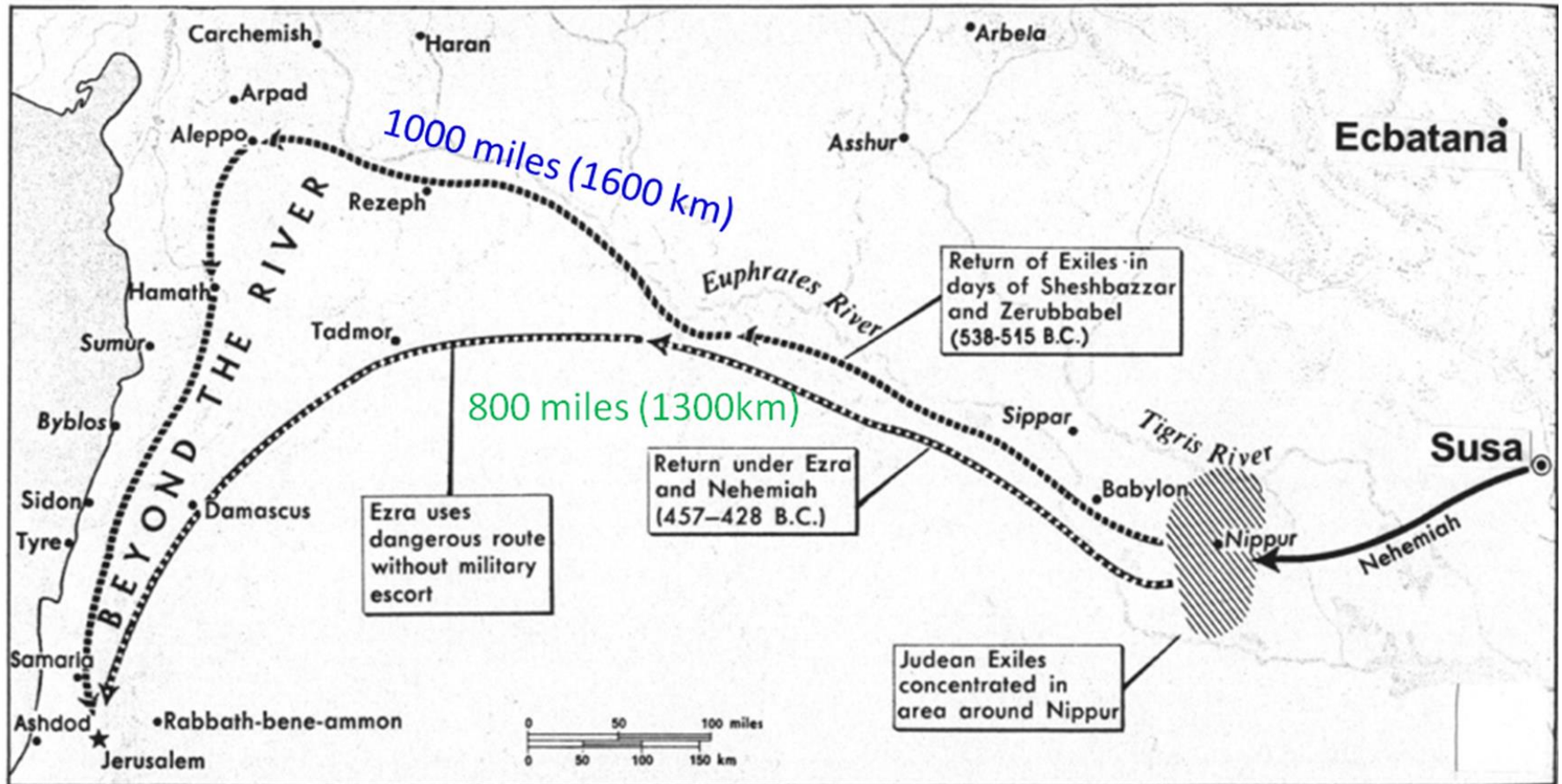
Working together in God's service



Class 2:
**We must learn to
work together now!**



Return of the Exiles



Jeshua & Zerubbabel took the long, safe route (1000 miles) Ezra took the short, risky route

Accounting those who returned

Ezra 2:1

1 Now these are the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, **everyone to his own city.**

v. 2 **Leaders**

Vs. 3-35 the **People**

Vs. 36-39 **Priests**

v. 40 **Levites**

v. 41 **Singers**

v. 42 **Gatekeepers**

Vs. 43-58 **Temple servants & sons of Solomon's servants**

Vs. 59-63 **Unknowns** (could not verify their ancestry)

They tried to get a record

Some from All 12 Tribes Returned

Ezra 6:16-17 Sin offering at dedication of temple was 12 male goats, *according to the number of the tribes of Israel*

Ezra 8:35 Exiles returning with Ezra offered *“12 bulls for all Israel”* and 12 male goats for sin offering.

Mat 10:6; 15:24 Jesus and disciples sent to *“lost sheep of house of Israel”*

Appears that some from 10 tribes moved south early on and survived the captivity (Josh 19:9; 1 Kg 12:17; 1 Chr 9:3; 2 Chr 11:3, 13-16; 15:9)

British Israelites misunderstand this

Summary of those who Returned

Notice
the low
Levite
number!

- People (vs 2-35) 24,194

- Priests (vs 36-39) 4,289

- Levites (v.40) 74

- Singers (v. 41) 128

- Gatekeepers (v. 42) 139

- Temple Servants &
Solomon's servants
(vs 43-58) 392

29,216

may only
include

Judah &

Benjamin

Total 29,216

Ezra & Neh 7 both list the grand total as 42,360

Much of Ezra 2 is also recorded in Neh 7 after the wall is finished

Summary of those who Returned

<i>According to:</i>	<i>Ezra</i>	<i>Nehemiah</i>	<i>1 Esdras</i>
Men of Israel:	24,144	25,406	26,390
Priests:	4,289	4,289	2,388
Levites:	341	360	341
Nethinim and servants of Solomon:	392	392	372
Those who could not prove their Israelite origin:	652	642	652
Total:	29,818	31,089	30,143

But all 3 accounts list the
total number as 42,360

Taken from Keil & Delitzsch

Comparison of the Levites

- Ezra 2 $\frac{74}{42,360} = 0.17\%$ 1 of 588
- Num 2 $\frac{22,000}{625,550} = 3.5\%$ 1 of 28
- Num 26 $\frac{23,000}{624,730} = 3.7\%$ 1 of 27

Seems Levites not interested in returning.
Depended on tithes to survive in Israel

The Role of the Levites

- **Support group for priests** (things like Sunday school teachers, CYC leaders, seminar helpers, etc. – not high profile jobs!)
- **Responsible to teach the truth**
 - Better educated
 - Used to higher standard of living (probably supplied some of the money in Ezra 1)
 - More easily integrated into Babylonian life
- **Warning:** Believers today tend to shoot up the corporate ladder – Be careful – work & life-style can limit our service to God

We need lots of volunteers for the support jobs in ecclesial life today!

Some priests could not be verified

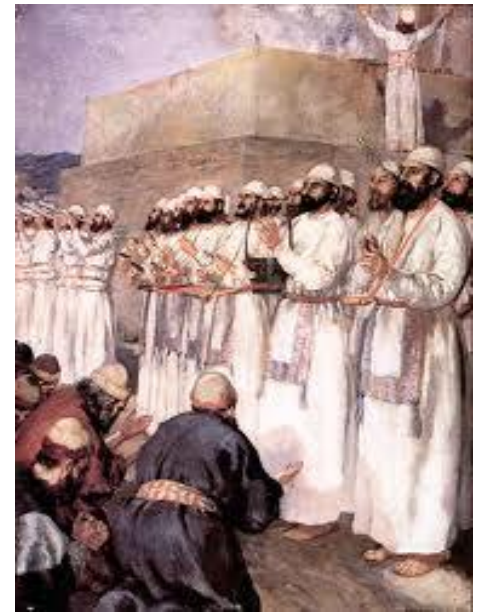
Ezra 2:61-63

61 and **of the sons of the priests:** the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Koz, and the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name. 62 **These sought their listing among those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled.** 63 And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.

Some people had to accept disappointment

Those excluded from the Priesthood as defiled (v.62)

- Shows the Jews were attempting to follow God's recorded Law
- Illustrates the need to respect dividing lines
 - Ecclesial jobs & positions
 - Fellowship lines



God doesn't need the best person for a job. He can work through many people if they are willing to let him.

Some people freely offered!

Ezra 2:68-70

68 **Some of the heads of the fathers' houses,** when they came to the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem, **offered freely for the house of God,** to erect it in its place: 69 **According to their ability, they gave to the treasury** for the work sixty-one thousand gold drachmas, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly garments.

70 So the priests and the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim, **dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.**

**Most not interested in living in
Jerusalem because it was destroyed**

Freewill Offerings to God

To build the tabernacle (Ex 25:2; 35:21-29)

Gives it willingly with his heart (Ex 25:2)

All the men & women whose hearts were willing (35:29)

To build Solomon's temple (1 Chron 29:5,6,9,14,17)

People rejoiced because with a loyal heart they offered willingly (v.9)

To rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:4; 1:6; 2:68-69)

According to their ability (Ezra 2:69)

To help the poor in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8 & 9)

Beyond their ability, they were freely willing (8:3)

According to what one has, and not what he doesn't have (8:12)

As a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation (9:5)

God loves a cheerful giver (9:7)

**Freewill giving should be in response to our faith,
in appreciation for God's gift of grace to us!**

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Cor 9:15)

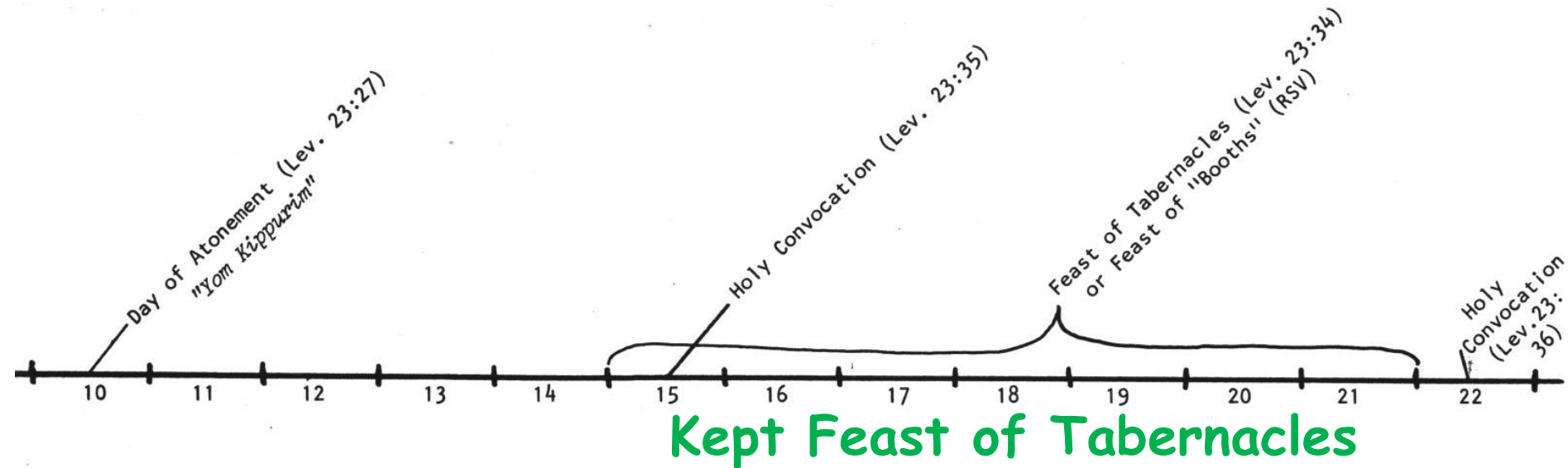
Beginning a Spiritual Revival

Ezra 3:1-4

1 And when **the seventh month** had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the **people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem.** 2 Then **Jeshua** the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and **Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and **built the altar of the God of Israel,** to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. 3 **Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries,** they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, both the morning and evening burnt offerings.

Moving forward, trusting in God

Now the 7th month (Ethanin) [3:1]



DAY OF ATONEMENT

1. People had to "afflict themselves" (Lev. 23:27) reminding them of the need to examine themselves spiritually to properly assess their sinfulness.
2. Two male goats were chosen on this day (Lev. 16):
 - a) One goat was *killed* as a sin offering — teaching us that the **METHOD** of redemption would only be accomplished by Messiah putting Sin to death in himself and by ourselves trying to do the same.
 - b) Aaron confessed all the iniquities, transgressions and sins of the people over the head of the *live* goat & it was led away — teaching us the **RESULT** of Messiah's work would be the forgiveness of our sins because he would still live!

FEAST OF TABERNACLES

1. This was a time to rejoice because of the harvest of wheat and grapes, foreshadowing the time of rejoicing at the great harvest when Christ returns.
2. The people had to dwell in booths for 7 days like the Jews did who left Egypt, reminding us that in order to be redeemed we must live as strangers and pilgrims on earth now.
3. It would seem very probably that the first day of the millenium will be the 15th of Ethanin.

No mention of Day of Atonement - not ready for this yet

Zerubbabel = “shoot of Babylon” (Yg)

- **Organized the return from Babylon**
- **Would have been king now**
- **Really the son of Pedaiah** (1 Chr 3:19), but counts as Shealtiel’s son (maybe a Levirate marriage?)



**Zerubbabel represents “the king”
and Joshua represents “the priest”**

Hilkiah the High Priest

(1 Chron 6:13; 9:11; 2 Kgs 22:14)

Azariah

(1 Chron 6:13,14; Ezra 7:1)

Jeremiah

(Jer 1:1)

Gemariah

(Jer 29:31)

Seraiah

(2 Kgs 25:18; 1Chr 6:14
Jer 52:24-27)

**Family Line of
Jeshua ("God is
Salvation")**

Jehozadak (Jozadak)

(1 Chron 6:15; Ezra 3:2)

Ezra

(Ezra 7:1)

Joshua (Jeshua)

The High Priest

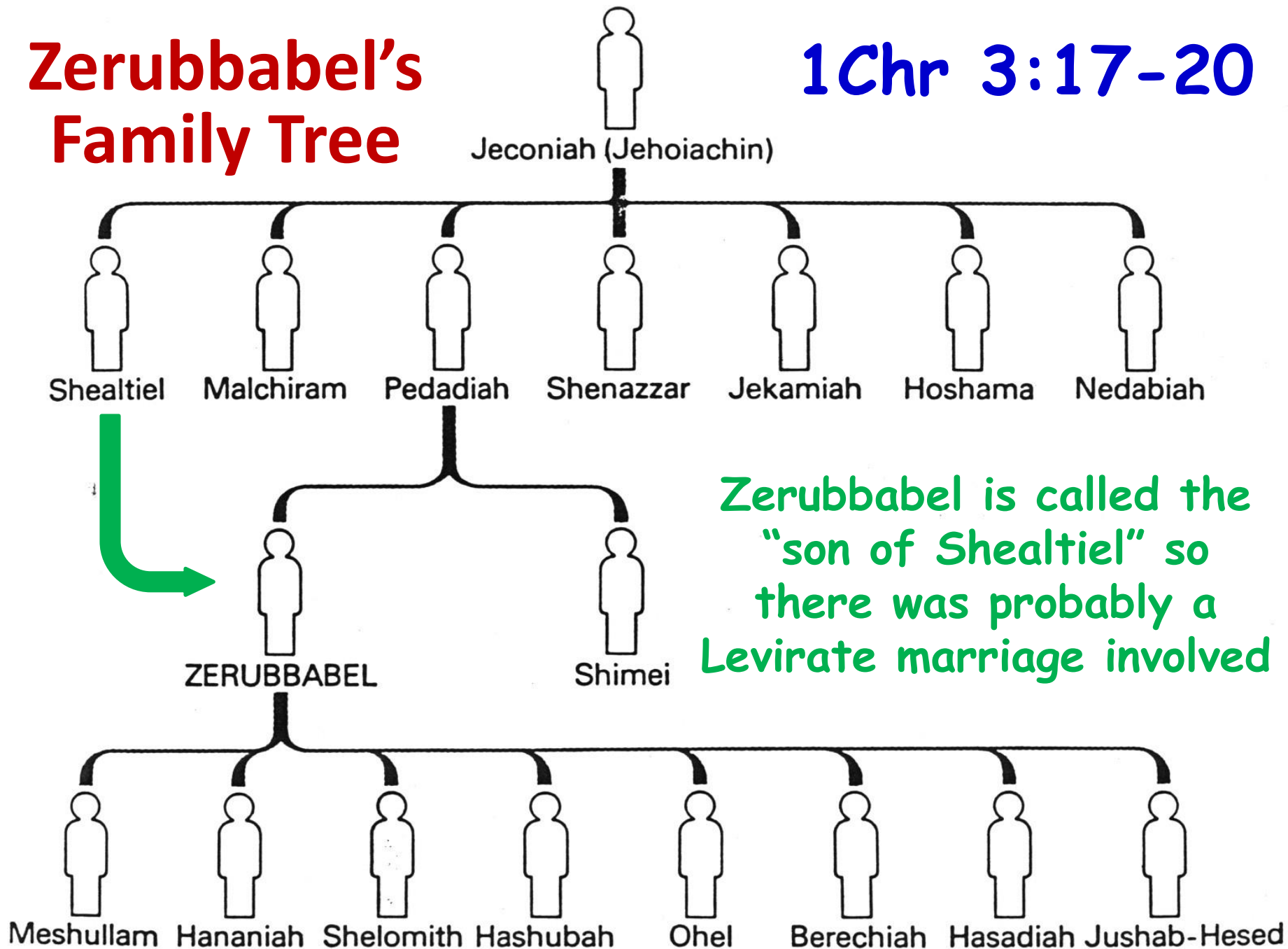
(Zech 6:11; Ezra 3:2)

**Ezra was
Joshua's Uncle**

**Carried
away
captive**

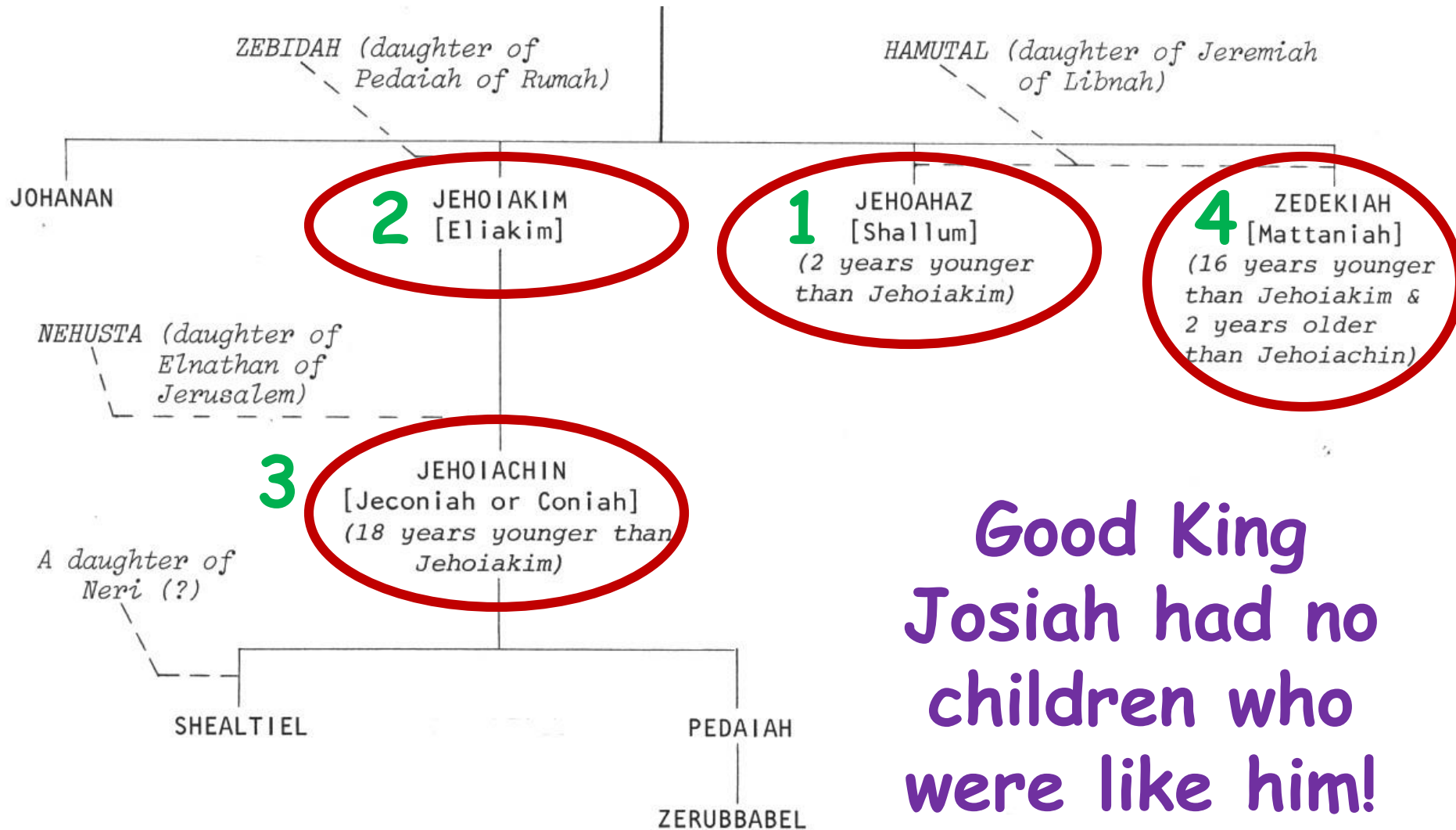
Zerubbabel's Family Tree

1Chr 3:17-20



King Josiah's Descendants

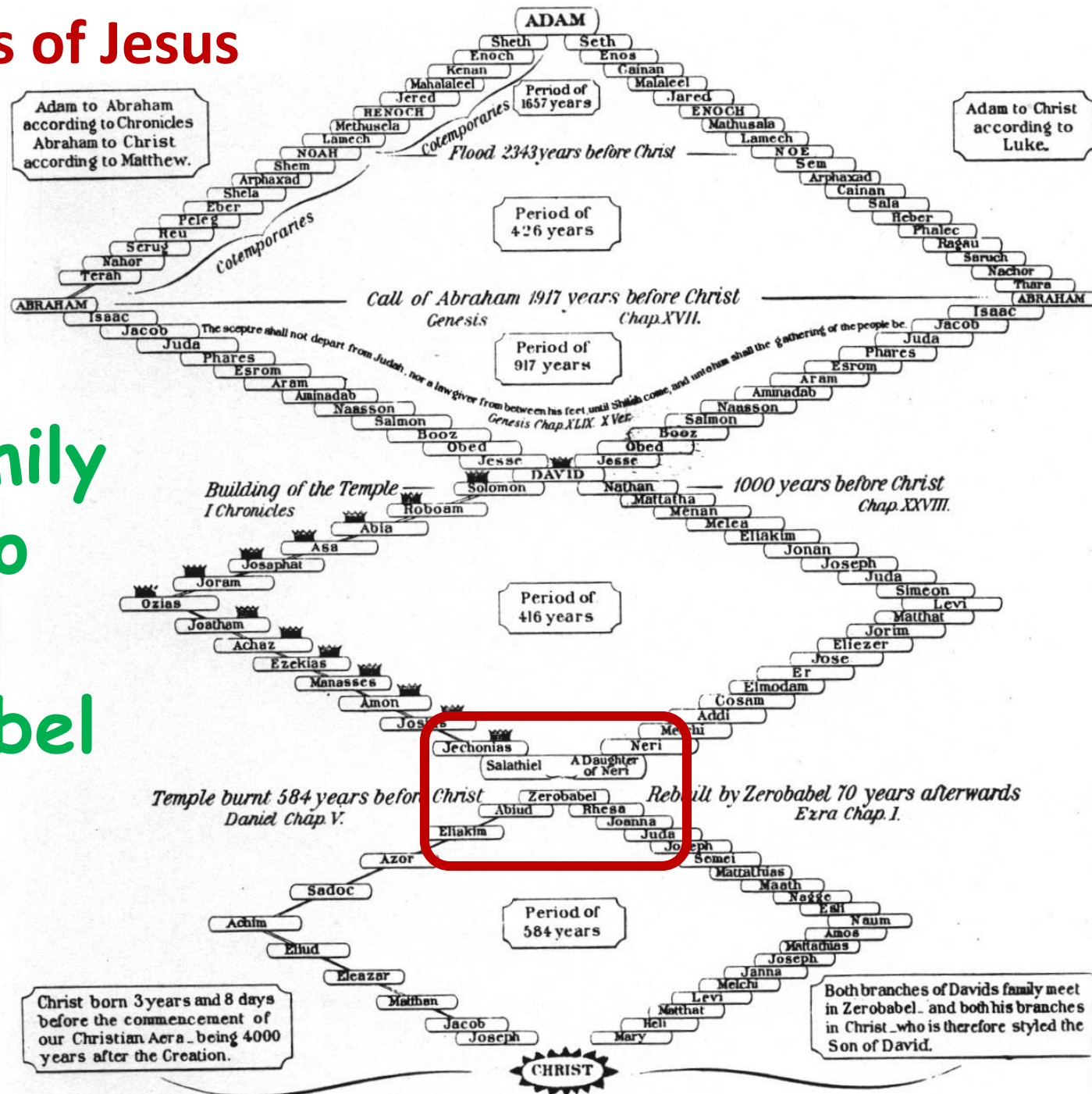
Josiah



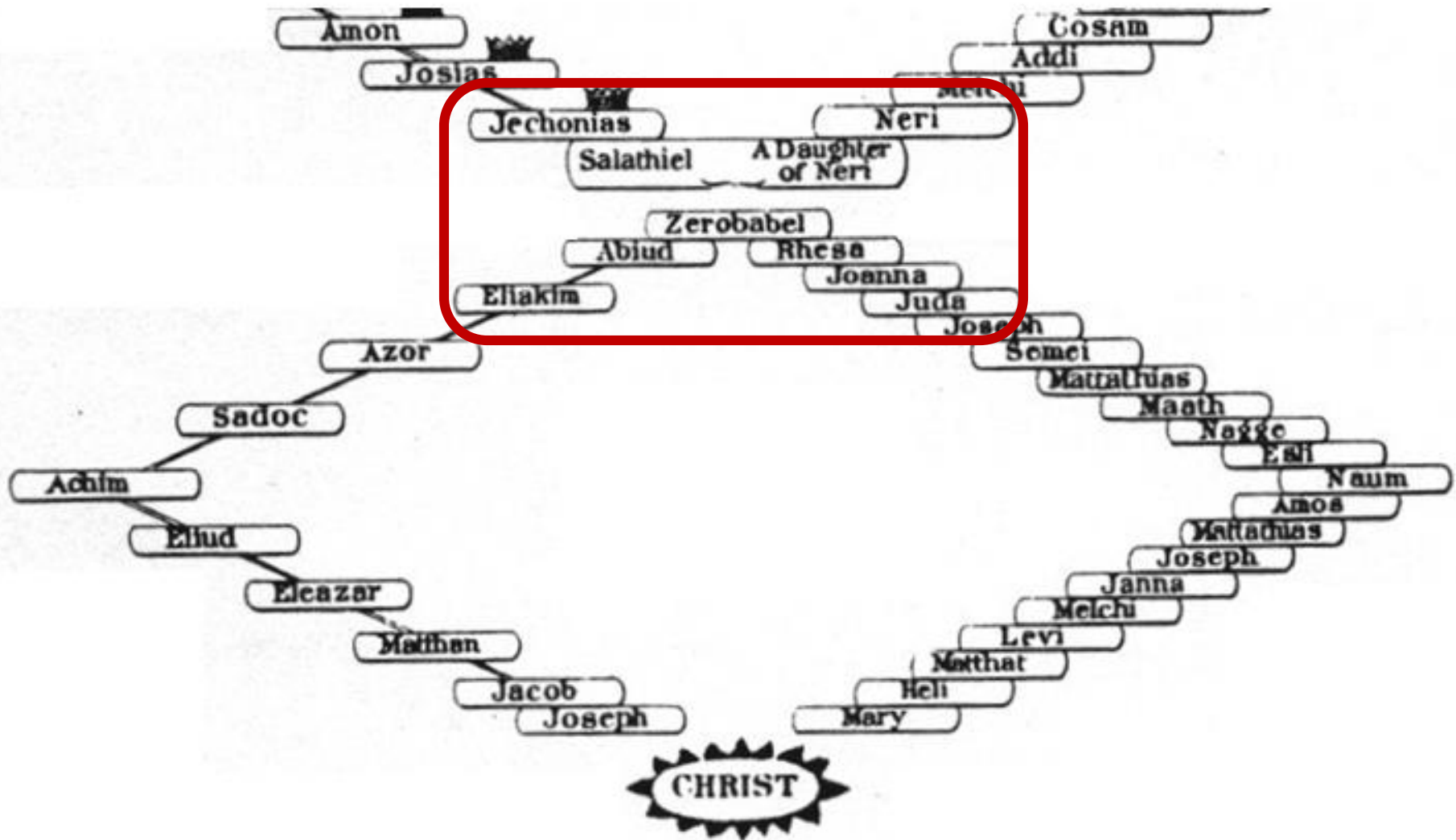
Good King
Josiah had no
children who
were like him!

Geneologies of Jesus

Both Family
lines go
thru
Zerubabbel



Geneologies of Jesus



Both Family lines go thru Zerubabbel

Jeremiah's prophecy had an impact!

Jeremiah 22:24-30

29 O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD!

30 Thus says the LORD: *'Write this man (Jehoiachin) down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.'* "

Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) obeyed Jeremiah & surrendered. He was released from prison in Jer 52:31-34.

Jehoiachin was rewarded

Jeremiah 52:31-34

31 Now it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth day of the month, that **Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah and brought him out of prison.** 32 And he **spoke kindly to him and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon.**

33 So **Jehoiachin** changed from his prison garments, **and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life.** 34 And as for his provisions, there was a **regular ration given him by the king of Babylon, a portion for each day until the day of his death, all the days of his life.**

Jesus was one of his descendants



Judgment & Mercy



- Zerubabbel – King – Judgment
- Joshua – Priest – Mercy

The Law of Moses separated these two offices until Messiah would come who could perfectly balance judgment and mercy

This is the challenge of every parent & Ecclesial leader: properly balance judgment & mercy! Two parents & many ecclesial leaders help us to find a balance.

Judah & Israel Finally United!

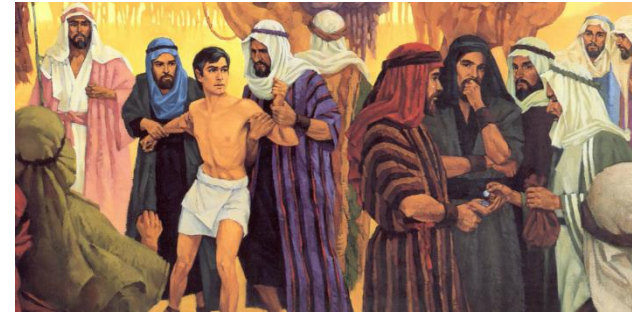
Ezra 3:1-4

1 And when **the seventh month** had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the **people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem.**

First time in the history of Israel that all the tribes finally put away their petty jealousies and united



Israel's Family were never united



- **Gen 29-30:** Jealousy & envy of Jacob's wives
- **Gen 37:** Joseph's brothers
- **Num 16:** Korah's rebellion – wanted priesthood
- **Josh 22:** Altar on western side of Jordan
- **Jud 8:** Ephraimites response to Gideon
- **Jud 12:** Ephraimites response to Jephthah
- **2Sam 20:** Sheba's rebellion (*we have no share*)
- **1Kgs 12:** Rehoboam & Jeroboam split

If we don't actively seek to
pursue unity, inevitably strife
and conflict will arise



God Determined to Unite Israel

Ezekiel 37:15-22

15 Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 16 "As for you, son of man, **take a stick** for yourself and write on it: 'For **Judah** and for the children of Israel, his companions.' Then take **another stick** and write on it, 'For **Joseph**, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.' 17 **Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.**

18 "And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, 'Will you not show us what you mean by these?' — 19 say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and **make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.**"' 20 And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.

21 "Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will **gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;** 22 and **I will make them one nation** in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and **one king** shall be king over them all; **they shall no longer be two nations,** nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.

No more envy, no more jealousy

“As one Man” (3:1)



- **Judah & Israel** were finally united!
- **Cost to bring about unity was huge:**
70 years of captivity
- **Learn to value ecclesial unity and work for it constantly**
 - Ecclesial leaders need to provide activities that will encourage unity of their members & other ecclesias
 - Many years of working for unity can be overturned in a moment by bad behavior or unkind words

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Ps 133:1)

The Order of the Building

1) Altar – dedication to become living sacrifices



2) Temple – commitment to daily service & worship



3) Walls – (during Nehemiah)
develop defenses against the evils of this world

God wanted it this way to encourage faith in His ability to provide

Building an Altar to Yahweh

Exodus 20:24-26

24 '**An altar of earth** you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you.

25 'And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; **for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.**

26 'Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, **that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.'**



Deuteronomy 27:5-6

5 "And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; **you shall not use an iron tool on them.**

6 "You shall build with whole stones the altar of the LORD your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God.

Altar all of God: no human tools
Ramp, no steps: no glory for man

Living Stones for God's House

1 Peter 2:4-5

4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,

5 ***you also, as living stones***, are being built up a ***spiritual house***, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.



1 Kings 6:7

7 And the temple, when it was being built, was built with ***stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built.***

Lesson: we must be ready now in this life! The resurrection will be too late!

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

Feast of Tabernacles (v.4)

- **Required** in Ex 23:14-17
- **Didn't need a temple**
- **Represented the final gathering** of saints throughout the ages into God's kingdom
- **Reminder of redemption** from Egypt (sin)
 - When Jews were slaves and had nothing
 - God in His mercy redeemed them



Would have been encouraging & exhortational
to experience the Feast at this time

The Temple work Begins!

Ezra 3:7-9

7 They also **gave money** to the **masons** and the **carpenters**, and **food, drink, and oil** to the people of Sidon and Tyre to bring **cedar logs** from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the permission which they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

8 Now **in the second month of the second year** of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, **Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel, **Jeshua** the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and **all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began work and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and above to oversee the work of the house of the Lord.** 9 Then Jeshua with his sons and brothers, Kadmiel with his sons, and the sons of Judah, arose as one to oversee those working on the house of God: the sons of Henadad with their sons and their brethren the Levites.

Levites in charge to oversee the work

Use of foreign supplies (v.7)

- **As Solomon** in 1Kgs 5:6-11
- **Only allowed foreigners to supply materials** – not actually build temple
- **Joshua & Zerubbabel drew a line:** no foreigners on site!



There are times to be selective about who we are willing to use in God's service too!

Years to Build the Temple

Cyrus 6 years

Cambyses 8 years

Pseudo-Smerdis 7 months

Darius 6 years (6:15)

Years to finish = 20 years

That's a long time to maintain
interest in an ecclesial project!

Off to a great start!

Ezra 3:10-11

10 When **the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord**, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, **to praise the Lord, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel.** 11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord:

"For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel."

Then **all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord**, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

Giving God the praise & glory

Following David's Directions

V. 8 Levites: originally began at 25 years old (Num 8:24)

David changed to 20 years old (1 Chron 23:24) when there was no need to carry the tabernacle

V.10-11 Reenactment of 2 Chron 5 – Solomon brought ark into the new temple

David's directions: 1 Chr 6:31;
16:4,5,7; 25:1-31



V.11 Quoted from:

1 Chron 16:34 – David brought ark into Jerusalem

2 Chron 5:13 – Solomon brought ark into Temple

**Lots of responsibilities for 20-year olds.
Older members must be willing to let
young people be involved.**

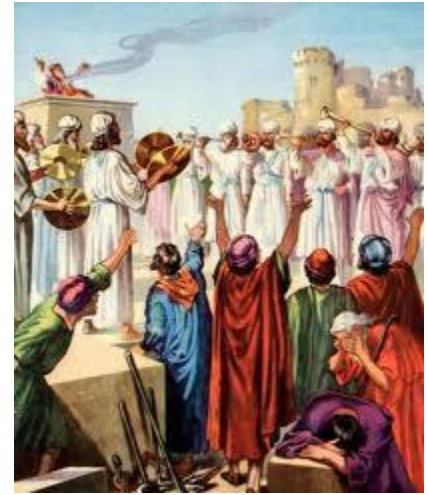
Differing Perspectives

Ezra 3:12-13

12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men **who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice** when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet **many shouted aloud for joy**, 13 so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and **the sound was heard afar off.**

This turned out to be a witnessing event

People's Reaction to the Laying of the Foundation



Younger: Shouted and
praised (excited!)

Older: Wept (disappointed)

This problem hung on for 20 years!
Still around for Haggai & Zechariah

Hag 2:3-4 *Is it not in your sight as nothing?*

Zech 4:8-10 *Who has despised the day of small things?*

God wants our best effort, not best ever result!

Be patient with young projects

Ecclesiastes 7:8-10 (NirV)

8 The end of a matter is better than its beginning. So it's better to be patient than proud. 9 Don't become angry quickly. Anger lives in the hearts of foolish people.

10 **Don't say, "Why were things better in the good old days?" It isn't wise to ask that kind of question.**

Most of us selectively remember the past - not what really happened!

Time to make a choice!

Philippians 1:27 (RSV)

Only **let your manner of life** be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in *one spirit*, with *one mind* striving *side by side* for the faith of the gospel

So let's go home & get more involved in ecclesial life & appreciate what each member can contribute!

Lessons from This Class

- Be careful not to get sucked into jobs of this world that leave us no time for God's work.
- God doesn't need the best workers, just people who are willing to get involved.
- Thankful people bring free will offerings
- Unity has a huge cost – it's much better to work it out peacefully
- It's better to respond to God late, than never respond at all.
- Make the most of today's opportunities, don't get trapped into comparing the past

Next



**Class 3:
Don't give
up with
things go
wrong!**



Ezra:

Working together in God's service



Class 3: Don't
give up with
things go wrong!



Warning: the responses of Ezra 3 may have led to the tests of Ezra 4

Younger: Shouted & praised (excited!)

Older: Wept (disappointed) 😞

Hag 2:3-4 *Is it not in your sight as nothing?*

Zech 4:8-10 *Who has despised the day of small things?*

God custom makes our trials to fine-tune our spiritual lives

The Trouble Begins!

Ezra 4:1-3

Now when **the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin** heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel, 2 they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, "**Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.**" 3 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, "**You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.**"

The Leaders take a firm stand!

The Adversaries Challenge!



- **Adversaries (v.1):** Samaritans – Introduced as adversaries from the start!
- **Let us build with you:** the Jews could sure use the help!
- **Days of Esarhaddon** (son of Sennacherib) about 130 years ago!
- **We worship God:** but idols too! (2Kgs 17:24-33, 39-41)
- **Assyrians moved Jews out of North & brought in Gentiles**
 - Gentiles brought their idols & mixed in with Jews in the North part of Israel
 - Samaritans feared Yahweh & all their other gods too

No compromise for Zerubbabel & Joshua

Background to the Samaritans

2 Kings 17:28-41

28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and **taught them how they should fear the LORD.**

29 However **every nation continued to make gods of its own**, and put them in the shrines on the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they dwelt. 30 The men of Babylon made **Succoth Benoth**, the men of Cuth made **Nergal**, the men of Hamath made **Ashima**, 31 and the Avites made **Nibhaz and Tartak**; and the Sepharvites burned their children in fire to **Adrammelech and Anammelech**, the gods of Sepharvaim.

32 So **they feared the LORD**, and from every class **they appointed for themselves priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places.**

The were adversaries from the start and never really intended to help the Jews

Background to the Samaritans

2 Kings 17:28-41

33 *They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods- according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.* 34 *To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the LORD,* nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the LORD had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel, 40 However they did not obey, but they followed their former rituals.

41 *So these nations feared the LORD, yet served their carved images;* also their children and their children's children have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day.

The were adversaries from the start and never really intended to help the Jews



Test #1: Return to Idols? (vs 2-3)

Idol worship was a primary cause of the 70-year captivity

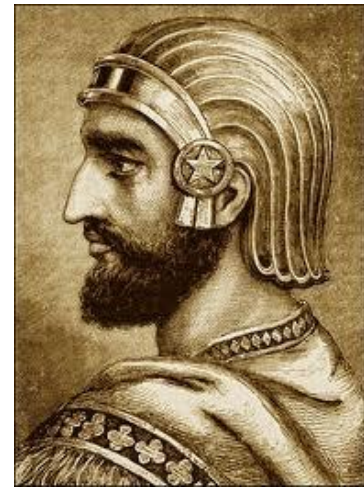


- Were the people willing to separate from the nations, stand fast for Yahweh their God, and guard the Truth that was entrusted to them?



**Yes! At least
for now**

Joshua & Zerubbabel's Defense and the Samaritans' response



- **As Cyrus commanded (v.3):**
 - Cyrus told “those that go up to Jerusalem” to rebuild the temple
 - So those already in the land not involved
- **People of the land discouraged the Jews (v.4)**
 - Decision not to compromise led to immediate trouble
 - Some of the Jews became discouraged

**Many of our decisions to not compromise with
this world will cost us too. This is where
faith & trust in God carry us forward!**

Compromising Alliances with the World are Destructive



Lot: *Political* (Gen 19:1)

Sat in the gate at Sodom

Judah: *Business/economic* (Gen 38)

Friends with Hirah the Adullamite

Jehoshaphat: *Marriage* (2 Chr 18:1) Married his son
(Jehoram) to Ahab's daughter (Athaliah)

Political/Military (2 Chr 18:3) war with Ahab against Syria

Economic (2 Chr 20:35) ships with Ahaziah at Ezion Geber

And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD is upon you. (2 Chr 19:2)

**We cannot compromise in building our
CYC's, Sunday Schools, and witnessing!**

People in Heb 11 who made tough decisions by Faith for long term results

- **Noah:** Built an ark and suffered abuse for it
- **Abraham:** Willing to offer up Isaac
Left Ur to go to an unknown land, that was having a famine when he got there!
Let Lot have first choice of the land
- **Moses:** Demanded Pharaoh let Jews go, even though Pharaoh made life even harder for Jews
- **Rahab:** Risked her life to hide the spies

Some long-range spiritual decisions have immediate uncomfortable results -
That's when we need faith!

The frustration builds!

Ezra 4:4-7

4 Then the **people of the land** tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building,
5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose *all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. [the whole timespan of the trouble]*

6 *In the reign of Ahasuerus*, in the beginning of his reign, **they wrote an accusation** against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 *In the days of Artaxerxes* also, **Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes** king of Persia; and the letter was written in Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language.

Who are these Kings?

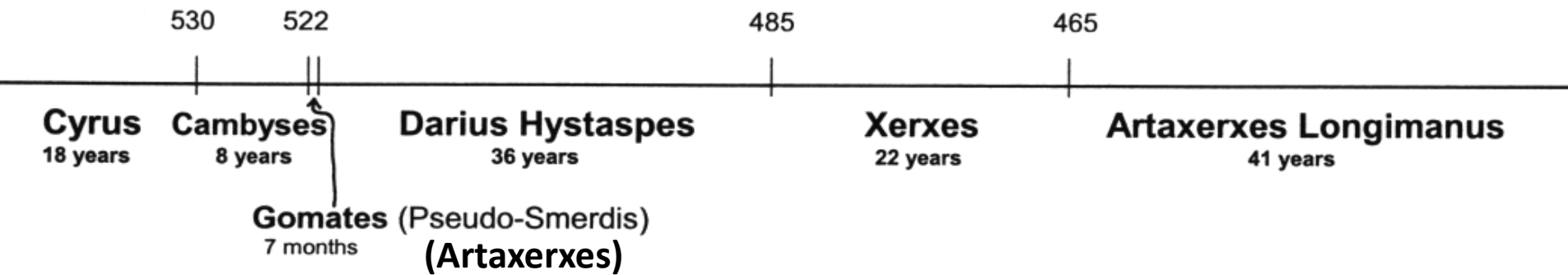
Test #2: Pressure & Endurance (vs 4-5)

- Were the people ready to endure tribulation from without?
- Were the people ready to endure trouble for many years and continue steadfast in their devotion to building God's house during times of distress & disappointment when their faith was challenged?



No !

Persian Kings: Cyrus to Longimanus



- Some take Ahasuerus (v.6) to be Xerxes & Artaxerxes to be Longimanus (58 years after Darius Hystaspes) and apply it to the building of the walls in Nehemiah's time
- but v.24 shows this is about the temple, not walls.
- If Ezra returned in the days of Longimanus, he would be ancient! (over 130 years old)

**So Ahasuerus is Cambyses
& Artaxerxes is Gomates**

Ezra 4:23-24 Shows that entire chapter is about the Temple – not the wall building in Nehemiah

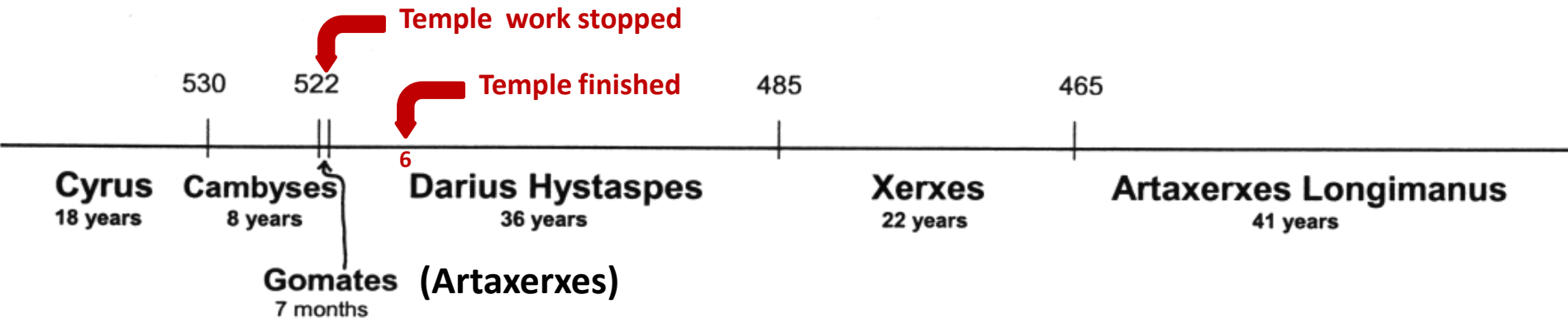
23 Now when the copy of *King Artaxerxes' letter* was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and *by force of arms made them cease.*

24 Thus *the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased*, and *it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

Nothing in Ezra 4 is about
Nehemiah's walls

The Key!

- The temple work is stopped in the reign of Artaxerxes of verse 7 (see v.23-23)
- The temple is finished in the 6th year of the reign of Darius (6:15)



So all the kings in Ezra 4 influenced the building of the temple

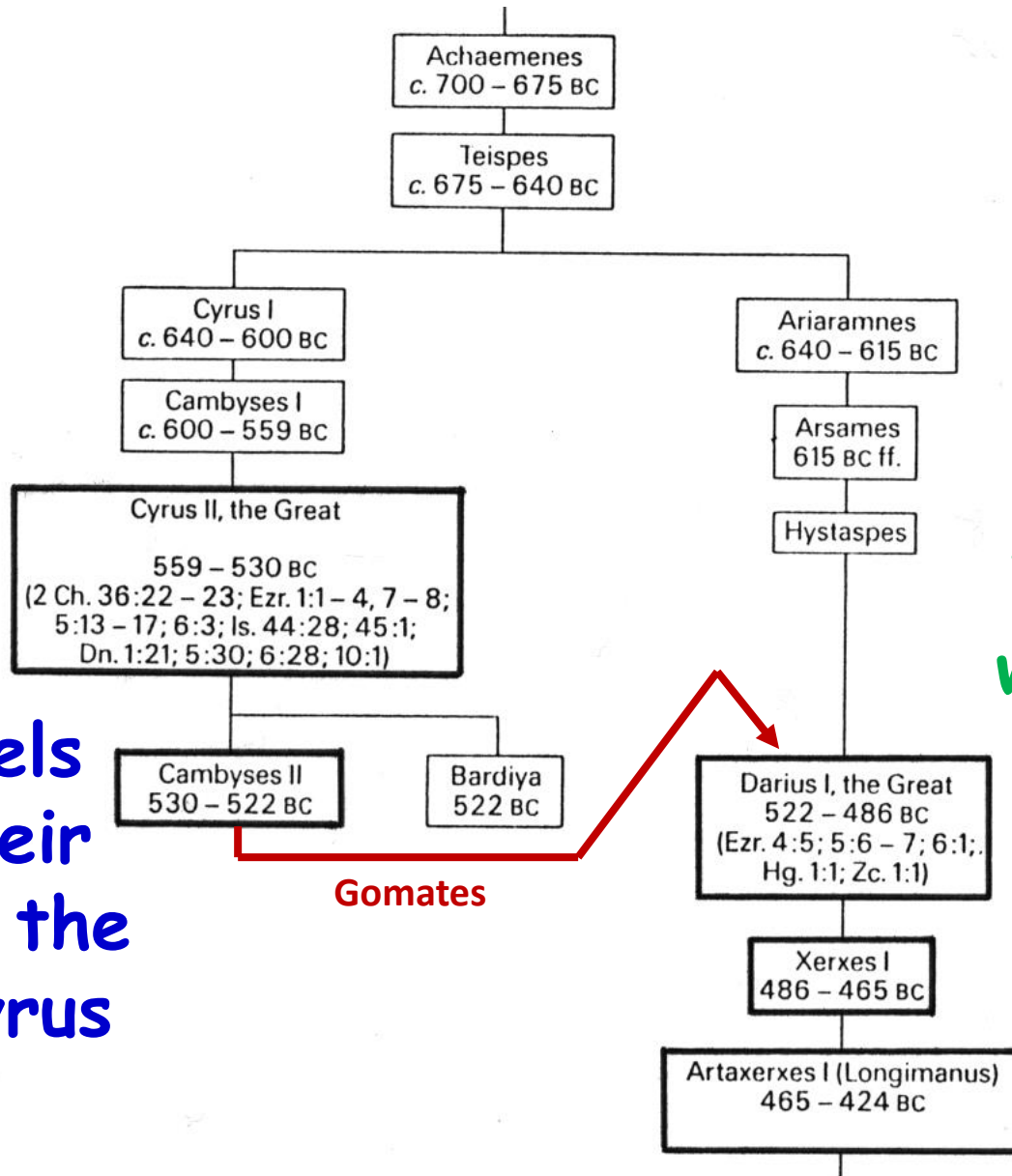
The Pressure Builds!

Ezra 4:4-7, 23-24

- 5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose *all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.*
- 6 *In the reign of Ahasuerus*, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.
- 7 *In the days of Artaxerxes* also, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the letter was written in Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language.
- 23 Now when the copy of *King Artaxerxes' letter* was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease.
- 24 *Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

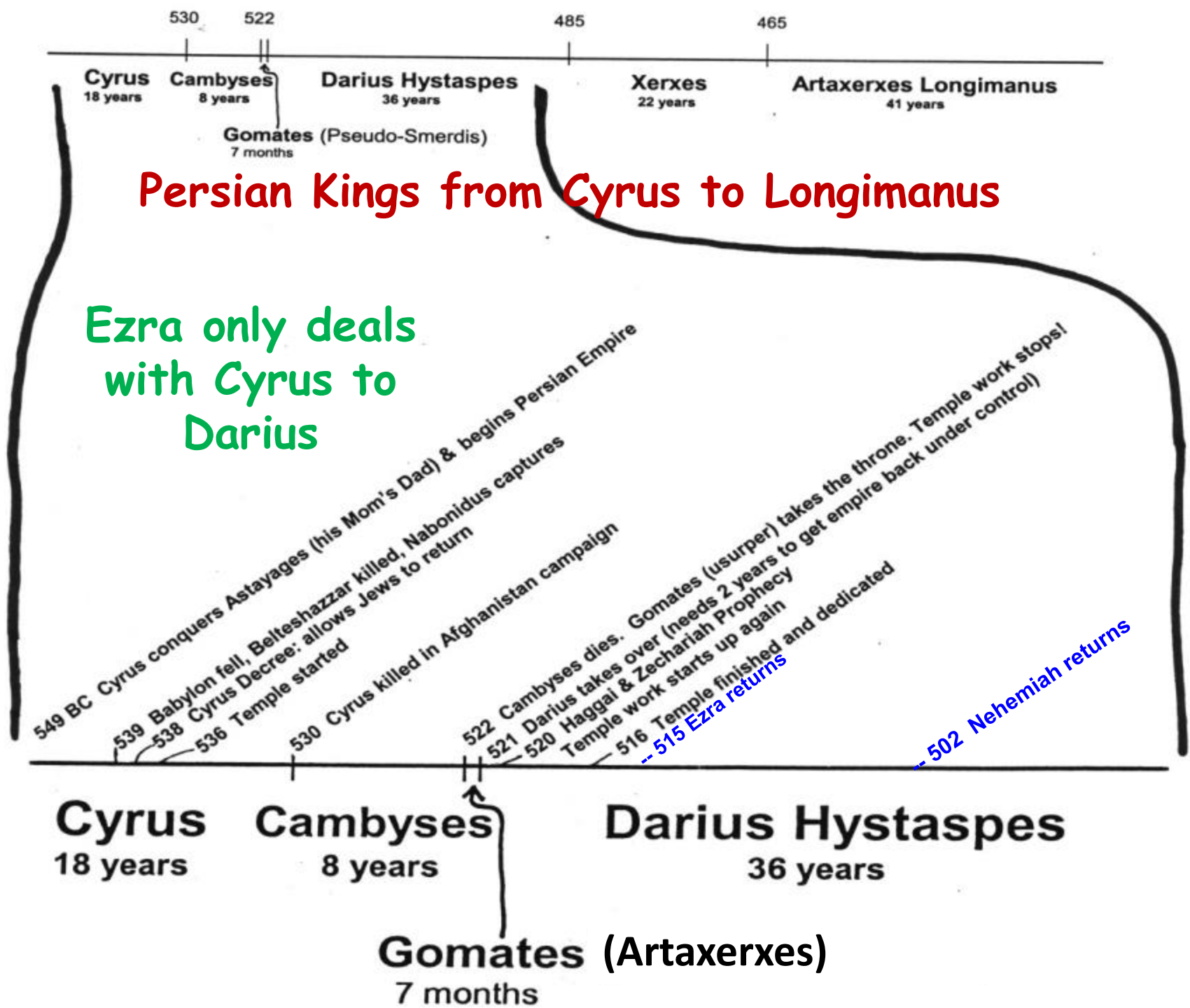
God gave them what many wanted

Persian Kings

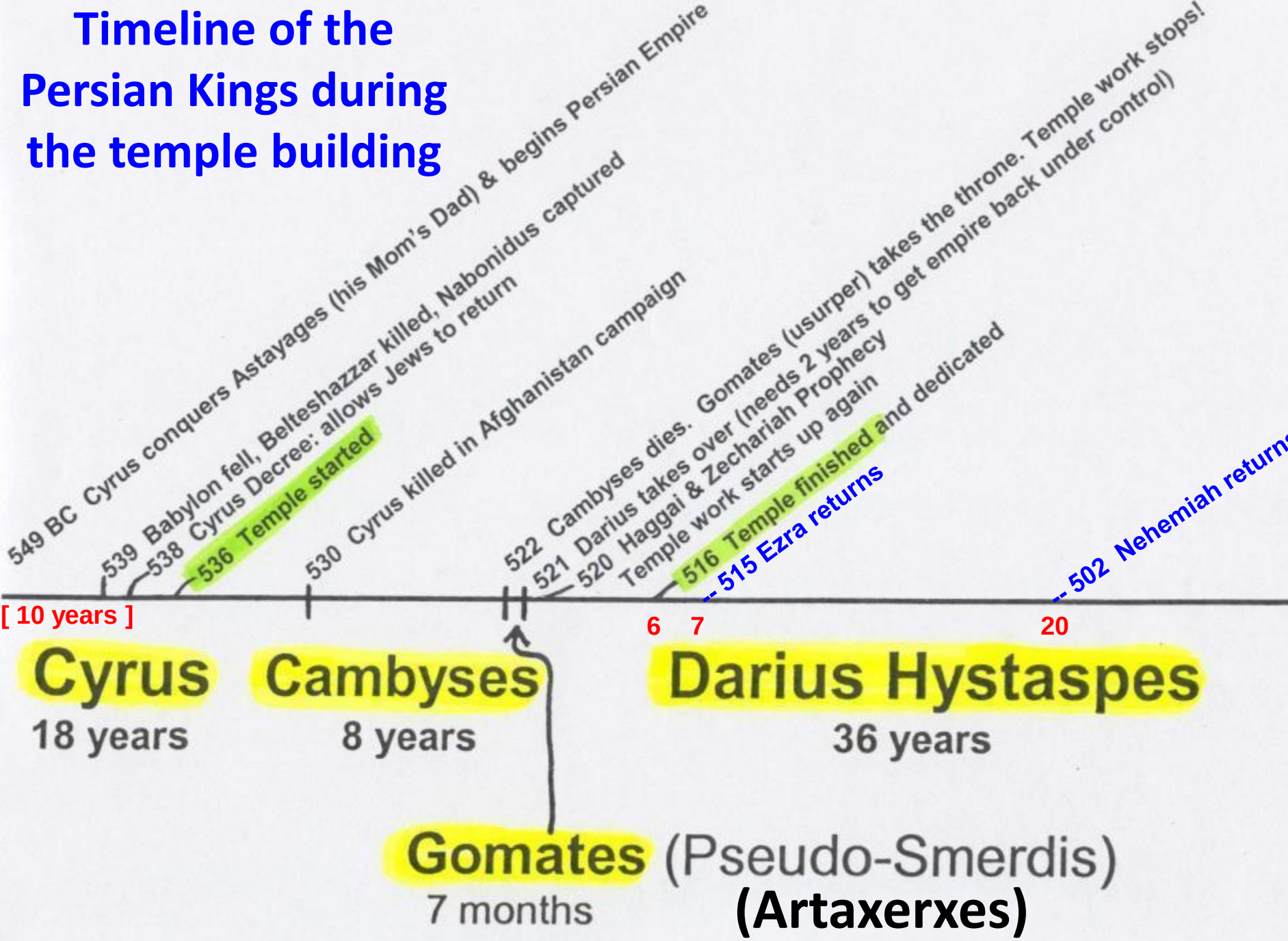


The Angels
ended their
work with the
line of Cyrus

They began
working with
Darius
Hystaspes



Timeline of the Persian Kings during the temple building



The Kings of Ezra 4

Effect on Temple	Name in Ezra 4	Historical Name	Length of Reign
Issued decree to build temple	Cyrus	Cyrus the Great	9 years after decree
Did not hinder the work	Ahaseurus	Cambyses II	8 years
Stopped work on temple	Artaxerxes	Gomates (Pseudo-Smerdis)	7 months
Encouraged work to finish	Darius	Darius Hystaspes (Darius the Great)	36 years

The Adversaries Expand

Ezra 4:8-10

8 **Rehum** the commander and **Shimshai** the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes in this fashion:

9 From Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and **the rest of their companions** — representatives of the **Dinaites**, the **Apharsathchites**, the **Tarpelites**, the **people of Persia** and **Erech** and **Babylon** and **Shushan**, the **Dehavites**, the **Elamites**, 10 and **the rest of the nations** whom the great and noble **Osnapper (Ashurbanipal)** took captive and settled in the cities of Samaria and the remainder beyond the River — and so forth.

A huge group united against the Jews

Kings of Assyria

Tiglath-pileser III (745–727)

Shalmaneser V (727–722)

Sargon II (722–705)

Sennacherib (705–681)

Esarhaddon (681–669)

Ashurbanipal (669–ca. 630)

Osnapper was probably Ashurbanipal. He must have deported Jews and settled people from Trans-Euphrates into Samaria

The Intimidating Letter of Lies!

Ezra 4:11-16

11 (This is a copy of the letter that they sent him) **To King Artaxerxes** from your servants, the men of the region beyond the River, and so forth:

12 Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem, and **are building the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing its walls and repairing the foundations.** 13 Let it now be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, **they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be diminished.** 14 Now because we receive support from the palace, **it was not proper for us to see the king's dishonor;** therefore we have sent and informed the king, **15 that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which cause this city was destroyed.**

16 We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, **the result will be that you will have no dominion beyond the River.**

They pressured the imposter King

The Samaritans' Letter



- **Artaxerxes (v.7)** = Gomates
- **V.10** check a modern version
- **Rebellious & evil city (v.12)**: trying to make Jerusalem look bad for the Persians
 - v.15 “harmful to kings” & “incited sedition”
- **Rebuilding the walls**: a lie! Misleading.
- **Search (v.15)**: about Jerusalem (not Cyrus’ decree)
 - These people are not interested in Truth!

Artaxerxes’ Answer: Stop the work by force!

- **Mighty kings (v.20)**: David, Solomon
 - Menahem (2Kgs 15:16)
 - Josiah (2 Chron 34:6,7; 35:18)

Remember: God is in Control!

Lies of the Samaritans



1) Jews are rebuilding the city and finishing the walls (v.12)

[no mention of temple]

2) Jews will not pay taxes, tribute (v. 13)

3) Jerusalem is rebellious, harmful to kings, incited sedition - that's the reason it was destroyed (v.15)



4) if city is finished, Persia will lose its dominion this side of Euphrates (v.16)

God used this to stop the work

Artaxerxes sends an answer

Ezra 4:17-24

17 **The king sent an answer:** To Rehum the commander, to Shimshai the scribe, to the rest of their companions who dwell in Samaria, and to the remainder beyond the River: Peace, and so forth.

18 The letter which you sent to us has been clearly read before me. 19 And I gave the command, and a search has been made, **and it was found that this city in former times has revolted against kings, and rebellion and sedition have been fostered in it.** 20 There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the region beyond the River; and tax, tribute, and custom were paid to them. **21 Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me.** 22 Take heed now that you do not fail to do this. Why should damage increase to the hurt of the kings?

23 Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, **they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease.** 24 **Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.**

Remember: God stopped the Work!

God gives them what they wanted



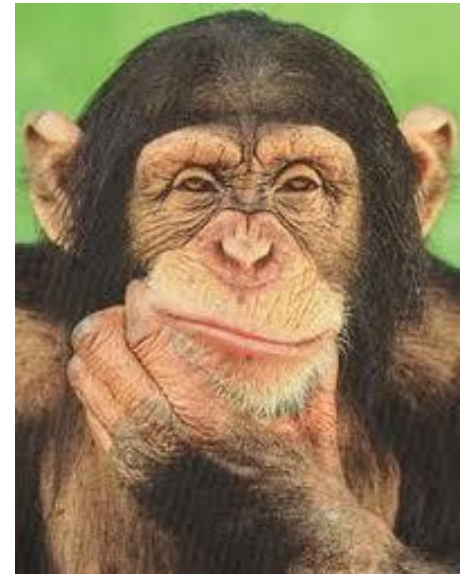
Have your
cake & eat
it too!

- **By force and power (v.23):**
 - When we complain about life God sometimes gives us what we really want
 - Makes us re-think our situation
 - Don't complain about your family, ecclesia or job!
- **The work stopped:**
 - Only for about 2 years
 - True believers were probably frustrated
 - It was a time to test their Faith: do we really believe God is in control and using these events to save His people?

This is when faith gets you through!

Why did God stop the work?

- **15 years of work** had worn out and discouraged the people
- **Older people didn't like** the new temple
- **Adversaries hired counselors** against them
- **Workers wanted to spend time** on their own houses, farms and businesses
- **People were afraid** of adversaries (8:4-5)



**Now was the time for faithful believers
to step forward and stir up the
community to finish God's house**

Lessons from This Class

- There are times when we need to draw a line and refuse compromising alliances with unbelievers in Spiritual activities with us.
- Drawing a line may lead to trouble, but God may be testing us and growing our faith.
- Endurance through tribulation is a tough test, but essential for our spiritual development.
- God may give us what we really want, so make sure we seek His kingdom more than anything.

Next



**Class 4:
God will
Provide the
Motivation
to Finish!**



Ezra:

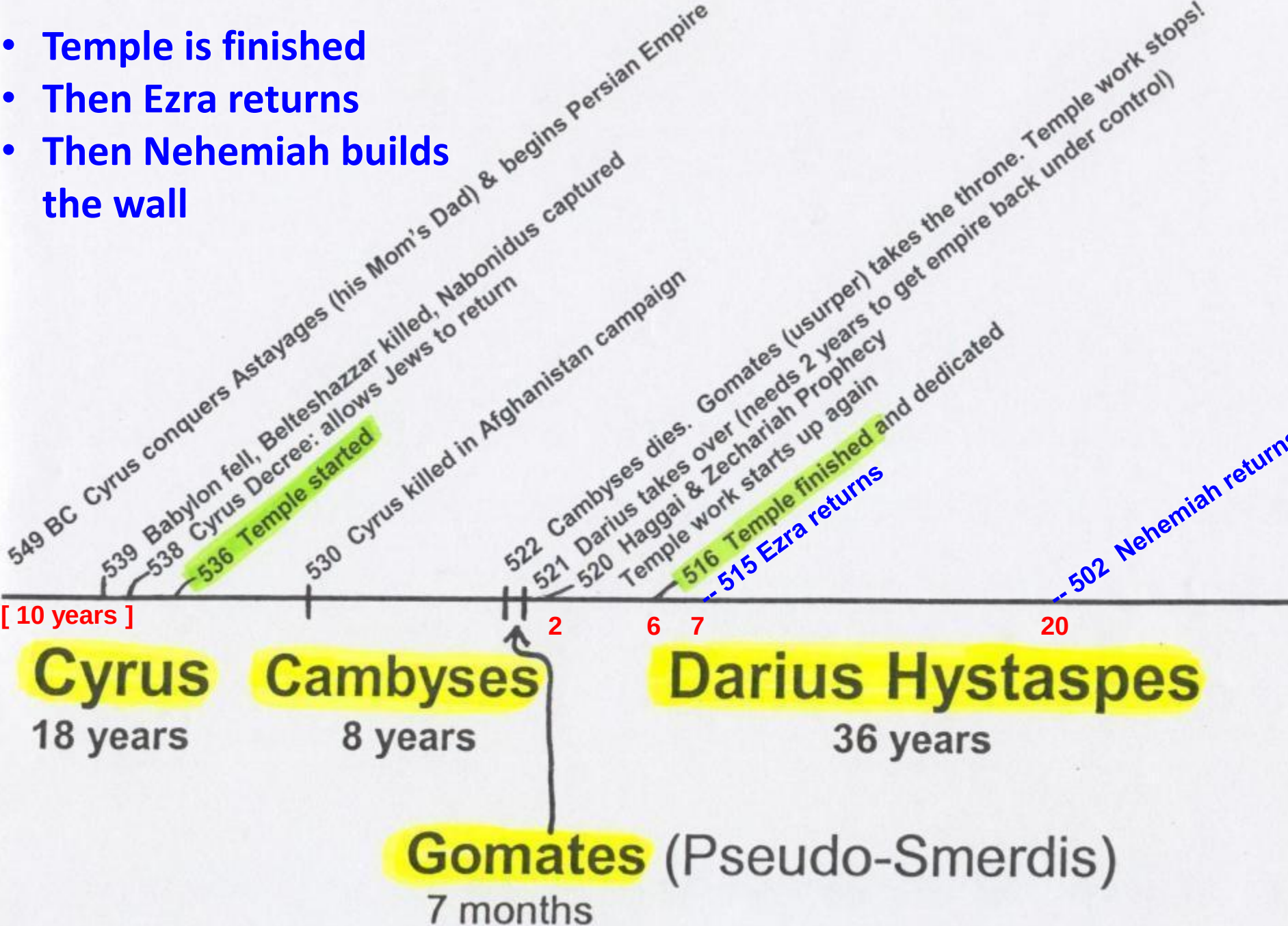
Working together in God's service



**Class 4: God will
Provide the
Motivation to Finish!**



- Temple is finished
- Then Ezra returns
- Then Nehemiah builds the wall



God Revives the Work

Ezra 5:1-2

Then the **prophet Haggai and Zechariah** the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. 2 So **Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel and **Jeshua** the son of Jozadak **rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.**

God will get the job done!

God gets the work going again!



- **Used Haggai & Zechariah**
- **Similar to today:** no angel visits, no spirit gifts
- **People needed faith** to see what God & His angels were doing for them behind the scenes
- **Only took 4 more years to finish**

It's amazing what can be accomplished in families & ecclesias when we have the faith to get involved in God's work!

“The Prophets of God Helping them”

(Ezra 5:1-2)

Coordinated efforts of Haggai & Zechariah

Haggai: Exhorts and reprimands the people for their poor choices and lack of faith.

Zechariah: Encourages the people that the angels are working behind the scenes and they will help finish the temple!

What had the People been doing over the last 15 years?

(see Haggai 1:1-6)



- 1) Claimed the time was not right (v. 2)
not yet the end of the 70 years
- 2) Paneled their own homes (v. 4)
- 3) Tried to improve their economic situation (v. 6)

**When we aren't involved in God's
work, we tend to serve ourselves**

Haggai's Motivational Message

Haggai 1:1-6

In the **second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month**, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 2 "Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: **'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built."**'"

3 Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 **"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"** 5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: **"Consider your ways!**

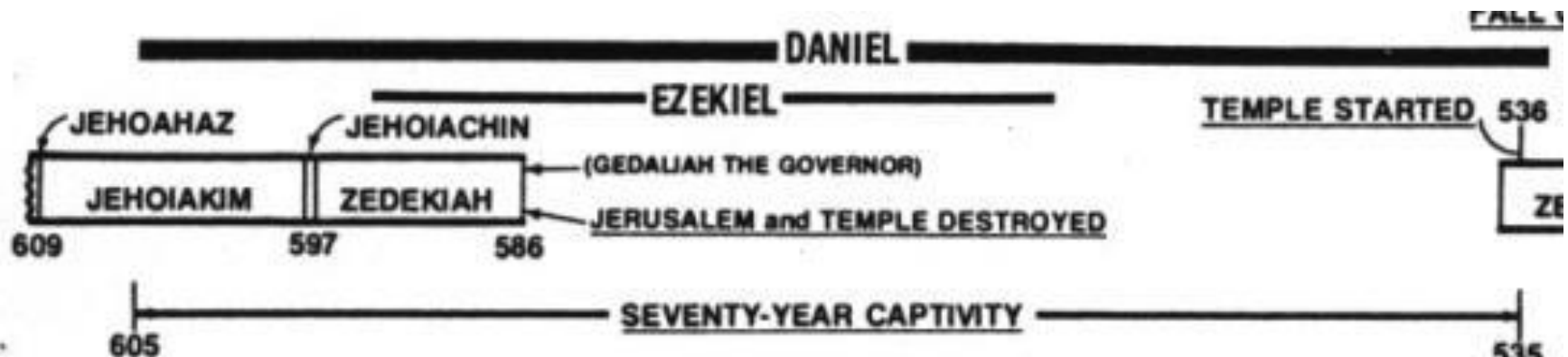
6 "You have **sown much**, and bring in little; **You eat**, but do not have enough; **You drink**, but you are not filled with drink; **You clothe yourselves**, but no one is warm; And **he who earns wages**, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."

Most people used the excuse "it's the wrong time!" and turned to improving their lives

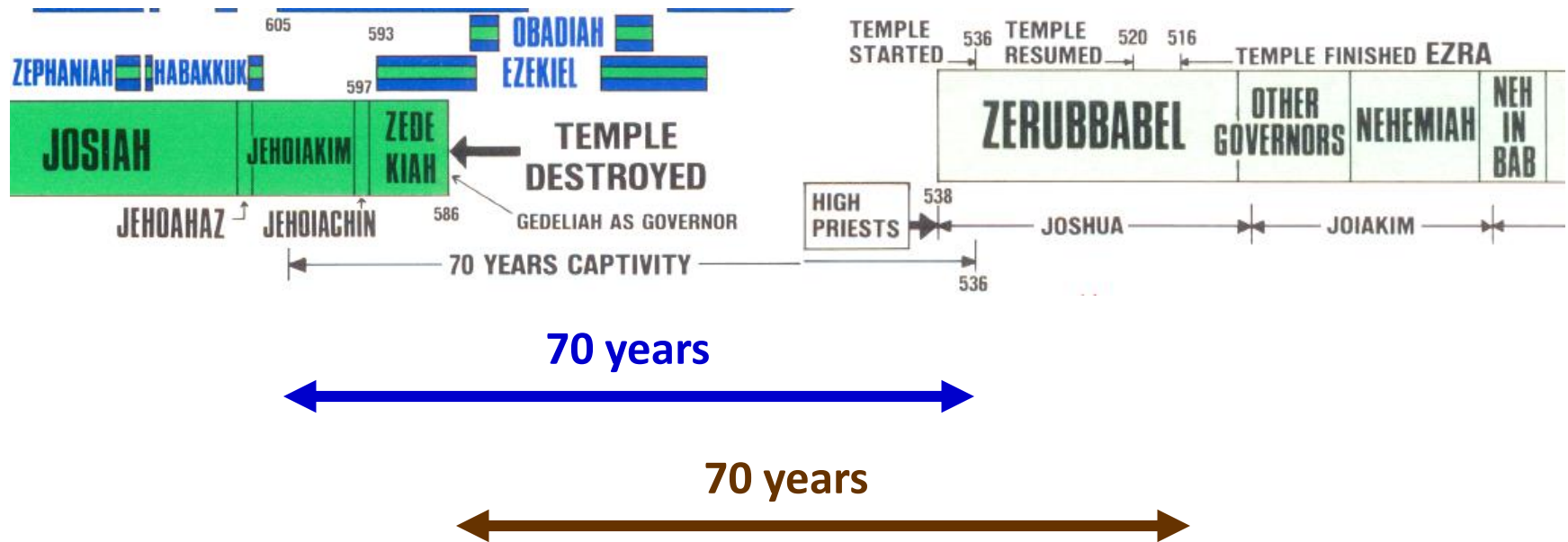
Jeremiah's Prophecies about the 70 years

Jer 25:11-14 *(during early years of Jehoiakim's reign)* after 70 years God will punish Babylon

Jer 29:10-14 *(during early years of Zedekiah)* after 70 years God will bring the Jews back and give them a future with peace and hope



When did the 70 years start?



People justified what they really wanted to do!

Warning for today: Don't wait till the end to get involved! God expects us to be working consistently until the end.

God tried to talk to the people by influencing the conditions in the land (Hag 1:5)

- 1) Small harvests: blight, mildew & hail (2:17)
- 2) Droughts
- 3) Cold
- 4) Inflation



God talked to them through economic & environmental events

We need to examine our own lives and consider how we have fared

Haggai's Message: Consider how you have fared!

God had influenced their lives



1:6 Small harvest, not enough to eat or drink, cold temperatures, high inflation

1:11; 2:17 drought, blight, mildew on crops

1:9 God blew it away!

1:8 Solution: Get involved in building temple!

1:13 God's assurance: "I am with you".

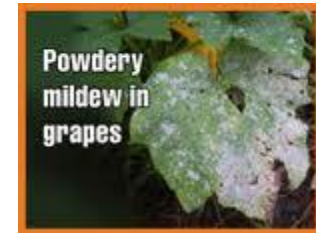
He stirred up the spirit of the people

1:14 Response: they came and worked

2:1-9 Don't worry that this temple is not as good as the former. It's latter glory will be greater

2:10-14 Nation is unclean. Much easier to learn wickedness than righteousness

2:15-23 God will bless Israel from now on because they involved again in God's work of building



Get priorities right: Spiritual issues first!



God talks to us through the experiences of life

- **We need to meditate and consider** the events of our lives – they are not by chance!
- **God attempts to influence us through life events** – if we are listening
- **He uses economics, jobs, health, family troubles, accidents, friends**



**We need to meditate
& consider how we have fared!**

God's talking...are we listening?

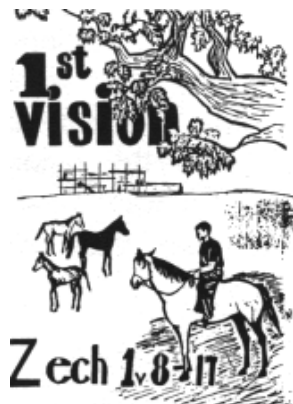
God does the impossible!

He raises up Darius to be King!

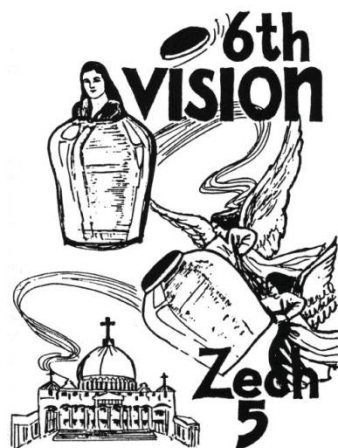


- **A few months after the temple work was forced to stop,** God opened a door by bringing Darius to the throne
- **Some of the Jews realized** this was their opportunity and began working on the temple again, but they needed more help

The angels were busy at work in the Persian Empire so that the work on the Temple could finish



Zechariah's 7 Night Visions (Zech. 1-6)



God promised to
help them finish
the temple

Zechariah's Message: the Angels are excited about finishing the temple!

1:7-11 Vision of Angels on horses patrolling earth and bringing rest

1:12 Angels ask God: how long until you will have mercy on Jerusalem?

2:1-5 Angels declare Jerusalem will be inhabited without any need of walls – God will protect it

3:1-5 Joshua stands before angel. Angel rebukes Satan. Angel removes iniquity and clothes Joshua.

3:6-10 God will bring forth his servant “the Branch”.
7 eyes (angels) are watching over the capstone.

4:9-10 Angels rejoice to see plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand *“who has despised the day of small things?”*

Angels are active today too! They want to establish God's Kingdom & for us to be there! Cooperate with their work & don't frustrate them!

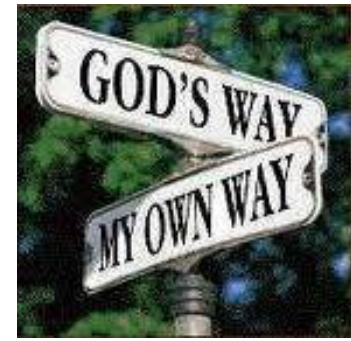
Here comes another challenge!

Ezra 5:3-6

3 At the same time **Tattenai the governor** of the region beyond the River and **Shethar-Boznai** and **their companions** came to them and spoke thus to them: "Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish this wall?" 4 Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were constructing this building. 5 **But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews**, so that they could not make them cease till a report could go to Darius. Then a written answer was returned concerning this matter.

God was with them this time to succeed

People challenged again (vs 3-4)



- **Tatnai = Tattenai** (province governor)
- **It's been about 16 years** since Cyrus' decree
- **Work stopped** for about 2 years
- **These people are not as nasty** as Samaritans - they ask questions but don't push their view.
- **Elders individually challenged** – need to stand up personally for our beliefs

**God will continually challenge us too –
He's hoping we will grow and triumph!**

The Eye of God upon them

(but not visible to human eyes!)



2 Chron 16:9 Hanani to Asa: “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him”

Zech 3:9 See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on (not “in”) that one stone (NIV)

Zech 4:10 “For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.” (angels will make sure the temple is finished!)

1 Pet 3:12 “for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers”

Angels are hidden, but always there to help! We need to be aware of their presence & thank them.

The Jews Response

Ezra 5:11-16

11 And thus they returned us an answer, saying: **"We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth,** and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and completed. 12 **But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath,** He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and carried the people away to Babylon. 13 However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, **King Cyrus issued a decree to build this house of God.** 14 Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple that was in Jerusalem and carried into the temple of Babylon — those King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon, and they were given to one named Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor. 15 And he said to him, 'Take these articles; go, carry them to the temple site that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its former site.' 16 Then the same Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem; **but from that time even until now it has been under construction, and it is not finished."**

The Jewish Leaders take Responsibility!

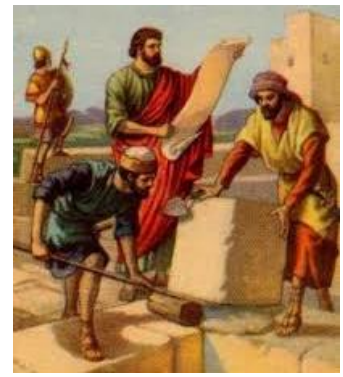
The People Respond in Faith

**The Power Of
Faith!**

- **Continued working this time** – endurance through persecution & pressure
- **Unbelievers noticed the commitment** of God's people (v.8)
- **Faithfully witnessed to God** (v.10) & gave God the credit (v.11)
- **Accepted the blame**: “our fathers angered God” (v.12)
- **Acknowledged God** brought the captivity
- **Referred to the political authority to build** – Cyrus' decree (v.13)

**Faith in God can motivate us to
move mountains & conquer giants**

Evidence that Sheshbazzar of v.16 is Zerubbabel



	<u>Sheshbazzar</u>	<u>Zerubbabel</u>
Governor:	Ezra 5:14	Hag 1:1
Laid Temple Foundation	Ezra 5:16	Zech 4:9

According to Neh 7:5
Zerubbabel led the first
return of the exiles!

A search for Cyrus' Decree

Ezra 5:17 – 6:5

17 Now therefore, if it seems good to the king, **let a search be made** in the king's treasure house, which is there in Babylon, whether it is so that a decree was issued by King Cyrus to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send us his pleasure concerning this matter.

Ezra 6

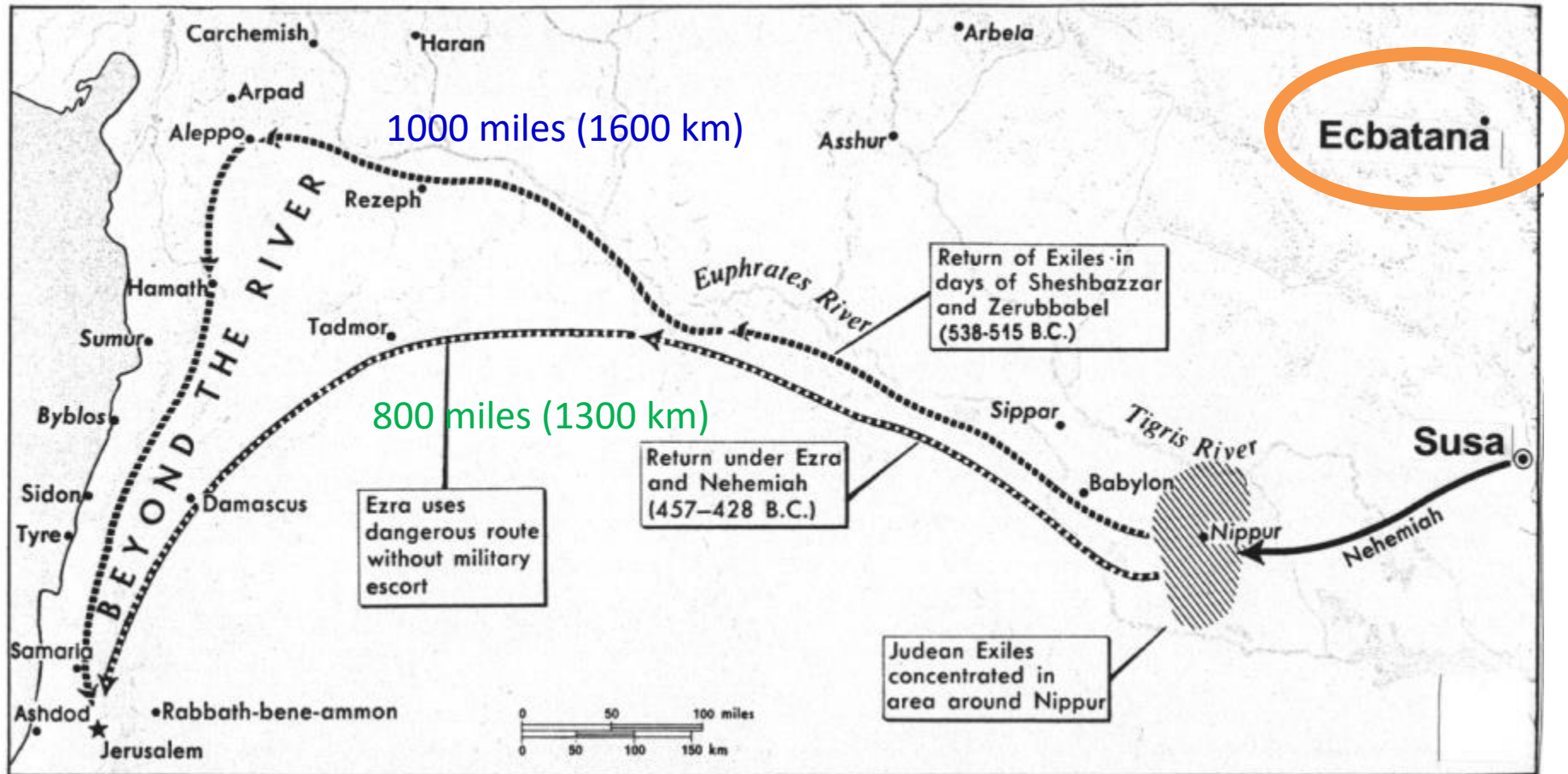
1 Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. 2 And at **Achmetha**, in the palace that is in the province of Media, **a scroll was found**, and in it a record was written thus:

3 **In the first year of King Cyrus**, King Cyrus issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem: "Let the house be rebuilt, the place where they offered sacrifices; and let the foundations of it be firmly laid, its height sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits, 4 with three rows of heavy stones and one row of new timber. **Let the expenses be paid from the king's treasury**. 5 Also let the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple which is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and taken back to the temple which is in Jerusalem, each to its place; and deposit them in the house of God" —

God made sure it was recorded!

Achmetha (6:2) = Ecbatana

(capital city of Cyrus)



Ecbatana was the summer residence of Persian kings, Susa was used in winter

Comparison of the Decrees in Ezra 1 & Ezra 6

	<u>Ezra 1 (Hebrew)</u>	<u>Ezra 6 (Aramaic)</u>
Yahweh Name	Yes	No
Size Limits	No	Yes
Free Will Offerings	Yes	No
Pay from Treasury	No	Yes

Some differences may have
developed when being translated
or changed over time

God Accomplished the Impossible!

Ezra 6:6-12

6 Now therefore, **Tattenai**, governor of the region beyond the River, and **Shethar-Boznai**, and **your companions the Persians** who are beyond the River, **keep yourselves far from there.** 7 **Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God on its site.**

8 Moreover I issue a decree as to what you shall do for the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: **Let the cost be paid at the king's expense from taxes on the region beyond the River; this is to be given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered.** 9 **And whatever they need — young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the request of the priests who are in Jerusalem — let it be given them day by day without fail,** 10 **that they may offer sacrifices of sweet aroma to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons.**

God blessed them beyond measure!

Look at what the Angels accomplished behind the scenes!



- v.6** Keep yourselves far from there
- v.7** Let the work of this house of God alone
- v.8** Let the cost be paid from the King's expense from taxes (so the adversaries of Ezra 4 ended up paying to finish the temple!)
- v.9** And whatever else they need --- let it be given them day by day without fail!

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think (Eph 3:20 RSV)

The Work Continues!

Ezra 6:13-19

13 Then Tattenai, governor of the region beyond the River, Shethar-Boznai, and their companions diligently did according to what King Darius had sent. 14 **So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo.** And **they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.** 15 **Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.** 16 Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, **celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.** 17 And **they offered sacrifices** at the dedication of this house of God, one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, **according to the number of the tribes of Israel.** 18 They assigned the priests to their divisions and the Levites to their divisions, over the service of God in Jerusalem, **as it is written in the Book of Moses.**

They finished & followed Moses' procedures

Temple is Finished!

- **Pray for King & Son** - Persians asked everyone in empire to pray to their god for the empire (v.10)
- **Cyrus & Darius & Artaxerxes** – we will look at this tomorrow!
- **Adar = 12th month.** Ready for 1st month of new year for Passover & Feast of Unleavened Bread
- **Temple took about 20 yrs to build** – Cyrus (6) + Cambyses (8) + Darius (6)
- **Celebrated with joy!** (v.16) – remember Zech 4 “whoever despises the day of small things will rejoice”

The Three Temples

The First Temple
Solomon's Temple
957 B.C. - 587 B.C.

The Second Temple
Zerubbabel's Temple
520 B.C. - 19 B.C.

The Second Temple
Herod's Temple
19 B.C. - 70 A.D.

Never despise or discourage God's work today, no matter how small it is!

Successes are all of God

1 Cor 15:57-58

57 But *thanks be to God, who gives us the victory* through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, *be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Let's determine to remain steadfast & immovable, even when under pressure – putting our faith & trust in our God

Spiritually Back on Track

Ezra 6:19-22

19 And the descendants of the captivity **kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.** 20 **For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them were ritually clean.** And they slaughtered the Passover lambs for all the descendants of the captivity, for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. 21 Then **the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity ate together with all who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the Lord God of Israel.** 22 **And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy; for the Lord made them joyful,** and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Spiritual Unity of Jews and Gentiles

Temple service organized

- **Offerings** (v.17): small compared to Solomon's (1 Kings 8:63)
- **Sin offering:** Solomon didn't have these [maybe exiles were confessing their sins that had caused the exile]
- **12 Tribes:** implies some from all 12 tribes did return
- **Priests & Levites organized** (v.18): as per 1 Chr 23:6-24; 24:1-19
- **Ate together with all** (v.21) – included Gentiles! Worship Yahweh, the God of Israel
- **King of Assyria** (v.22): An Assyrian king began the exile, now the temple is finished during another



God wants us to rejoice in our service to Him – it's time to celebrate what He has done for us!

Philippians 1:6 (RSV)

And I am sure that he who began a good work in you *will bring it to completion* at the day of Jesus Christ.

Whatever our current trials & problems, never lose Paul's confidence in God's ability to finish His work!

Lessons from This Class

- Pray that God will send your ecclesia motivated and energetic workers to stir up your ecclesia to good works!
- Don't look for excuses to quit! There will always be some when working with people.
- God will do the impossible! He's just looking to see if we really want the work to prosper.
- Thank God for His angels who continuously guide our lives and prosper our way. They will get the job done!

Next



Class 5: Preparing to serve is Essential



Ezra:

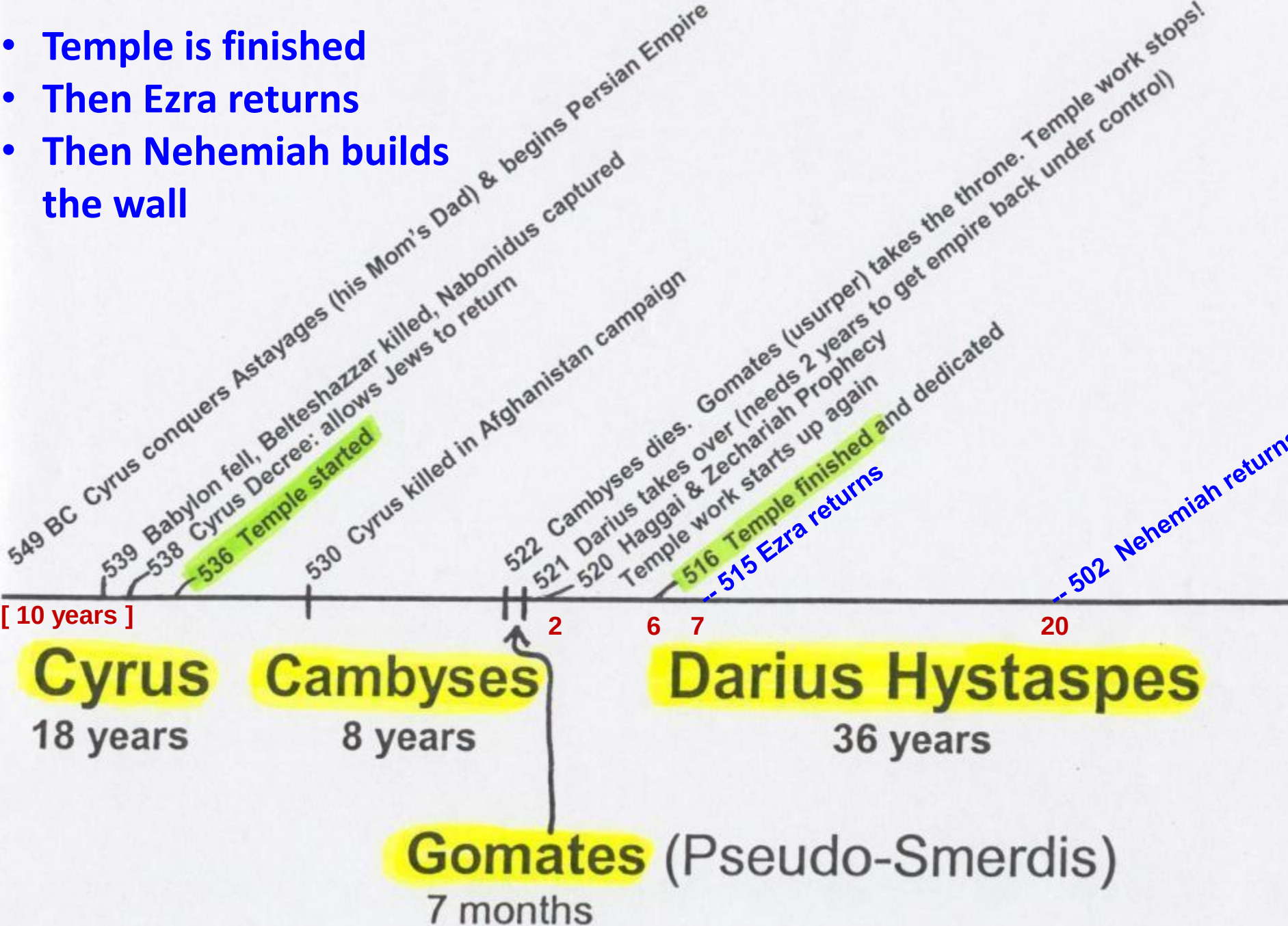
Working together in God's service



Class 5: Preparation for Service is Essential



- Temple is finished
- Then Ezra returns
- Then Nehemiah builds the wall



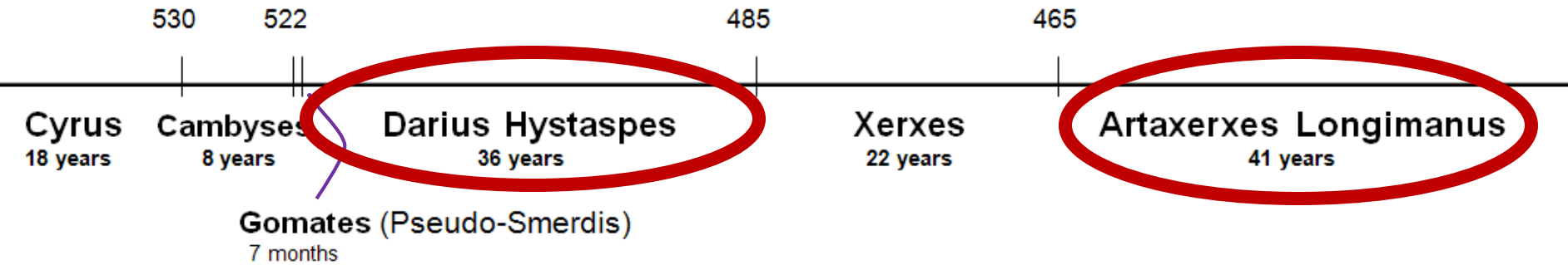
Ezra is ready to go!

Ezra 7:1-7

1 Now after these things, **in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah** (*high priest when Babylonians invaded & he was killed*), the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, 2 the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, 3 the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, 4 the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, 5 the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, **the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest** — 6 **this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses**, which the Lord God of Israel had given. **The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him.**

God blessed Ezra & prospered his plan

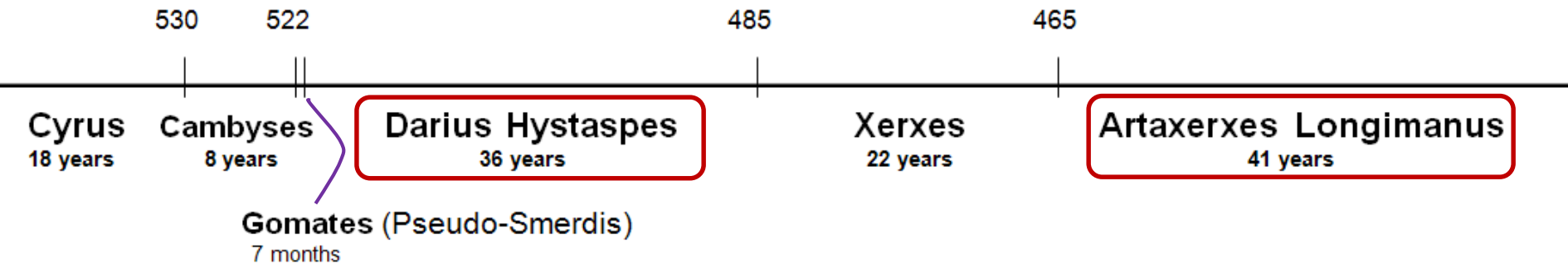
Who is Artaxerxes of Ezra 7?



Neh 5:14; 13:6 indicates that Artaxerxes reigned at least 32 years. Darius Hystaspes & Artaxerxes Longimanus are the only Persians kings to reign that long.

That narrows it down to only 2

Who is Artaxerxes of Ezra 7?



- **Artaxerxes is just a title**, not a specific individual (there was another Artaxerxes in 4:7.) Now the 7th year (v.7)
- **Most say Longimanus** (*but he is 58 years after Hystaspes*)
 - But.....Longimanus did not build the temple
 - Longimanus was not mentioned before this in Ezra
- **Probably Darius Hystaspes**
 - Darius & Artaxerxes are titles like: President, Prime Minister, Premier, Chancellor, King, etc.
 - Ezra compiled information from returned exiles in Israel and added his own experience. Different sources probably used different titles for the King. Remember Zerubbabel was also called Sheshbazzar.

Ezra returned as soon as the temple was finished!

Evidence that Artaxerxes is Darius Hystaspes



- **Temple finished in his reign.** Ezra 6:14 says *"Cyrus and Darius and [even] Artaxerxes"*
- **Artaxerxes sends Ezra back in 7th year** to work in Temple, offer sacrifices & teach Jews how to worship Yahweh. *Why wait 58 years to do this?*
- **Ezra's age:** he was born before captivity began [son of Seraiah]. In 7th year of Hystaspes he would be at least 71 years old. In 7th of Longimanus he would be over 129, and over 144 when he walked in the procession at the dedication of the wall in Neh 12:36 - possible, but not very likely.
- **Compare Neh 10:2-10 with Ezra 2.** Out of 30 priests & Levites who returned with Zerubbabel, 20 of them signed the covenant with Nehemiah. In Longimanus' reign they would all be alive 92 years after Zerubbabel's return – possible, but not very likely!

Artaxerxes is just a title

Ezra 6:14 is the key



Ezra 6:14 (RSV)

They finished their building by command of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia

Ezra 6:14 (H.P.M.)

They finished their building by command of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius *even* Artaxerxes king of Persia.

Cyrus & Darius were the only Persian kings to make decrees about finishing the temple, so Darius & Artaxerxes must be different titles for the same king

Family line of Ezra

Hilkiah the High Priest

(1 Chron 6:13; 9:11; 2 Kgs 22:14)

Azariah

(1 Chron 6:13,14; Ezra 7:1)

Jeremiah

(Jer 1:1)

Gemariah

(Jer 29:31)

Seraiah

(2 Kgs 25:18; 1Chr 6:14
Jer 52:24-27)

Folks who go with
Longimanus don't
think Seraiah was
Ezra's Dad

Jehozadak (Jozadak)

(1 Chron 6:15; Ezra 3:2)

Ezra

(Ezra 7:1)

Ezra is
Jeshua's
uncle

Joshua (Jeshua)

The High Priest
(Zech 6:11; Ezra 3:2)

Ezra's Dad
was killed
at Riblah a
month after
Zedekiah

Ezra travels to Jerusalem

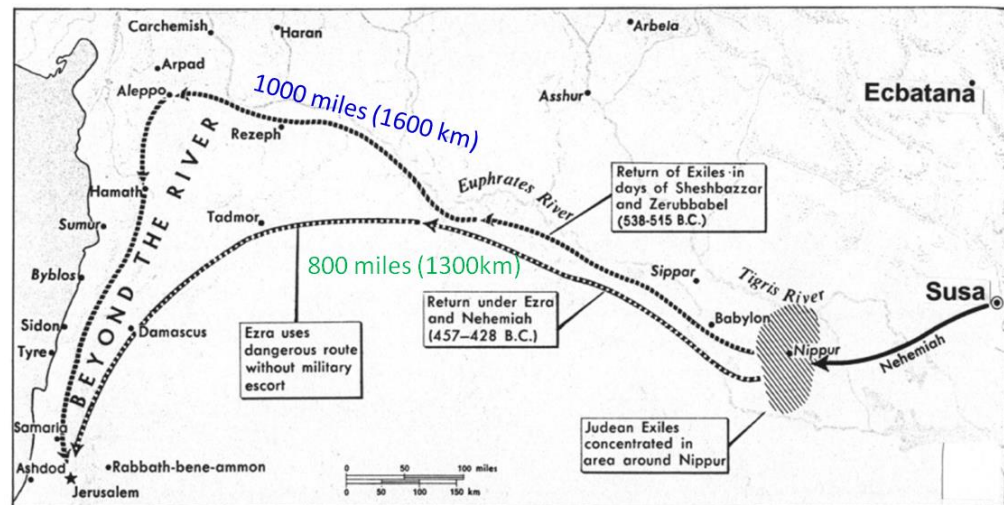
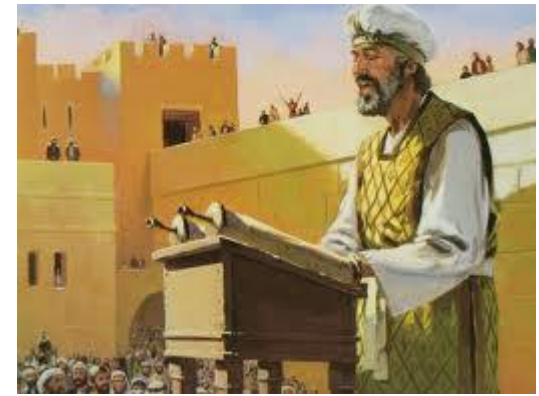
Ezra 7:8-10

8 And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. 10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Ezra prepared to fulfill his service

Ezra's Preparation & Return

- **Skilled in Law of Moses (v.6):** requires time & effort, like any other skilled job (carpenter, seamstress, etc)
- **Hand of God on him:** from 1Kgs 18:46 when Elijah prayed for rain & ran before Ahab – time of national reformation.
- **Journey:** 800 miles [1300 km]. Took 4 months (v.8-9)





Ezra's Preparation (7:10)

His heart was immersed in the Law of the Lord

- 1) Seek** [study (RSV, NASB, NKJVmg)]: *“to tread or frequent” (Strong's) – He poured over the Scriptures*
- 2) Do it** – *he lived his message, it was not just an academic study! [like Paul showing Gentiles Jesus Christ crucified - “reveal His son in me”]*
- 3) Teach** – *he felt the responsibility and privilege to share with others – that's the goal*

This helps us today to be effective workers in God's ecclesia

Artaxerxes' Letter sent with Ezra

Ezra 7:11-17

11 This is a copy of **the letter that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest,** the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of His statutes to Israel:

12 **Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a scribe** of the Law of the God of heaven: Perfect peace, and so forth.

13 I issue a decree that **all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you.** 14 And whereas **you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand;** 15 and whereas you are to carry **the silver and gold which the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel,** whose dwelling is in Jerusalem; 16 and whereas all the silver and gold that you may find in all the province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and the priests, are to be freely offered for the house of their God in Jerusalem — 17 now therefore, be careful to buy with this money bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem.

King encouraged Jews to return with Ezra

Lots of Financial help!

Ezra 7:18-26

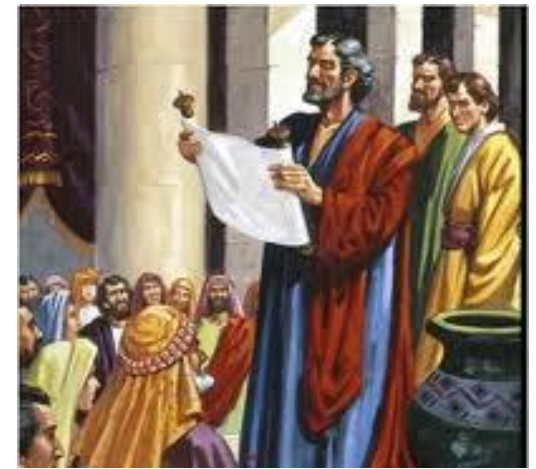
18 And whatever seems good to you and your brethren to do with **the rest of the silver and the gold, do it according to the will of your God**. 19 Also the articles that are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem. 20 And **whatever more may be needed for the house of your God, which you may have occasion to provide, pay for it from the king's treasury**.

21 And **I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are in the region beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, let it be done diligently**, 22 up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred kors of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribed limit. 23 **Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it diligently be done for the house of the God of heaven. For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?**

24 Also we inform you **that it shall not be lawful to impose tax, tribute, or custom on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God**. 25 And you, Ezra, according to your God-given wisdom, set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people who are in the region beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God; and teach those who do not know them. 26 Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily on him, whether it be death, or banishment, or confiscation of goods, or imprisonment.

Lot's of Power for Ezra

Purpose of Artaxerxes' Decree in Ezra 7



- Allowed any Jews to return (13)
- Inquire about Jews following God's laws in Judah (14)
- Convey silver & gold offered by King & counselors & Jews to buy animals, grains & wine for offerings (15-18)
- Convey vessels to temple for service (19)
- Buy anything else needed out of King's treasury (20)
- Told treasurers in province to supply silver, wheat, wine, oil & salt (21-23)
- Treasurers not to tax temple workers (24)
- Gave Ezra authority to appoint officials & judges, and to impose punishments (25-26)

God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think (Eph 3:20)

Give thanks & glory to God

Ezra 7:27-28

27 **Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers,** who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem, 28 and **has extended mercy** to **me** before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty princes.

So **I** was encouraged, as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me; and **I** gathered leading men of Israel to go up with **me**.

Ezra assembles his group

Artaxerxes helps Ezra out!



- **7 counselors (v.14)** = 7 princes of Esther 1:14
- **Silver & gold** – amounts in 8:25-27
- **Lest His wrath be against the king:**
 - Ezra used this as a motive in 8:22
 - Pray for the King and his sons (back in 6:10)
- **Note use of “me” and “I”** – implies Ezra was the author of the book.

Ezra prepared to seek God's law, then God did more than Ezra could have imagined

Those who returned with Ezra

Ezra 8:1-14

These are the **heads of their fathers' houses**, and this is the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of King Artaxerxes: 2 of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom; of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel; of the sons of David, Hattush; 3 of the sons of Shecaniah, of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah; and registered with him were **one hundred and fifty males**; 4 of the sons of Pahath-Moab, Eliehoenai the son of Zerahiah, and with him **two hundred males**; 5 of the sons of Shechaniah, Ben-Jahaziel, and with him **three hundred males**; 6 of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him **fifty males**; 7 of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him **seventy males**; 8 of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him **eighty males**; 9 of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him **two hundred and eighteen males**; 10 of the sons of Shelomith, Ben-Josiphiah, and with him **one hundred and sixty males**; 11 of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him **twenty-eight males**; 12 of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him **one hundred and ten males**; 13 of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these — Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah — and with them **sixty males**; 14 also of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud, and with them **seventy males**.

1496 Males & Families – not a huge group. Even with the temple finished, motivation to return was low.

The Exiles that Returned with Ezra (Ezra 8)



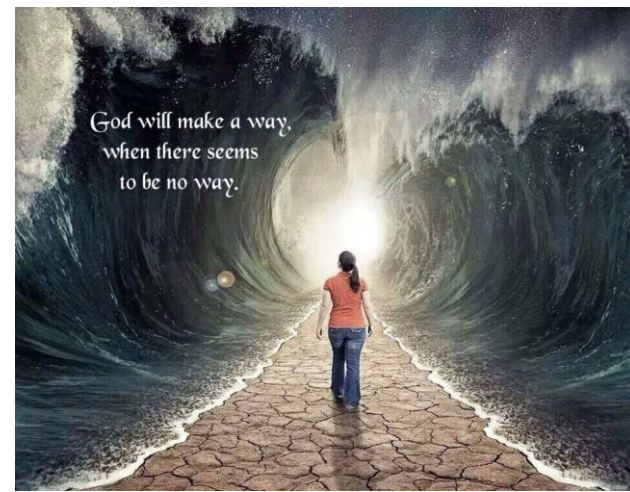
- **Phinehas & Ithamar (v.2)** = families
 - Nadab & Abihu were killed (Lev 10)
 - Eleazar was in the line of Phinehas
- **Made it to River Ahava (v.15)** – took 9 days & stayed 3 (see 7:9 & 8:31)
- **No Levites! (v.15)** Similar problem in 2:40-42
 - Rough life in Israel. Couldn't own land.
 - Depended on people for support
 - Some (38) did come when pressured a bit!

**Some folks need a push to get
involved. Start out gently!**

A gravel path splits into two directions in a park. The path is made of light-colored gravel and is surrounded by green grass. In the background, there are several trees with green and yellowing leaves, suggesting an autumn setting. A large tree trunk is visible in the center of the path where it splits.

Faith motivates
us to let God
guide our
decisions

**When opportunities arise,
our faith can motivate us
to jump in, trusting God
to make it work**



- **Get more involved** in your ecclesia and family
- **Volunteer to lead** CYC, teach Sunday School, play music, organize Sisters' class.
- **Take on an ecclesial project** – witnessing, hall clean up or fix up, meals and snacks
- **Be brave** – help out with pastoral work

**God is looking to see if we
want serve in His family**

Ezra gathers some Levites

Ezra 8:15-20

15 Now I gathered them **by the river that flows to Ahava, and we camped there three days.** And I looked among the people and the priests, and **found none of the sons of Levi there.** 16 Then I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, leaders; also for Joiarib and Elnathan, men of understanding. 17 And I gave them a command for **Iddo** the **chief man at the place Casiphia**, and I told them what they should say to Iddo and his brethren the Nethinim at the place Casiphia — that they should bring us servants for the house of our God. 18 Then, **by the good hand of our God upon us,** they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely **Sherebiah**, with his sons and brothers, eighteen men; 19 and **Hashabiah**, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brothers and their sons, **twenty men**; 20 also of the Nethinim, whom David and the leaders had appointed for the service of the Levites, **two hundred and twenty Nethinim.** All of them were designated by name.

Sometimes we need a little pressure!

Some of the returning Exiles (Ezra 8)



- **Iddo (v.17)** = Zechariah's Dad or Grandpa (5:1)
 - **Casiphia** = settlement village of Jews
- **Sherebiah** = Faithful worker for Nehemiah
 - See Neh 8:7; 9:4; 10:12; 12:24
- **Hashabiah (v.19)**: mentioned in Neh 10:11; 12:24 [involved in wall dedication]

**These people returned to
work in God's service!**

Ezra starts with Humility

Ezra 8:21-23

21 Then **I proclaimed a fast** there at the river of Ahava, that **we might humble ourselves** before our God, **to seek from Him the right way** for us and our little ones and all our possessions. 22 **For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen** to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him." 23 **So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.**

God heard their prayer & blessed them

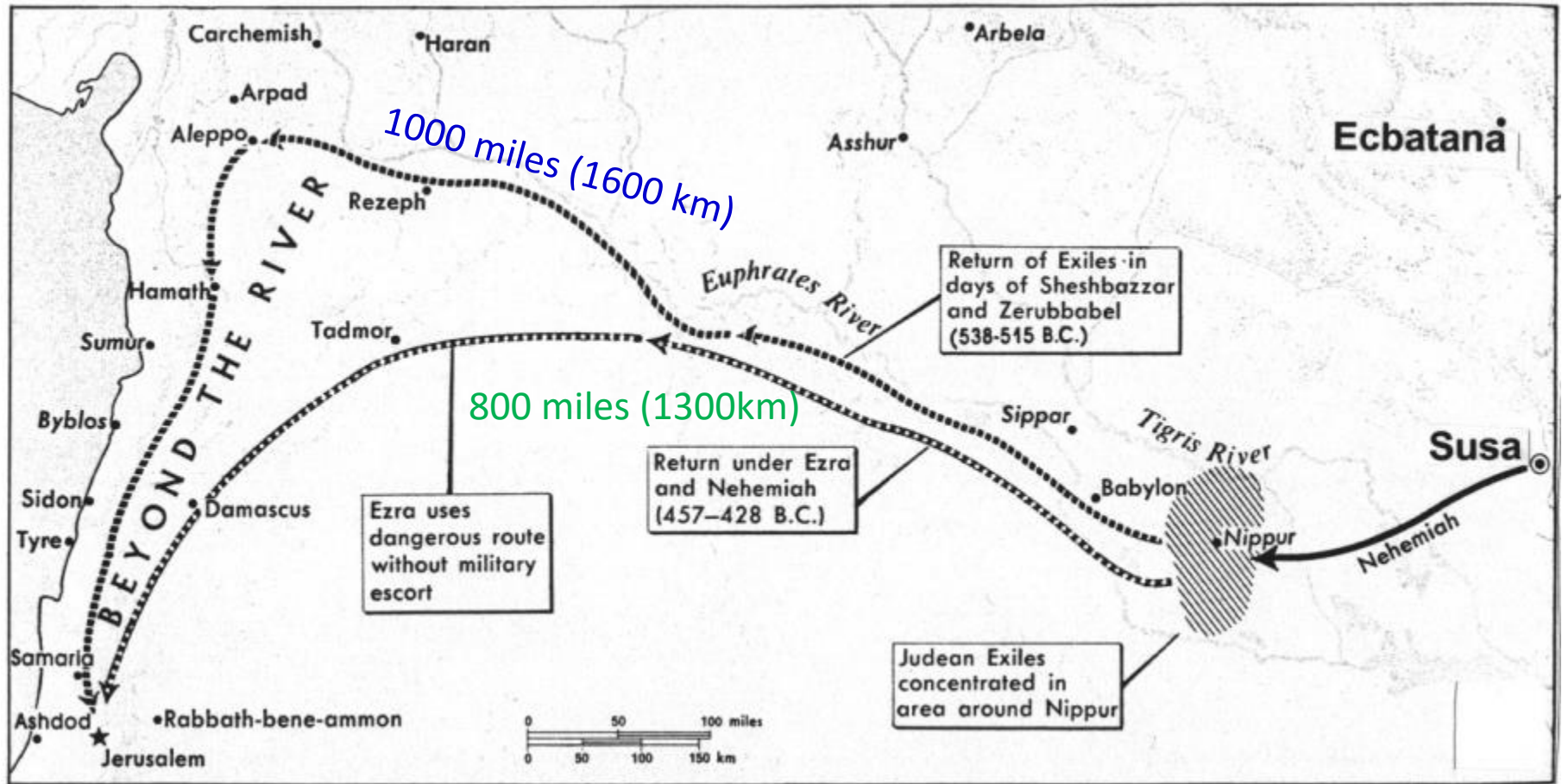
Ezra starts with humility (8:21)



- **Ezra proclaims fast to humble themselves**
 - Ezra starts with humility – good lesson for us!
 - Contrast Nehemiah who brought whole army (2:9)
 - Nehemiah was faithful too.... Not only one way!
 - Ezra backed word with actions showing great faith! (note ambushes in v.31)
- **Fasted & prayed (v.23):** Actions that allowed God to act for them
 - Isa 58: purpose of fast – neglect self & serve others

Ezra completely trusted God's involvement in his life. He was willing to accept God's direction & decisions

The Exiles Return



Ezra took the dangerous route, and trusted in God to protect them!

Gifts for the Temple

Ezra 8:24-30

24 And I separated **twelve of the leaders of the priests** — Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them — 25 and **weighed out to them the silver, the gold, and the articles**, the offering for the house of our God which the king and his counselors and his princes, and all Israel who were present, had offered. 26 I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, silver articles weighing one hundred talents, one hundred talents of gold, 27 twenty gold basins worth a thousand drachmas, and two vessels of fine polished bronze, precious as gold. 28 And I said to them, "You are holy to the Lord; the articles are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to the Lord God of your fathers. 29 **Watch and keep them until you weigh them before the leaders of the priests** and the Levites and heads of the fathers' houses of Israel in Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord." 30 So the priests and the Levites received the silver and the gold and the articles by weight, to bring them to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

**It's good to not provide opportunities
for people to give in to Sin**

God blessed their Journey!

Ezra 8:31-36

31 Then **we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem.** And **the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road.** 32 So **we came to Jerusalem, and stayed there three days.**

33 **Now on the fourth day the silver and the gold and the articles were weighed in the house of our God** by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; with them were the Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui, 34 with the number and weight of everything. All the weight was written down at that time.

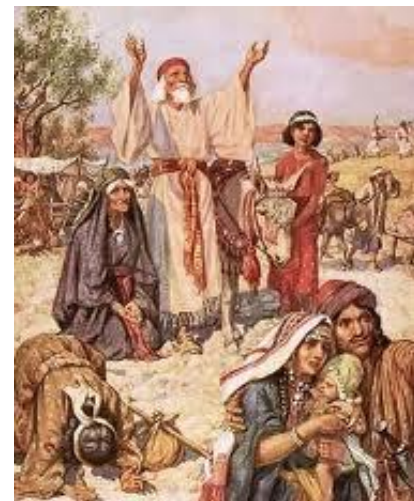
35 The children of those who had been carried away captive, who had come from the captivity, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: **twelve bulls for all Israel**, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and twelve male goats as a sin offering. All this was a burnt offering to the Lord.

36 And **they delivered the king's orders** to the king's satraps and the governors in the region beyond the River. **So they gave support to the people and the house of God.**

They came to give support, not take over!

The Journey & Arrival

- **12th day of 1st month (v.31)** – they still had a 3.5 month trip
- **He delivered us:** Ezra gave God the credit
 - We make plans & carry them out, but it is God who gives the increase
- **3 days (v.32):** Ezra probably rested & prayed
- **12 bulls for all Israel** → some from all 12 tribes returned
 - **Sin offering:** acknowledged sins, especially captivity
 - **Burnt offering:** commitment to dedicate our lives to God
- **Everything counted & weighed**
 - Good idea to safeguard ecclesial funds for everyone's sake
 - 2Kgs 22:7 Josiah didn't make workers account for money
 - Use discretion: may depend on circumstances



**A man's heart plans his way, but the
LORD directs his steps (Prov 16:9)**

Flexibility: a key characteristic in families and ecclesias

- Many times in life there is more than one acceptable way to get a job done.
 - Ezra versus Nehemiah
 - Ezra versus Josiah
- It's our responsibility to look at the options, pray about it, and *ask God to bless the choice* we think will work best for our family or ecclesia.
- When ecclesias make choices that differ from ours, be flexible and realize that God can work in either decision if we proceed in faith, asking God to make it work



Even God is flexible! He listens to our prayers & modifies His plans.

Tomorrow we will consider how they solved an Ecclesial Problem:



It's good to have some examples in mind

- 1) **Joshua 22:** The 2nd altar the 2.5 tribes built
- 2) **Lev 10:** Moses angry at Eleazar & Ithamar
- 3) **Acts 15** Problem of fellowshiping Gentiles
- 4) **Joshua 9** Gibeonites deceive Joshua & leaders
- 5) **Judges 20-21** Levite & concubine. Benjamin nearly wiped out completely! People emotionally reacted, rather than patiently discussing a solution
- 6) **Num 27 & 36** Daughters of Zelophehad's inheritance

God has given us examples in the Bible so we can use them as patterns to solve our problems

2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, **handling accurately the word of truth.**

16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness,

17 and their talk will spread like gangrene.

Now is our time to prepare so we can be faithfully involved in God's service in our families & ecclesias

Lessons from This Class

- We must prepare to properly fulfill our service to our God in our families & ecclesias – read God's word to know His will
- To be effective, we must be prepared to “do it” – walk the walk
- God can provide the finances to get His work done when we trust Him and are willing to do our part
- Let your faith make you brave to get involved in God's work in His family
- Remember to give God the credit!

Next



**Class 6: We
must provide
an inheritance
for our
children**



Ezra:

Working together in God's service



**Class 6: We must
provide an inheritance
for our children**



Biblical Examples of how some Ecclesial Problems were solved:



- 1) **Joshua 22:** The 2nd altar the 2.5 tribes built
- 2) **Lev 10:** Moses angry at Eleazar & Ithamar
- 3) **Acts 15** Problem of fellowshiping Gentiles
- 4) **Joshua 9** Gibeonites deceive Joshua & leaders
- 5) **Judges 20-21** Levite & concubine. Benjamin nearly wiped out completely! People emotionally reacted, rather than patiently discussing a solution
- 6) **Num 27 & 36** Daughters of Zelophehad's inheritance

God has given us examples in the Bible so we can use them as patterns to solve our problems

Today we look at 2 tough issues:



1. Marriage to unbelievers
2. Divorce

My Goal Today:

- **Help you understand** how the people of Ezra's day solved their problem
- **This should help us in making decisions** with our problems today

**Remember: God may be more interested
in how we behave while solving our
problems than the end result!**

The Problem Revealed

Ezra 9:1-4

1 When these things were done, **the leaders came to me**, saying, "**The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands**, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2 **For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands.** Indeed, **the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.**" 3 So when I heard this thing, **I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished.** 4 Then **everyone who trembled** at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

1st Step: Acknowledge the Problem

1) Acknowledge the Problem and openly discuss



- **Officials approach Ezra (9:1)**
 - Indicates Ezra has become a spiritual leader
 - Ezra has wisdom and authority
- **People – Priests – Levites:** problem throughout Israel!
 - May have resulted from Gentiles who were attracted back in Ezra 7
 - Some Jews then took Gentile wives who were not believers

**Communication is a key to all
family & ecclesial problems**



Holiness: Not separated themselves

HOLINESS TO THE LORD



- **Ex 22:31** “Be you holy for I am holy”
- **Lev 11-22** Clean/unclean, defilement – God tried to impress the people

You shall be holy, for I the Lord
your God am holy (Lev 19:2)

We are training to join
God's heavenly family

God Expects & Demands Holiness

Lev 20:24-26

24 'But I have said to you, "You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, **who has separated [badal] you from the peoples.**

25 '**You shall therefore distinguish [badal] between** clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which **I have separated [badal] from you as unclean.**

26 '**And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy,** and **have separated [badal] you from the peoples,** that you should be Mine.

We must distinguish between good & bad

The Problem Revealed

2 Cor 6:17-18

17 Therefore "**Come out from among them and be separate**, says the Lord. ***Do not touch what is unclean***, and **I will receive you.**"

18 "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

This is not just an OT concept!

The Problem Revealed

Deuteronomy 7:1-6

1 "When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the **Hittites** and the **Girgashites** and the **Amorites** and the **Canaanites** and the **Perizzites** and the **Hivites** and the **Jebusites**, seven nations greater and mightier than you,

2 "and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. **You shall make no covenant with them** nor show mercy to them.

3 "**Nor shall you make marriages with them.** You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son.

4 "**For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods;** so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.

5 "But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

6 "**For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.**

This was the principle

Applying the principles

- **Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians**
 - not specifically mentioned in Deut 7
 - Principle was extended to apply
 - Legalists would have claimed it did not apply!
- **Lesson:** learn principles & apply them in faith
 - Adam to Eve: “neither shall you touch it”
 - If wrong to murder, then wrong to hate in heart
 - If wrong to commit adultery, then wrong to look & lust



Look for ways to apply God's principles –
don't condense them to letter of the Law

Ezra's Prayer for Help

Ezra 9:5-9

5 **At the evening sacrifice** I arose from **my fasting**; and having **torn my garment** and my robe, **I fell on my knees** and **spread out my hands to the Lord my God**. 6 And I said: "O my God, **I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You**, my God; **for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens**. 7 Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day. 8 And now for a little while grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. 9 **For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia**, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.

We have failed, God is faithful & merciful

Ezra's Prayer for Help

Ezra 9:10-15

10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? **For we have forsaken Your commandments**, 11 which You commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their impurity. 12 Now therefore, **do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity**, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.' 13 And after all that has come upon us **for our evil deeds and for our great guilt**, since **You our God have punished [restrained, spared] us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us such deliverance as this**, 14 should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people committing these abominations? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed us, so that there would be no remnant or survivor? 15 O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, **in our guilt**, though no one can stand before You because of this!"

Acknowledged the guilt of Sin

Extent of the Problem



- **They have taken wives** for themselves and their sons
 - Elders have tremendous responsibility to live by God's standard
 - Children do as parents, so parents must live by God's standard
- **Holy race has mixed itself:** divided loyalties & interests
 - Talk to folks who have unbelieving spouses & discover the tough decisions they face
 - Have someone share the issue with your CYC
- **Note:** mixed marriages & idolatry that followed were what caused the exile (v.14)
 - **Fear of punishment** is not a powerful, long-run motivation
 - **Must learn to love the Lord our God** with all our heart, soul, strength & mind (Mat 22:37; Deut 6:5), develop a relationship

Ecclesial elders & Parents must lead!

Ezra's Prayer (9:6-15)

- Begins with humility (v.6)
- Confession of sin (v.7)
- God's kindness & mercy (v.8)
- Purpose of Freedom: build temple (9)
- Acknowledged Peoples' failure (v.10)
- God warned of the danger (v.11)
- God commanded separateness (v.12)
- Not punished as sins deserve [mercy] (v.13)
- If break commands, there will be no remnant (v.14)
- God is just, no one is righteous (v.15)



Great leaders identify with the peoples' sin & plead for God's help to recover

Ezra's Response

Ezra 10:1-5

1 Now while Ezra was **praying**, and while he was confessing, **weeping**, and **bowing down before the house of God**, a **very large assembly of men, women, and children** gathered to him from Israel; for **the people wept very bitterly**. 2 And **Shechaniah the son of Jehiel**, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "**We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this.** 3 Now therefore, let us **make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them**, according to the advice of my master and of **those who tremble at the commandment of our God**; and let it be done **according to the law**. 4 Arise, **for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it.**"

5 Then Ezra arose, and **made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore an oath.**

People supported the proposed solution

Admitting the Problem (Ezra 10)



- **Pray, confessing, weeping (v.1):** talking to God, admitting community sins, demonstrating sincerity
- **Rent garments, mantle, pull out hair (v.3)**
 - Some think Ezra over-reacted, but he was terrified about the future of God's ecclesia
 - This issue had led to the captivity in the first place, and the death of Ezra's Dad (Seraiah)
- **All who trembled at God's word (v.4)**
 - They were concerned about the future
 - Note how the faithful were attracted to Ezra
- **Evening sacrifice (v.5):** time of continual burnt offering – time for dedication!

This is true Leadership

Finding a Solution (Ezra 10)

- **Ezra's sincerity**, commitment & example cause others to join (v.1)
- **Before the house of God:** Note Solomon's prayer in 1Kgs 8:30,35 "when they pray toward this place"
- **People wept bitterly:** Not a sign of weakness, but a part of confession & true repentance
- **Shecaniah (v.2):** his Dad (Jehiel) has a foreign wife (v.26), but he's still willing to deal with the problem
- **There is hope:** he knew about God's great mercy when there is true repentance

Ezra's leadership caused Shecaniah to rise to the occasion

Ezra's Approach to Mistakes:



- 1) **Publicly acknowledge the issue is wrong** and mistakes have been made (9:3)
- 2) **Think about what we have done** and the consequences of our mistakes (9:4)
- 3) **Pray:** admit mistakes and ask for God's mercy and help (9:5-15)
- 4) **Consider possible plans to move forward** to correct the mistake (10:1-4)
- 5) **Implement the plan,** trusting in God to bless the efforts (10:5-44)

Similar strategy used by Joshua for solving the Gibeonite mistake in Joshua 9

Ezra Distributes the Plan

Ezra 10:6-8

6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and **went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib**; and when he came there, **he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity.**

7 And they issued a **proclamation** throughout Judah and Jerusalem **to all the descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem**, 8 and that whoever would not **come within three days**, according to the instructions of the leaders and elders, all his property would be confiscated, and he himself would be separated from the assembly of those from the captivity.

Ezra pressured the community to get involved in the solution

Inviting Everyone to be part of the Solution



- **“Be courageous (strong) & do it” (10:4)**
from 1Chr 28:10 David to Solomon
- **Ezra made them swear on oath (v.5)**
 - Asa (2 Chr 15:12-14)
 - Hezekiah (2 Chr 29:10)
 - Josiah (2 Chr 34:31-32)
 - Nehemiah (Neh 5:12 restore land, no interest)
10:29 (put away foreign wives)
- **Chamber (v.6):** in side of temple (1Kgs 6:5)
 - Eliashib = high priest in Neh 3:1
 - No bread or water: Ezra willing to make personal sacrifices for the sake of the community
- **Within 3 days (v.8):** no one lived more than 3 days away
 - Note: Ezra’s authority & willingness to disfellowship

Go forward, trusting God

Solution: Divorce the foreign wives

who were not committed to Yahweh



- **Put away (v.3):** same Hebrew word as in Deut 24:2
 - Some Christadelphians claim these men only “lived with” these foreign women, but did not marry them or divorce them
 - However, these foreign women were taken as wives in Ezra 9:2 (compare Deut 7:3; Gen 34:9) & as acknowledged by Ezra in 9:12 – that’s why the solution was so difficult to implement
- **Wives & their children** = wives & children who still lived as foreigners (worshipped idols)
 - **In Neh 13:24**, where this occurs again, the children did not know the Hebrew language
 - Maybe this became a test of the commitment of the foreign wives to Yahweh
- **Note: this was not a simple solution of demanding every foreign wife be divorced.**
 - Some foreigners had joined Israel & participated in the Passover back in Ezra 6:21
 - This was a selective process & took 3 months to implement

**Good solutions take time and
involve examining each case**

The Community Assemblies

Ezra 10:7-11

9 So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, **trembling because of this matter** and because of heavy rain. 10 Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "**You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel.** 11 Now therefore, **make confession to the Lord God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives.**"

A clear solution: Separate from Canaanites AND pagan wives

We are in this world, but not of it

John 17:13-17

13 But now I come to You, and **these things I speak in the world**, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because **they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.** 15 **I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.** 16 **They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.** 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

This world is the arena where God trains us to battle Sin, but we cannot join it!

**AND DO NOT BE
CONFORMED
TO THIS WORLD,**

**BUT BE
TRANSFORMED
BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND,
THAT YOU MAY PROVE WHAT IS
THAT GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE
AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD.**

ROMANS 12:2

Paul's marriage counsel in 1 Corinthians 7



v.12-14 If an unbeliever is willing to stay, then give it a try. Who knows, maybe the unbeliever will be won over to God.

v.15 If an unbeliever departs (not interested), let them go. God has called us to peace!
(note: this only works if the believer is walking with God!)

There wouldn't be peace if an unbelieving spouse taught our children another language and how to worship another god!

Don't marry Canaanites

Deuteronomy 7:1-5

1 "When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, **seven nations greater and mightier than you**, 2 and when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you **shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. 3 Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son.** 4 **For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.** 5 But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

They will lead your children astray!

Divorce affects our Children

Malachi 2:13-16

13 And this is the second thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so **He does not regard the offering anymore**, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.

14 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because **the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth**, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

15 But did He not make ~~them~~ one, having a remnant of the Spirit? **And why one? He seeks godly offspring.** Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

16 "For the LORD God of Israel says that **He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence**," says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

Marriage was designed to teach us Godly principles and help us raise Godly children

Principles Involved in the Law used by Ezra:



- 1) **Separate ourselves to God – “be you holy”**: don’t marry unbelievers: (Deut 7:1-5)
- 2) **Marriage should be for life** (Gen 2:24, Mat 19:8) Divorce was permitted (Deut 24:2), but not the Divine ideal! “for the hardness of your hearts” (Mat 19:8)
- 3) **God wants us to raise Godly children, so he “hates divorce”** (Mal 2:15) – but these families were not Godly & not raising Godly children!

The challenge of living the Truth is to weigh up all the principles, and then prayerfully choose a pathway that attempts to faithfully follow God's way and works to help and support our members & their families

Marriage Relationship is not always the primary Issue



- 1) **Master/slave relationship rated higher** than a marriage relationship (Ex 21:1-11)
- 2) **Marriage to ungodly unbelievers** who brought evil practices into the family (Ezra 10:11, 19, 44; Neh 13:23-27)
- 3) **Converts to Christ whose spouses desired to leave the marriage.** Converts were “*not under bondage*” because “*God has called us to peace*” (1 Cor 7:12-16)

When Biblical principles conflict, we have to wisely rank them according to God's ways

Conflicting Principles in the Bible:

We have to make a choice!



Sabbath **OR** Circumcision on 8th day

Sabbath **OR** Priests' daily temple work

Showbread rules **OR** David's men need food

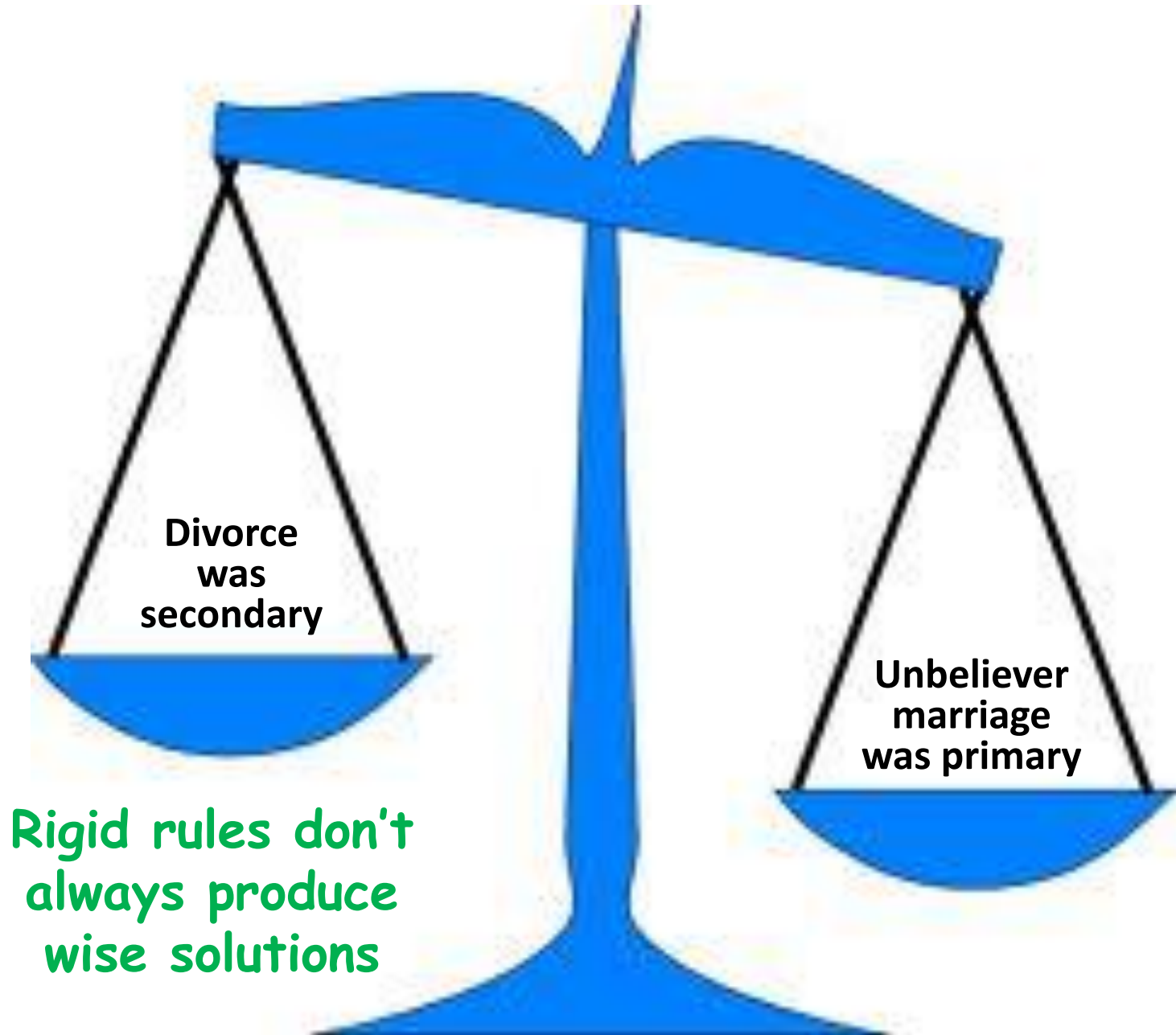
God hates divorce **OR** Holiness to God

Gibeonites should die **OR** faithfulness to covenant

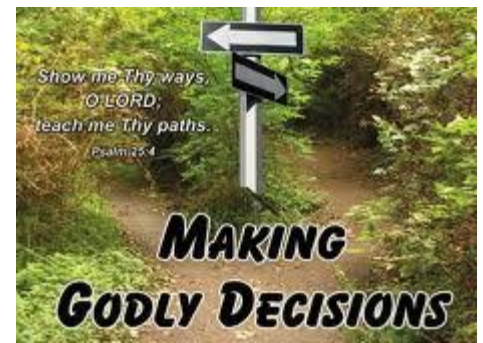
**"Sabbath was made for man,
not man for the Sabbath"**

**These are the issues that help
us learn to live like God**

Weighing the Issues in Ezra



Conflicting principles in Christ



We have to make a choice!

Use freedom to eat
meat offered to idols

OR

Try not to cause
others to sin

Exercise liberties
we have in Christ

OR

Through love serve
one another

Carry out judgments
against one another

OR

Extend God's
mercy to others

The choices we make reveal our
understanding of God's character

They agree with the solution!

Ezra 10:12-17

12 Then **all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, "Yes! As you have said, so we must do.** 13 But **there are many people;** it is the season for heavy rain, and we are not able to stand outside. Nor is this the work of one or two days, **for there are many of us who have transgressed in this matter.** 14 Please, let the leaders of our entire assembly stand; and **let all those in our cities who have taken pagan wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the fierce wrath of our God is turned away from us in this matter."** 15 **Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite gave them support.**

16 Then the descendants of the captivity did so. And **Ezra the priest, with certain heads of the fathers' households,** were set apart by the fathers' households, each of them by name; and **they sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.** 17 **By the first day of the first month they finished questioning all the men who had taken pagan wives.**

This involved 3 months of investigations!

Solution is implemented



- **“Be courageous (strong) & do it” (10:4)** from 1Chr 28:10 David to Solomon
- **Ezra made them swear on oath (v.5)**
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 - No bread or water: Ezra willing to make personal sacrifices for the sake of the community
- **Within 3 days (v.8):** no one lived more than 3 away
 - Note: Ezra’s authority & willingness to disfellowship
- **9th month, 20th day:** 4.5 months after Ezra’s arrival in Jerusalem (7:9)
 - Open square = temple court
 - Heavy rain: possible drought before this? (see Hag 1:10)

Go forward, trusting God

Those who had Pagan Wives

Ezra 10:18-44

18 And among the **sons of the priests who had taken pagan wives** the following were found of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brothers (**high priest family - 4**): Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. 19 **And they gave their promise that they would put away their wives;** and **being guilty**, they presented a ram of the flock as their trespass offering.

20 (**Other priests - 13**) Also **of the sons of Immer**: Hanani and Zebadiah; 21 of the **sons of Harim**: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, **Jehiel**, and Uzziah; 22 of the **sons of Pashhur**: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

23 **Also of the Levites (6)**: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (the same is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

24 **Also of the singers (1)**: Eliashib; and **of the gatekeepers (3)**: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

more →

All these leaders agreed to divorce

Those who had Pagan Wives

Ezra 10:18-44

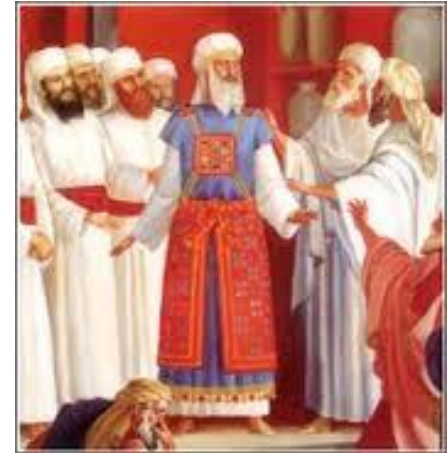
25 **And others of Israel - 86:** of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, Jeziah, Malchiah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah; 26 of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Eliah; 27 of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza; 28 of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai; 29 of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Ramoth; 30 of the sons of Pahath-Moab: Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh; 31 of the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, 32 Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah; 33 of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei; 34 of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel, 35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluh, 36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, 37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, Jaasai, 38 Bani, Binnui, Shimei, 39 Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, 40 Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, 41 Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, 42 Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph; 43 of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah.

44 **All these had taken pagan wives,** and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

Total of 113 cases out of 50,000 men

The Result: 113 divorced families

- **Took 90 days (v.16):** didn't rush thru in 1 week
 - Note: no women married foreign men
- **Total in the list: 113 men**
 - 4 of High priest's family
 - 13 of other priests
 - 10 Levites
 - 86 common Israelites
- **Indicates problem was spread through community, but very many affected**
 - Low percentage of men – only 0.3%
 - Much lower than our community today
 - 27 priests & Levites: *Leaders were the worst offenders!*



**Maybe Ezra's reaction was based
on the failure of the Leaders**

Ezra's success based on:



- 1) Admitted the problem existed
- 2) Identified with the people: *“our iniquities”*
- 3) Prayed to God for help
- 4) Let people develop a solution
It was not Ezra's mandate
- 5) Got most people to agree with plan
- 6) Took the time to examine each case.
Did not mandate blanket rule!

**This problem & solution is in
the Bible to help us today**

As we return home...



Remember: Grandpas & Grandmas,
Dads & Moms, Aunts & Uncles, AB's, S.S. teachers, CYC
leaders...

You set the standards for your families & ecclesias. So pray for
God's wisdom! Study & then do it!

Look to the future! Make tough decisions today for sake of
your children and grandchildren, so you can leave them a
Godly inheritance in a united community!

Pray for God's help & blessing: Unless the Lord builds the
house we labor in vain (Psa 127:1)

*"I have no greater joy than to
hear that my children are walking
in the truth" (3 Jn 4 NIV)*

Lessons from This Class

- Community & individual failures will happen – admit the problem & pray for solutions
- Seek the wisdom of our families & ecclesias in finding a solution – then get many involved.
- Our solutions must be designed around God's holiness and what will be helpful to families.
- Move forward in faith – God will help solve the problem
- Solutions can encourage many to make wise, spiritual decisions about their lives
- God is involved and will prosper your efforts



*Let's head home
working for the
unity Jesus can
bring to our
families &
ecclesias*