

# Unlocking The Mystery & Treasure Of Our Inheritance

## #44 Restoration: A Spiritual Roller Coaster

### *Timeline Of Historical Events Leading To Restoration Period*

1. The United Kingdom under King Saul, David and Solomon - 120 Years
2. Divided Kingdom: Northern Kingdom fell to Assyrian captivity about 100 years before the Southern Kingdom (Judah) fell to Babylonian captivity
3. 605 BC > Daniel and 1<sup>st</sup> group taken captive to Babylon - Temple Vessels
4. 597 BC - Exiled 7,000 men of might and 1,000 craftsman - Ezekiel taken
5. 586 BC - Destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple - exiled remaining Jews
6. Captivity = Daniel, an old man probably ~ 84, had been in Babylon for nearly 70 years. He knew from reading the recently completed scroll of Jeremiah's writings that the 70 year captivity God had ordained for Israel was just about over. [Jer. 25:8-11]  
Dan. 9:2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel Understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet that he would accomplish 70 Years in The Desolations Of Jerusalem.  
End of the 70 years: God begins to work to fulfill His promise announced by His prophets:
  - a. To RESTORE His people from Babylon
  - b. To REBUILD the temple at Jerusalem
  - c. To RENEW their hope that the Davidic kingdom would be restored
7. 539 BC > Cyrus of Persia defeated Beltshazar [handwriting on the wall]; Babylonian Empire
  - a. When Cyrus made his grand entrance, Daniel showed him an ancient scroll of Isaiah. It contained a personal letter addressing him by name! Note the prophecy:
    - b. Isa. 44:28 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."'
8. Ezra 1:1-3 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, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, <sup>2</sup> Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. <sup>3</sup> Who is there among you of all his people? 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 the God,) which is in Jerusalem.
  - a. Cyrus' Response: Freed the captives; returned their sacred vessels; 5400 temple vessels of silver and gold; provided incentives to return home and rebuild
9. Group 1 left in 538 BC under Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple. (Ezra 1-6)  
Restore the House of God - God's dwelling place and the Jewish Community.  
Ezra 1:5 Then rose up the heads of fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone Whose Spirit God Had Stirred To Go Up to rebuild the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.

a. ~ 50,000 Jews journey ~900 miles in 4 months- Required: Faith, courage and sacrifice

b. Willing to give up their life in Babylon [captivity]

Consider: God Takes The Initiative: No one, after falling into a carnal, apathetic state, would come back to Christ unless God brought him back.

Phil. 2:13 [Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.

c. Found their capital in ruins, their city walls shattered and their temple a heap of charred, shattered stones.

Refusing to be overwhelmed, this remnant began work on the foundation in 535 BC.

1. Building An Altar: original temple site in the midst of ruins to restore worship of God.

Our biggest problem isn't the actual problem! It's our relationship with God! Altar in Ruins!

If we do not fix our problem with God, we will not find the solution to any problem in our lives.

If you wish to change your life, you cannot waste anymore time. You must start with your Altar, your relationship with God. As long as it is destroyed, your life will be in ruins.

Note: It wasn't necessary to wait until the temple was completed before offering sacrifices to God. (Broken heart & Contrite spirit)

Note: When I seek the Lord in prayer, submit and yield to Him, and confess my sin, it is like pushing a reset button. When I put first things first, the rest will come back into alignment.

Truth: Begin with worship and surrender. Restoration will follow.

An altar almost invariably involves sacrifice, worship, and praise -- the sacrifice of apprehending the truth, "You are not your own; you were bought with a price"

2. Laid The Foundation Of The Temple

Ps. 11:3 If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Question Will they realize the ruins are the result of spiritual idolatry and apathy?

Lack of obedience? Lack of spiritual discipline? Solution: Lay the foundation again!

Ezra 3:10-13 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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, <sup>13</sup> 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.

Have you ever come back to God after a time of coldness and withdrawal -- a captive of sin's power -- with a great sense of joy as the foundations of fellowship were re-laid by the Spirit?

Yet also with regret for the lost and wasted years?

Tears of joy mingled with tears of sorrow as the people saw the temple being re-laid.

Note: Rebuilt the altar, gathered in Jerusalem, celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, and laid the foundation for the new Temple.

### 3. Opposition Immediately Develops

Truth: When you make a commitment to the Lord, be prepared to face the enemy's unrelenting attempt to set you back.

I Pet. 5:8 Be Sober, Be Vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Satan's 1<sup>st</sup> Enemy Tactic: 1. Weaken From Within - Join The Team

Ezra 4:1-2 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, <sup>2</sup> 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 [681-669 BC], who brought us here."

Note: These enemies had been brought in ~130-142 years previously. It is now ~539 BC.

Consider: Satan's most dangerous trick is to lure us into compromise under the guise of cooperation.

Zerubbabel's Response: Ezra 4:3 Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. [Why does he respond this way?]

Question: Who these enemies of Judah & Benjamin? Assyria Resettles Samaria

II Kings 17:24-26 Then the king of Assyria brought *people* from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria [Northern Kingdom] instead of the children of Israel; and They Took Possession Of Samaria And Dwelt In Its Cities. And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, That They Did Not Fear The LORD; therefore the LORD Sent Lions Among Them, Which Killed Some Of Them. So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the rituals of the God Of The Land; therefore He Has Sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land."

II Kings 17:27-28 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Send there One Of The Priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land." 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.

II Kings 17:32-33 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.

They feared the LORD, Yet Served Their Own Gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.

II Kings 17:38-39 And the covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you fear other gods. But the LORD your God you shall fear; and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies."

II Kings 17:40-41 However they did not obey, but they followed their former rituals. 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.

Problem: Syncretism = blend false religions with worship of God

1. If the Jewish exiles had worked together with the inhabitants, they would have fallen into spiritual compromise.

Satan's 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactic: Weaken From Within: Tool Of Discouragement

Ezra 4:4a Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah,

Satan's 3<sup>rd</sup> Tactic: Weaken From Within: Fear Often Follows Discouragement

Ezra 4:4b and troubled [frightened] them in building,

Consider: Satan's whispers: This dark valley will never end. You can't live the Christian life; why don't you give up. What if...?

Discouragement quickly turns into many fears about our future.

Satan's Tactic: Weaken From Without:

1. Use Of Misinformation And False Accusations

Ezra 4:5 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.

Ezra 4:6 In the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

Letter Writing Campaign: Weaken With Lies: Ezra 4:12-22 Jerusalem is a wicked city;

Will stop paying their taxes; troublesome to kings & provinces; long history of revolt & sedition; threat to royal interests

Ezra 4:18, 21 The letter which you sent to us has been clearly read before me. Now Give The Command To Make These Men Cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me.

Ezra 4:23-24 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.<sup>24</sup> 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.

Verses 6-23 chronicle events which happened up to 80 years after verses 1-5. This shows the unrelenting nature of Satan's opposition. He does not give up after one setback. He keeps on countering whatever the Lord's people try to do to move ahead spiritually.

The Jews had left Persia with much enthusiasm and zeal. No doubt they assumed they would return to their land, quickly rebuild the temple and the city, and then turn their attention to their land and houses. When they found completing the temple would not be as quick and easy

as they had supposed, they threw up their hands and turned their attention and energies to building their own homes. They gave up because the task was more difficult than they first thought. To turn their attention to their own homes was not that difficult (really wanted to build their own homes anyway). It appeared safer and easier to put off work in Jerusalem. They have not come up against an immovable object; they have encountered a little resistance. They have the assurance of God, the decree of the king, and the means provided to accomplish their task. However, they became self-indulgent and self-absorbed and pursued activities to please themselves. Israel got used to life without the Temple. Sixteen years passed and the temple lay half-completed, the foundation overrun with weeds and grass. They stood as a mute reminder of the Jews' failure to take care of God's house. Worship ceased.

God sent 2 prophets, Haggai [520 BC] and Zechariah, to move the people's hearts to finish the task. Consider Your Ways: Your Priorities Are Wrong

1. The Temple is in ruins.
2. You are neglecting the worship of God.
3. Your priorities are misplaced. You have drifted from the truth that God is first.
4. Your ways are an embarrassment to God and a blemish on His reputation.

1. Haggai exposed their hypocrisy and unbelief.

Haggai 1:2,4 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built. Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your paneled houses, and this house lie waste? Consider Your Ways!

- a. They were so concerned to build their own houses they ignored working on God's temple.
- b. The rebuilding of God's temple was the task that had brought them to Jerusalem!

2. Cease Being Selfish - No time to work on God's Temple

Note: If I give no thought to how I am living, I will naturally live for myself.

3. Believe God's Promises

- a. When you stop working on God's temple, you are admitting you have no faith in God's Word or in God's power to perform it.

4. Honor God's Name - Haggai 1:7-8

5. Obey God's Commands

Haggai 1:12-14 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, Obeyed The Voice Of The LORD Their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD. <sup>13</sup> Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I Am With You, saith the LORD. [obeyed within 23 days]

<sup>14</sup> And the LORD Stirred Up The Spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the Spirit Of All The Remnant of the people; they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, Temple was dedicated in 515 BC; about 23 years after beginning the work.

Gap Between Ezra 6 & Ezra 7: About a 60 year gap and insert the Book of Esther. Esther becomes Queen. Her marriage gave the Jews prestige at Persian court which effected Ezra's return and Nehemiah's position. Preservation of the Jews - Takes place in Shushan or Persia.

Truth: God is never surprised by circumstances or at a loss for prepared servants.

Joseph > Egypt; Ezekiel & Daniel > Babylon; Nehemiah > Susa; Esther > Shushan

Spurgeon: "There is no attribute of God more comforting to His children than the Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. He is the Master of the Universe. God is in control."

Group 2 left in 457 BC under Ezra [80 years after group 1]. Ezra, a scribe and priest living in Babylon, was to return to Jerusalem. He was given a letter by the Persian King to return and teach God's Law and appoint judges. The King provided him with gold and silver offerings.

Ezra set his heart to study the Law of God. He not only read and studied it; he practiced and obeyed it.

Wiersbe: "If our knowledge of the truth doesn't result in obedience, we end up with a big head instead of a burning heart."

Ezra's Purpose: institute many reforms; restore the Law and teaching of God's Word

Group 3 left in 444 BC under Nehemiah to rebuild the wall and gates around Jerusalem.

God sends the prophet Malachi to encourage the people.

1. While they rebuild their nation: temple, walls, gates, God is rebuilding their heart to obey Him and worship Him.

2. Am I a prepared sanctuary for the dwelling place of God Almighty?

3. Temple is complete and dedicated. Walls & gates were restored in under 52 days!

Time To Address Spiritual Needs:

1. Ezra and Nehemiah hold a "Bible Conference" at the Water Gate.

2. Ezra read the Scriptures for hours. People stood and listened.

Neh. 8:1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to Bring The Book Of The Law Of Moses, Which The LORD Had Commanded To Israel.

Neh. 8:3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

Neh. 8:5-6 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

I Thess. 4:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the Word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word Of God, Which Effectually Works Also In You That Believe.

Consider: May I have such an appetite for the Word of God!