

Lesson 4 The Return of the Exiles

Key Themes in the Book of Ezra

- Yahweh's covenantal faithfulness and man's covenantal unfaithfulness
- Yahweh sovereignly and providentially works out his redemptive purpose in history despite human evil.
- Yahweh's intention for Israel for purity in worship and obedience to the law
- Yahweh's grace and mercy exceed his anger
- Sinful man's need for a changed heart

Background

Zerubbabel: grandson of Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin was the king of Judah at the time Jerusalem was taken into captivity by the Babylonians. As the grandson of the king, Zerubbabel would be part of the royal line descended from King David. He returned with the first group of exiles around 537 BC.

Jeshua: He was the high priest at the time Jerusalem was taken into captivity by the Babylonians. He was listed as one of the leaders returning with the first group of exiles.

Temple Servants: persons of foreign descent who were given to the Levites for the purpose of performing menial tasks in the temple.

Key Words and Phrases:

came up: Strong's H5927 "alah" to go up ,ascend, to climb.

Read Ezra 2:1-70, Genesis 12:1-2, and II Samuel 7:8-17

The exiles who were "stirred up" by God were ready to leave their former captivity and return to Jerusalem. Their reason for returning was to rebuild their nation and to reestablish the worship of Yahweh.

1. What did God promise Abraham in Genesis 12:2a? How did the return of these exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem demonstrate God's faithfulness to His covenant promise in Genesis 12:2a? What are the two ways the returning people of Israel are identified? See Ezra 2:3- 35? Why were these two ways important in reestablishing the nation?

2. What did God promise David in II Samuel 7:8-17 concerning his descendants? How does the return of Zerubbabel with this group of exiles show God's faithfulness to carry out His covenant promise to David ?

3. This was a new beginning for the nation of Israel. They had been unfaithful to their covenant promises and had disobeyed the Lord. As a result they had been sent into captivity. Now God was releasing them from that captivity and returning them to Jerusalem and its surrounding cities. What attribute of God do you see here and how can you apply it to your own times of failure and disobedience as you walk with the Lord?

4. Can you see the providence of God at work in the various groups of people who returned to Jerusalem?. List several of the different groups. Why was each group you listed important to the rebuilding and the reestablishment of the temple and worship of God? What do you think your role is in the building of God's church today?

5. According to Ezra 2:68-69 what was the first thing the people did upon their return? What does this reveal about their heart for rebuilding of the house of the Lord?

