

17–18 Bible Study #11

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Ezra (Cont)

Ezra (Cont)

- **Ezra 7:1-10**

- During the reign of King *Artaxerxes* Ezra the scribe is introduced
- He was a skilled in the law of Moses
- He went to Jerusalem with a group of Jews in 458 B.C., the 7th year of ***King Artaxerxes*** (465-424 B.C.) during the second return (525-457 B.C)*

Ezra (Cont)

- **Ezra 7:11-28**

- The King Artaxerxes gave Ezra a letter once again stating that any Jews in Babylon may return to Jerusalem
- Further, that those in the provinces beyond the river were to give financial support to the Jews
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- **Ezra 8:1-20** lists the families who returned with Ezra *

Ezra (Cont)

- **Ezra 9:1-15**

- Upon his arrival in Jerusalem Ezra was made aware that some of the Jews had not separated themselves from the peoples of the land along with their abominations
- They even intermarried with the pagans
- Upon hearing this Ezra rent his clothing and prayed to God for the forgiveness of the people *

Ezra (Cont)

- **Ezra 10:1-13**
- He called for an assembly of all the people to address this situation, followed by the establishment of a new covenant
- The people then took an oath to give up their pagan wives and children

Transition

- We will now look at the impact of the **Prophets Haggai and Zechariah** had on the restoration

The Prophet Haggai

Haggai 520 B.C. Post Ex

- **Haggai**

- Little is known of him other than he was a persuasive speaker
- Was most likely a priest who expressed interest in
 - Ritual purity
 - Uncleaness
 - Holiness
 - Building of the temple
 - God's fulfilling his promises in a new era

Haggai (Cont)

- Bridged the old pre-exilic era and new messianic era
- Discussed the command to rebuild the temple after *King Cyrus* of Persia authorized the Jews to return home in 539 B.C.
- Is linked with *Ezra* the priest and *Nehemiah* the king's cup bearer who assisted the Judean governor *Zerubbabel* who had been appointed by King *Cyrus*
- Taught that constructing a sacred building could afford a congregation the opportunity of experiencing a renewal of faith (construction of temple began in 539 B.C.)

Haggai (Cont)

- As a member of the old era, Haggai:
 - Was born in the old Jerusalem
 - Witnessed the destruction and desecration of the temple
 - Lived as an exile in Babylon
- As a member of the new era he:
 - Joined the first wave of returnees
 - Participated in the first stage of rebuilding of the temple
 - Spoke his oracles as an old man

Haggai (Cont)

- Presented a message reflecting that the restoration of the temple was the sign that points to the Church
- Was filled with zeal for the temple and was one of the most successful prophets in getting immediate results
- His book contains four messages that were delivered in 520 B.C.
 - There is no fruitfulness in the land because the temple is still in ruins
 - Although the temple seems a paltry replica at the moment, it will be restored to great splendor
 - The people will be freed from misery and the Lord will bless the land as the temple is restored
 - The Lord has a special place in his plan for Zerubbabel

Haggai (Cont)

- **The Problem** for the people of Judah was that they had stopped rebuilding the temple due to the harassment of the *Samaritans* in the 2nd year of King *Darius*
- **The Solution** was to obey the prophets that God had sent to encourage them to finish building the Temple so that His blessing might follow

Haggai (Cont)

- The people had gotten their priorities wrong as they decided to finish their homes before they finished God's house
- God promised that the Glory Cloud would not appear until the Temple was finished (remember Ezekiel's vision)
- God reminded the people that He was with them and that they should have no fear
 - When God was with Israel in the past, all their enemies round about were defeated*

Haggai (Cont)

- **Haggai 1:1-5**

- This happened in 520 B.C.
- *Joshua* was the Hebrew version of the Aramaic name
- *Jeshua (Jesus)*
- After a brief start on rebuilding the temple it appears that the people stopped their work for two reasons:
 - Looking at the foundation for the restored temple the older men wept because it was so small
 - After their support was refused the Samaritans began to harass the Jews in their attempt to work on the temple
- Once they gave up on the temple, they put all their attention on building their own houses *

Haggai (Cont)

- **Haggai 1:6-15**

- God pointed out that they were not fairing very well because of their refusal to complete this project
- God commanded them to resume this project via the Prophet *Haggai* and *Zechariah*
- They also were assisted politically by the three decrees of *Cyrus*, *Darius*, and *Artaxerxes*
- So they completed the restoration of the temple
- Haggai reminded the Jews that the “glory cloud” could not return until they completed the restoration of the temple *

Haggai (Cont)

- **Haggai 2:1-23**

- He encouraged the people to take courage since God was with them
- Many of the people began to worry that they would not have enough money to finish construction of the temple
- Haggai told them not to worry as God would take care of everything
- Haggai admonished them to return to building the temple, which they did
- God promised via Haggai that if they returned to building the temple He would watch over them, bless them, and give them prosperity

Transition

- We will now look at the **prophet Zechariah** who was also speaking to the Jews in Jerusalem at this same time

The Prophet Zechariah



Zechariah 520-480 B.C. Post Ex

- **Zechariah**

- The son of *Iddo* returned from exile with *Zerubbabel* and *Joshua*
- United his efforts with *Haggai* to encourage the restoration of the temple
- Was a priest who had roots in Babylon
- Depicts a king coming triumphant and victorious riding on an ass
- Communicated his message via visions under the tradition of Ezekiel
- Preached the coming of God's kingdom preceded by the building of the Temple

Zechariah (Cont)

- His book consists of **two parts**:
 - The **first part** deals with the years 520-518 B.C. to include the introduction from October-November 520B.C. which:
 - Covers a period of time two months after the first prophesy of Haggai
 - Contains 8 visions followed by the symbolic crowning of Zerubbabel
 - He was preoccupied with the:
 - Rebuilding of the temple
 - National restoration which was expected to inaugurate a messianic era
 - Irreproachable moral conduct that was required

Zechariah (Cont)

- During this era the priesthood of *Joshua* will be held in greater honor and the sovereign power will be held by *Zerubbabel*
- These two anointed ones will rule in harmony
- His work contained the priestly influence to *Ezekiel* and the prominence of visions, the apocalyptic approach, and concern for purity was influenced by the Prophet Ezekiel
- Also the intervention of angels that were anticipated in the prophecies of *Daniel*

Zechariah (Cont)

- The **second part** comes at the end of the prophetic tradition with few historical indicators
- The historical background changed to Assyria and Egypt and the Greeks
- This part focuses on the:
 - Interest for messianic teaching
 - Recovery of the House of David
 - Expectation of a humble and gentle Messiah who will be pierced
 - Armed theocracy
 - Liturgical community as in Ezekiel which can be reconciled in the person of Christ and the New Testament

Zechariah (Cont)

- Received the word from God in the **2nd year of *Darius***
- His use of the image of the measuring line is linked to the one described by *Ezekiel* when he predicted the destruction of Jerusalem

Zechariah (Cont)

- **Zechariah 1:1-6**

- Zechariah was prophesying two months later
- The Lord told him to let the people know that He was angry with them and they needed to return to Him so He could return to them
- He called on them not to be like their fathers who failed to heed the cries of the earlier prophets to be obedient to the Lord
- So they repented and began working on the temple*

Zechariah (Cont)

- **Zechariah 1:7-21**

- He then related a dream in which angels asked God how long He will withhold his mercy against the Jews
- The four horns and four smiths represents the powers that scattered Judah into exile
- The Lord answered that his anger had abated and that He wanted to return to Jerusalem with compassion
- Further, that the cities of Judah shall again overflow with prosperity*

Zechariah (Cont)

- **Zachariah 2:1-5**

- As we saw a prophecy in *Ezekiel* concerning the restoration (Ezekiel 41:13)
- The angel encourages the people that if they start working on rebuilding the temple, God will protect them like a wall of fire from the *Samaritans* who were harassing them*

Zechariah (Cont)

- **Zechariah 2:6-13**

- This should remind us of the prophecy of **Zephaniah 2:9**
- The glory cloud of God will only be able to dwell in the city of Jerusalem by the restoration of the temple
- According to **2nd Samuel 7**, the purpose of the temple was to house the Ark of the Covenant
- Zechariah had many visions, but for the sake of brevity we will only look at his vision in **Zechariah 4 ***

Zechariah (Cont)

- **Zechariah 4:9-10**

- *Zerubbabel*, the son of David is going to finish the rebuilding of the temple
- These events encourage the people to finish the job as we saw in **Ezra 6**
- But they have not finished the job of rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and that will be done under the leadership of *Nehemiah*
- We heard about him in the book of **Ezra2:2**

Transition

- We will now turn to the **Book of Nehemiah**

Nehemiah

Persian Kings

- **Artaxerxes (Ahasuerus) 465-424 B.C.**
- Restoration of the temple and Jerusalem
- Allows *Nehemiah*, his cupbearer, to return and rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem
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Nehemiah

- **Nehemiah:**

- Was ***King Artaxerxes*** cupbearer
- Became depressed about the conditions in *Jerusalem*
- Was allowed by the king to return to *Jerusalem* to oversee the rebuilding of the city
- Called the people to rebuild the city walls
- Was opposed by the neighboring nations because a fortified *Jerusalem* was perceived to be a threat to them

Nehemiah (Cont)

- Finished the wall
- Identified the number of returnees
- Became governor
- Ezra the priest read the Book of the Law of Moses to the people who:
 - Had to be re-catechized
 - Celebrated the Feast of Booths
 - Sought to have the scriptures translated
- The book of Nehemiah can be found right after the historical book of Ezra

Nehemiah (Cont)

- **Nehemiah 1:1 -11**

- In the 20th year of King *Artaxerxes* (445 BC) Nehemiah was visited by a Jew who reported on the poor status of the city of Jerusalem
- On hearing this news he wept and prayed to God
- He was the cupbearer to the king*

Nehemiah (Cont)

- **Nehemiah 2:1-20**

- Nehemiah obtained permission from the king to return to Jerusalem with a letter
- He arrived in Jerusalem with this letter from the king making him governor of the province
- Upon his arrival he inspected the walls of the city
- He presented his task to the people and they began rebuilding the city walls
- The continuation of this project, including the necessary defensive measures are discussed in **Nehemiah 3-6:14***

Nehemiah (Cont)

- **Nehemiah 6:15**

- At this point the Jews under the leadership of Nehemiah have completed the wall of Jerusalem in 445 BC
- Many (but not all the people taken into captivity) have returned
- The temple was rebuilt and sacrifices had resumed
- What is missing?
 - The promised Davidic King
 - Both Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were not kings
 - The glory cloud had not returned to the temple *

Nehemiah (Cont)

- **Nehemiah 8:1-18**

- The people gathered before the Water Gate to hear the scribe *Ezra* (who stood on a wooden platform) read the **law of Moses**
- Nehemiah, the governor, was present
- The presentation lasted for two days
- The people then celebrated the **feast of Booths***

Nehemiah (Cont)

- **Nehemiah 9:1-35**

- Again, the people gathered, and this time, they were fasting and in sackcloth
- Ezra gives a long beautiful speech (similar to the speech of **Stephen in Acts 7**)
- In this speech Ezra traces salvation history of the Jewish people from creation, through Abraham, all the way to the Babylonian exile and the return*
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Nehemiah (Cont)

- **Nehemiah 9:36-37**

- Ezra saw a problem

- Geographically they were no longer in exile, but politically and religiously they were still in the exile
- The wealth of Judah continued to be going to the Medo-Persians in the form of taxes
- They knew that if they rebel they would again be destroyed as they had been under the Babylonians
- Thus, they were slaves in their own land
- Also, their religious exile was not over because the glory cloud had not returned*

Nehemiah (Cont)

- Going back to **Ezekiel 34:1-25** we read how God would:
 - Gather his people back together, cause them to rebuild the temple and send the glory cloud
 - God would gather his people together as a shepherd gathers his flock
- God would then place someone in the line of David over them and then the glory cloud would return
- The people of Israel had returned, rebuilt the temple and the city of Jerusalem but they were still under the Medo-Persian empire

Nehemiah (Cont)

- They had someone in the line of David in a position of authority but he was not a king (Messiah)
- They began to wonder about the faithfulness of Yahweh
- They experienced a crisis of faith
- Had God forsaken them?
- Maybe he was never going to come and the temple would remain empty forever

Nehemiah (Cont)

- Maybe he did not love them anymore and they were no longer his covenantal people
- This issue will be answered when God sends the Prophet **Malachi** to them
- But before we look at the prophet **Malachi** we will turn briefly to the prophet **Obadiah**