

JTB XI. JUDAH'S RESTORATION TO THE LAND

Scripture: 2Chronicles 36:22,23; Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
Historical Era: ca. 539-400 B.C.

Judah's Multi-stage Restoration to the Land

ca. 539 B.C. - Persia conquered Babylon and Cyrus made a decree that captured people could return to their lands (2Chronicles 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-4)

ca. 536 B.C. - Zerubbabel led the first group of 42,360 exiles (Ezra 2:64) back to Judah (Ezra 1:5-2:64) and saw the walls of Jerusalem and the city in ruins

ca. 535 B.C. - the altar and temple foundations were restored (Ezra 3)

ca. 521 B.C. - the prophets Haggai & Zechariah arose to encourage the finishing of the 2nd temple (Ezra 5:1)

ca. 516 B.C. - the 2nd temple was completed (Ezra 5-6)

ca. 479 B.C. - Esther saves her people (Esther 3-9)

ca. 458 B.C. - Ezra the Scribe leads the second group of exiles back to Judah and begins reforms (Ezra 7-8)

ca. 444-433 B.C. - Nehemiah's first governorship and the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls (Nehemiah 1-12)

ca. 430 B.C.? - ministry of Malachi

ca. 428-423 B.C. - Nehemiah's 2nd governorship (Nehemiah 13)

Problems & Principles in Judah's Restoration

(1) Things happen through those "God stirs" (Ezra 1:1,5,68)

(2) Obstacles to restoration: fear of others & red tape (Ezra 4-6).

(3) God uses men who have prepared themselves and want to be used by Him (Ezra 7:6,9,10). Ezra sought God's strength and guidance (Ezra 8:21-31)

(4) Restoration often requires separating ourselves from precious elements of our past (Ezra 9-10) in favor of what is right in God's eyes.

(5) Growth requires dedicated and optimistic leadership (Nehemiah 2:11-20), as well as people willing to work (Nehemiah 4:6). Those adversaries and obstacles that can't be ignored must be dealt with wisely (Nehemiah 2:19-20; 4:1-23; 6:1-19).

(6) A basic key to restoration is the reading and sound teaching of God's Word (Nehemiah 8:1-12) to those hungry for it (Nehemiah 9:1-3). Small group study to educate leaders is helpful (Nehemiah 8:13), as is the faithful preaching of God's Word by faithful men (Ezra 5:1,2). Restoration also requires that God's people have the courage to act on what they learn from the Word (Ezra 9-10; Nehemiah 8:13-18; 13:1-3).

(7) Although the truths of God may be "rediscovered" by some (Nehemiah 8-9) who will vow to continue in the truth (Nehemiah 8:38-10:39), still there will be some who quickly turn back to error (Nehemiah 13:4-24).

(8) Each of God's people must be ready to be used by God at the time and place where they find themselves (Esther 4:14).

With Judah's return to the Promised Land during the Persian era, the last of the canonical prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) speak to Judah by 400 B.C. Then, for 400 years (400 B.C. to John the baptizer, ca. 5 B.C.) Judah would have only the OT Scriptures as they came to be locked in a life-or-death struggle with Greek philosophy and culture. During this period of "silence," Judaism divided into "denominations" and gravitated toward a very materialistic, earthly-minded Messianic hope.

God was continuing in His faithfulness to bring Messiah from the tribe of Judah and David's family (Gen. 49:10; 2Sam. 7:8-16). Following punishment on the rebellious nation and ill-fated earthly monarchy, God restored Judah to their land, where they would wait another four centuries until the proper time came for the awaited appearance of the one promised in Genesis 3:15.

Charles E. McCoy
4/15/2006