



Redemption from Babylon Bondage!

Prophets of the Return to Jerusalem

Haggai 520-518 BC Ezra 5-6

Rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem (Reign of Darius I)

Zechariah 520-510 BC Ezra 5-6

Rebuilding and Dedication of the Temple (Reign of Darius I)

Malachi 420-397 BC Nehemiah 13

Second Reformation by Nehemiah (Reign of Artaxerxes I)

The prophet Jeremiah foretold the captivity of Judah and its release, specifying the number of years the Jews would be subject to Babylon.

Jeremiah 25:8-12, *“Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Because you have not heard My words, ⁹ behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,’ says the Lord, ‘and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations. ¹⁰ Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. ¹¹ And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹² ‘Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,’ says the Lord; ‘and I will make it a perpetual desolation.*

Jeremiah 29:10-14, *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.*

Over a hundred years before Jeremiah, the prophet Isaiah spoke of Judah’s return from Babylon to the land of Canaan. The amazing thing about Isaiah’s prophecy is that he even names “Cyrus” as the “servant” God would employ to bring about the return of His people to the land of Canaan:

Isaiah 44:26-45:1, *Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' And I will raise up her waste places; ²⁷ Who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers'; 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:*

During the days of their exile in Babylon, godly Jews had a deep sense of loss and a strong desire to return to Jerusalem and to the temple, where they could worship the God of their fathers.

Can you imagine the joy and elation the Jews in Babylon experienced when they heard the words of this decree?

Ezra 1:1-4, *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.*

What an exciting moment in Israel's history this must have been. **Can you imagine the sense of eager anticipation these returning exiles must have felt?**

Adam and Eve were given a place of blessing, in the garden. Had they obeyed God, they could have lived there forever, enjoying His presence. But they failed, bringing about sin and separation.

Then, God wiped the slate clean at the flood, and Noah and his family started fresh.

But Noah and his descendants failed as well.

Then came the tower of Babel and the confusion of languages, another judgment from God (soon to be followed by the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah).

But then God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham, promising to bless the whole earth through Abraham by giving him a land, a seed, and the promise of His blessings.

It wasn't long before Abraham and his descendants made a mess of things, and God had to sequester His people in Egypt, where they would remain separate and where they would grow into a mighty nation.

Those who left Egypt with Moses failed many times and were not allowed to enter the promised land, so a second generation was raised up to possess the land under the leadership of men like Joshua and Caleb.

But the Book of Judges informs us that this generation would pass, and another ungodly generation would follow, caught up in a deadly cycle of sin and judgment.

What Israel needed was a king, a leader. Surely that would do it:

Judges 17:6, *In those days Israel had no king. Each man did what he considered to be right.*

Hopes were running high when Israel's first king Saul was anointed. But it did not take very long to see that Saul was a failure who led the nation astray.

Our hopes are rekindled, however, when we read that God designated David as Saul's replacement. Now here is a man after God's own heart. Surely the good times are here at last for Israel. But David is a sinner as well, and so is his son, Solomon.

Because of Solomon's sin, his kingdom is divided, and before long the people of God will be spewed out of the Promised Land of Canaan.

The northern kingdom is scattered by the Assyrians, and the southern kingdom of Judah is carried off as slaves to Babylon.

Now, at last, the time has come for the Babylonian exiles to be released to return to the Promised Land.

Do we not feel a renewed sense of hope and optimism?

Surely the Jews will get it right this time.

The lessons of history should serve to keep them from repeating the same sins.

We will get only a few years into the return and restoration account when the people of God fail again.

By and large, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are not a "success story" to be imitated by men today.

They are yet another repetition of the failures of God's people, from the beginning of human history.

The lessons we learn are often negative, but they have the positive effect of turning our attention and our trust toward God, and not toward ourselves.

Ezra may not be a fascinating account, but it is one we desperately need to hear and to heed.

The Decree of Cyrus:

The First Wave of Exiles Return to Jerusalem

Ezra 1:1—4:24

The Assyrians chose to scatter their enemies, hoping to sever them from all their ties to their land and their religion.

The Babylonians made captives of their enemies, using them as slaves (as we see with Daniel and his friends).

God then fulfilled His promise to bring judgment upon the Babylonians (Isaiah 13; Jeremiah 25:12; chapters 50-51).

The Persians who defeated them dealt with their prisoners of war in a very different way. They sought to instil gratitude in their captives, rather than hatred.

They sent their captives back to their homeland and helped them re-establish their worship.

It was that God orchestrated the events of human history in such a way as to fulfil His promise, made nearly 200 years beforehand, that a man named Cyrus would act as His servant, bringing the Jewish exiles in Babylon back to the Promised Land. (**Isaiah 44:26–45:1**).

It is interesting that our author does not choose to emphasize the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah, but rather the prophecy of Jeremiah!

We may safely assume that the prophecies of Jeremiah that were fulfilled by Cyrus would be those of **Jeremiah 25:12 and 29:10-14**.

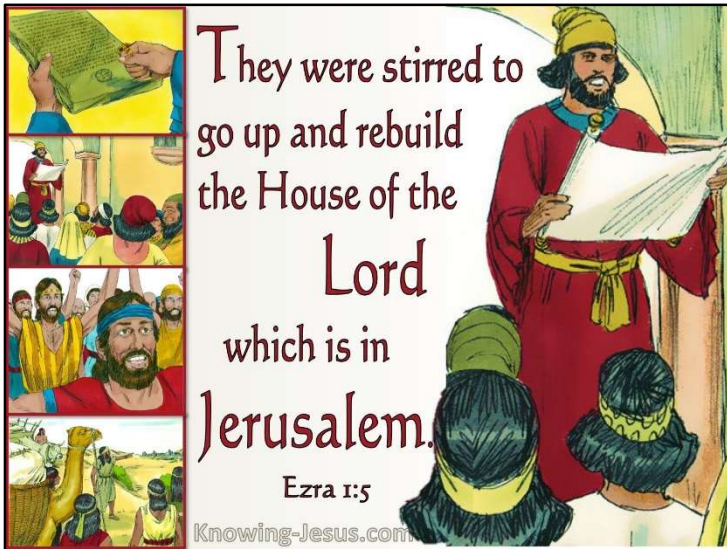
There is yet another prophecy of Jeremiah that was fulfilled by the decree of Cyrus.

Jeremiah 27:21-22, *yes, thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem: ²² ‘They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall be until the day that I visit them,’ says the Lord. ‘Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.’ ”*

Cyrus included a command to return the vessels removed from the temple in Jerusalem, which had been kept in Babylon.

God who moved in the heart of Cyrus (1:1) and in the hearts of the **50,000**.

Ezra 1:5, *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.*



God was sovereignly working to fulfil His purposes and promises regarding His people.

In **Ezra 2**, we are provided with a list of those “whose spirits God stirred”, prompting them to go back to their homeland.

The trip was approximately 800 miles, taking several months.

There were grave dangers involved in such a journey, especially for a group carrying many valuable objects with them.

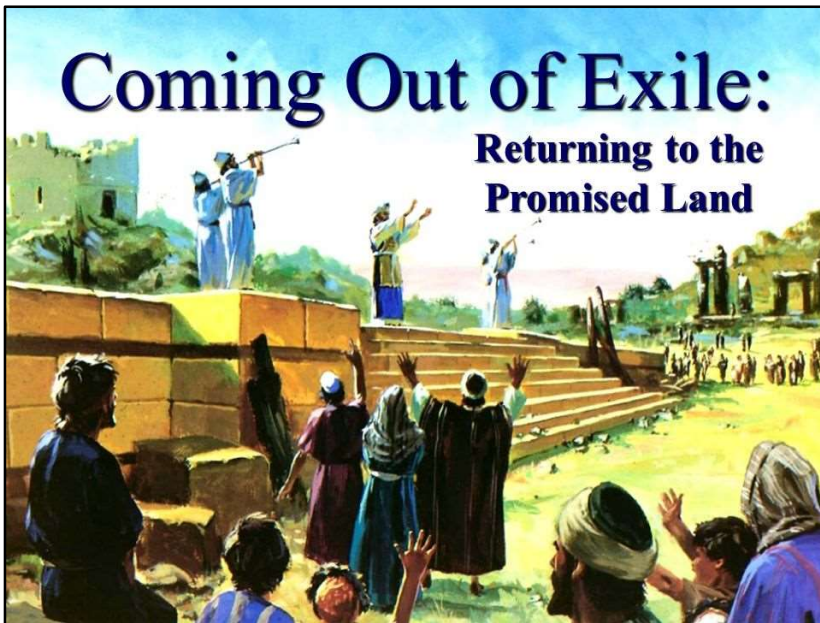
Life was not so bad in Persia, and many of the Jews seem to have been content to remain there, as did Esther and Mordecai (the Book of Esther).

The Exiles Return

It must have felt like a dream. After so many years in a foreign land, the Jewish people could go home. Their release from captivity in Babylon, now part of the Medo-Persian Empire, should not have come as too much of a surprise; after all, it had been predicted in a song.

Psalms 126:1–6, *When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream. ² Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” ³ The Lord has done great things for us, And we are glad. ⁴ Bring back our captivity, O Lord, As the streams in the South. ⁵ Those who sow in*

tears Shall reap in joy. ⁶He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him.



The return of the exiles to Judah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem were carried out in three waves.

The first return was around 538 B.C. under the leadership of a man named Zerubbabel. It was during this period that the people of Israel built the second Temple.

About eighty years later, a second group, under the priestly leadership of Ezra, returned to the land. Spiritual and religious reformation occurred at that time.

Finally, under the leadership of Nehemiah, a king's cupbearer, many more returned. Nehemiah's focus was to repair Jerusalem's walls and gates.

The First Return: Fearless Faith

God stirred Cyrus, king of Persia, to proclaim in writing that all captives of Israel could return home (Ezra 1:1–2). The prophet Daniel may have shown him Jeremiah's prophecy about Babylon's fall and Israel's seventy-year captivity.

He also could have shown the king's name in the book of Isaiah as the one prophesied to allow Jerusalem and the Temple to be rebuilt.

Zerubbabel was to lead the first **aliyah**.

The Hebrew word *aliyah* means "ascension" or "going up." Today it commonly refers to the act of Jewish people returning to live in Israel from other parts of the world.

The call of Cyrus, king of Persia, has been used as an adage for Aliyah.

2 Chronicles 36:23, *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. Who is among you of all His people? May the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!*

Zerubbabel was a descendant of King David and an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

His name probably means “seed of Babylon” but his Persian name was Sheshbazzar, suggesting he may have been in the service of the king (Ezra 1:8—5:14). Yet Zerubbabel left all the comforts of Babylon behind to take on this challenge.

Scripture states that **42,360** people returned to Judah, accompanied by **7,337** slaves and **200** singers (Ezra 2:64–65), including members of the ten northern tribes taken into captivity by Assyria in 722 B.C. (Ezra 2:70). Still, they were only a small remnant.

Why wouldn't the opportunity to return to the Promised Land cause a massive exodus from Babylon?

Because the Jewish people were not slaves in Babylon but were full and active members of Babylonian society.

Many prospered. It is easy to imagine that many second and third generation Jewish Babylonians had no interest in leaving.

Jeremiah 29:4-7, *Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. ⁶Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. ⁷And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.*

- They have built home,
- They have married,
- They have started business,
- They have flourished.

With the exception of the few, most of the Israelites born in captivity probably had lost the love for the homeland. Perhaps their desire to fit in caused many to discard God's Word.

Nevertheless, there were men and women like Zerubbabel who turned their backs on the comforts of a pagan world and turned their faces toward the God of Israel and the land He had promised would be theirs forever.

An analogous situation exists today among Christians.

Many second and third-generation believers live comfortably in their spiritual complacency. They are still “captives” to a God-hostile world.

A sure way to break free is to focus all our devotion on Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith.

At Jerusalem the first order of business was to rebuild the altar of the Lord and re-establish sacrifices.

Also, the Temple was to be rebuilt with donations of material and money (Ezra 3:1–7).

The primary lesson for the new arrivals was to put the Lord first in all things.

Then opposition from outside, together with the selfish interests of some from within the remnant, caused the work on the Temple to stop for about sixteen years.

Rebuked and encouraged by the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the Jewish people resumed the Temple project (**Ezra 5—6**).

Christ’s enemies always seek to thwart God’s work. Nevertheless, God’s promise is clear.

Proverbs 21:30, *“There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the LORD”*

Most of the returnees rejoiced to see the finished Temple. But some of the older folks wept when they compared the humble structure with the magnificence of the first Temple. To them it was simply too inferior.

Haggai 2:3, *‘Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?’*

Zechariah 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.”*

Even today people are quick to judge the quality of a work of God by its size and grandeur. Yet Scripture admonishes us not to despise the day of small things (**Zechariah 4:10**).

Whether large or small, God’s work is accomplished “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (**Zechariah 4:6**).

The Second Return: Spiritual Shake-Up

A priest had a burden. He wanted to teach God's laws and regulations to the people already in Jerusalem (Ezra 7:10).

With letters from a new Persian king, Artaxerxes, Ezra the priest and scribe led a second expedition back to the Promised Land.

Ezra was a man with credentials. Scripture calls him with wonderful accolades.

Ezra 7:6, 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.

Ezra 7:11-12, *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.*

He had a profound love for God's Word, deplored sin, and trusted God every step of his life. He exemplified the principle of fear of God.

Ecclesiastes 12:13, *"Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."*

The king's commission invited all the Jewish people who so wished to accompany Ezra.

The male registry showed that about **1,754** or fewer responded. As Ezra examined the list, he noticed that members of a special group were missing. **There were no Levites.**

Although the Levites were men with many privileges associated with Temple service, not one chose to go.

Ezra probably exerted his priestly muscle and sent a delegation to find volunteers (**Ezra 8:15–20**).

It is a sad situation when people fail to use their God-given abilities for His glory.

As believers, we should be active and willing to do God's will.

Luke 12:48, *But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

Unfortunately, there was trouble in Jerusalem. Many had violated the law concerning mixed marriages.

Deuteronomy 7:3–4, *Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. ⁴For 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.*

Priests, Levites, princes, and rulers were some of the worst offenders. This sin was serious because it encouraged idolatry. It also broke down the separation that God had designed for Israel as a unique people (**Ezra 9:1–2**).

Full of grief, Ezra threw himself on the ground in front of the Temple entrance. Many joined him in his cry to God for mercy and forgiveness.

Finally, under a heavy rain, hearts came under conviction. Confession was made, and action was taken to put away sin.

With the exception of a few, the offenders separated themselves from the heathen people of the land and their own pagan wives (Ezra 10).

Many of the marital problems believers have today could be avoided if we obeyed God’s command.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18, *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.” ¹⁷Therefore “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.”*

The Third Return:

Singleness of Purpose

A cupbearer in the Persian summer court at Shushan was sad. Nehemiah had received bad news. Jerusalem’s walls and gates were still in ruins. Strengthened by prayer, he spoke to the king and, in **445 B.C.**, was granted permission to go to Judah (**Nehemiah 2:5–8**).

It was Nehemiah, during this Persian period of Israel’s history, who opened the door for more Jews exiled in heathen countries to return to the Promised Land.

Nehemiah 5:17, *And at my table were one hundred and fifty Jews and rulers, besides those who came to us from the nations around us.*

The name Nehemiah means “*God consoles.*”



Comfort in the name of the Lord was exactly what Nehemiah determined to offer his fellow countrymen. He was willing to leave a position of wealth, power, and influence to share in the hardships of his people.

Scripture reveals that Nehemiah knew his God.

Nehemiah 1:5, *And I said: “I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments,*

While at Jerusalem, he was challenged by enemies from without as well as from within.

Again, as in the days of Zerubbabel, God’s enemies were active. Nevertheless, the work continued under Nehemiah’s tenacious leadership. In only fifty-two days, the walls were restored.

Nehemiah 6:15, *So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days.*

With the help of Ezra and, later, the prophet Malachi, Nehemiah encouraged spiritual reforms. He enforced the separation law concerning mixed marriages, as well as the Sabbath observance. He kept the sanctuary free from infidels and arranged support for the Temple services.

Nehemiah had singleness of purpose. He sought divine blessings and gave thanks to God for all his successes.

The significance of these three returns can be appreciated in the light of three unique men:

Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

It is not the position or office but the condition of the heart that God seeks and uses for His purposes.

God’s enemies could not stop His work. In spite of the opposition, the Temple and walls of Jerusalem were restored.

Supported by the ministries of three great prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the leaders of the returns set a practical pattern for courage, conviction, and commitment.

Romans 15:4, *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

The prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah did the job. The rebuilding of the temple resumed, with the encouragement and support of the prophets.

There was a great celebration as the temple was joyfully dedicated, and as they observed Passover.

Ezra 6:14-18, *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 ^[e]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.*

Ezra 6:22, *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.*

Once again in Ezra, we come upon a meticulous listing of those exiles who returned to their homeland, this time with Ezra, some 80 years after the first wave of exiles returned with Zerubbabel.

The first wave of exiles numbered around 50,000.

The second wave was probably no more than 5,000 strong, counting women and children.

For seventy years, the southern kingdom of Judah has been in bondage to Babylon and then to Persia. The godly saints have yearned to return to the land of promise (Psalm 137), and it has happened at last.

What should we learn from this return?

We should certainly learn about man.

When given the opportunity to return to the land of promise and of blessing, a mere 50,000 Jews chose to do so.

The Book of Esther, which takes place during the **60-year** period between Ezra 6 and 7, deals with many of the Jews who chose to stay behind.

This is not particularly encouraging.

But even those devout people who did return were “prone to wander.”

When Ezra returns to Jerusalem, he soon learns that, beginning with some of the leaders, a number of the Jews have intermarried with the peoples of the land.

If one were to dare to speak of some of the events of Ezra as a revival, we must also acknowledge that revival is short-lived indeed!

The initial enthusiasm of those who first returned with Zerubbabel quickly faded to the point that Haggai and Zechariah had to prompt the people to return to the task of rebuilding the temple (rather than attending to their own homes).

We can also see that the next generation quickly fell into the sins of their forefathers.

The Jews began to intermarry with the same people who sought to hinder the building of the temple!

They became sons-in-law to their enemies, those with whom they formerly would not even share the building of the temple. If we expected the Jews of the return to be different from their forefathers, we are sadly disappointed.

We can certainly learn much about God. The Book of Ezra portrays a God Who is sovereign and Who is faithful to His covenant promises, in spite of the failures and faithlessness of men.

When God called them to come back only three leaders who led the people back to Jerusalem.
Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

Three prophets were willing to come to be the voice of the Lord for the people.

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Jesus Commands, “Follow Me”

“Follow me!” This is the command of Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. In the Greek, it is *akolouthetô moi*.

This command appears in the gospels **70 times**.

We must not define “Follow me” by our own definition.

We must use Christ’s. “Follow me” simply means “Hear and do the will of the one who goes ahead of us.”

We are called to follow Jesus in his footsteps as He goes before us in the straight and narrow way of His Lordship.

In this world, we are pilgrims, sojourning to our heavenly city. Our citizenship is in heaven (**Philippians 3:20**).

“Follow Me!”

Jesus used those two simple words when He called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to be His disciples.

Matthew 4:19-20, *Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”* ²⁰ *They immediately left their nets and followed Him.*



The words mean immediate detachment from personal interests and attachment to Christ. Implied in the call of Jesus was a turning from sin to Him to be saved.

Even after Jesus had risen from the dead, while the disciples were on a fishing trip, Jesus told Peter, “Follow Me!” (**John 21:19**).

“Follow Me!” is a call to obedience.

It is no mere invitation, but an imperative command.

Those who heard the words of Jesus immediately left everything to follow Him. It was a costly decision for James and John because “they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him”

There is no genuine Christianity without obedience to Christ. The rich young ruler heard the call and realized that Jesus was his rightful Lord and Master, but he refused to follow Him.

The true believer enters a life of obedience to Christ.

What Does it Mean to Follow Jesus?

- It is a personal decision of saying “yes” to His invitation. He will never force us; it is not a command.

- Following Jesus means humbly submitting our entire self to Him. It means we undertake a radical change in lifestyle- just as the disciples did. We leave the old things of life behind when we recognize Jesus as Messiah and our personal Saviour.
- Following Jesus includes learning and applying his teachings through the help of the Holy Spirit:

John 10:27, *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

The early believers were so loyal to Jesus and His teachings that other people knew for certain they were His followers.

There was something distinct about the way they spoke, acted, and lived that showed others they were followers of Christ.

It's something to think about when considering our own lives.

Luke 9:23, *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*



Luke 14:25-33, *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes,*

and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— ²⁹ lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’? ³¹ Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. ³³ So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

Will you follow Jesus?

Do you hear Him speak to you now?

Ordinary men like **Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.** Left everything to follow God.

Let us learn from them!