

RESTORATION UNDER CYRUS

Quote:

“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.”

Haggai 2:6, 7

Ezra: The Book of Restoration:

Theme: “But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.” (Lamentations 3:32)

The book shows how the work of Zerubbabel (ch 1-6) complements the work of Ezra (ch 7-10):

Zerubbabel	Ezra
Decree of Cyrus - 1:1-4	Decree of Artaxerxes 7:1,11-26
Leader: Zerubbabel - 2:2	Leader: Ezra - 7:1-10
Names and Numbers of remnant - 2:3-65	Names and Numbers of company - 8:1-20
Sacred Vessels & Gifts - 1:6-11; 2:68-70	Sacred Vessels & Gifts - 7:15-22; 8:24-28
The coming to Jerusalem - 2:1; 3:1	The coming to Jerusalem - 8:32
Prophetic Ministry of Haggai and Zechariah - 5:1-2; 6:14	Intercessory ministry of Ezra - 9:1-15
Development: Temple rebuilt - 6:15-22	Development: The people rededicated - Ch 10

Four Decrees by the Ram Dynasty in Favour of Judah and Jerusalem:

1. In first year of Cyrus authorising the return of the Jews to Israel and to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1).
2. Issued by Darius in the second year of his reign enforcing the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 6:1-5).
3. In the 7th year of Artaxerxes for the restoration of the Commonwealth of Judah (Ezra 7:7, 11-26).
4. In the 20th year of Artaxerxes for the building of the city wall and the setting up of the gates of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:1). This decree commenced the 70 weeks prophecy period.

Ezra 1:1 - “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia” - See Dan 1:21 – most likely 1st year of Cyrus sole reign - after the death of Darius who had reigned co-regent with him (see Daniel 6).

“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” - See Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10. Daniel 9:1 – Daniel saw that this time was coming to pass.

Ezra 1:2 - **“God of heaven”** - see **Dan 4:17; 6:26-27**.

“given” = to give/bestow. Cyrus knew full well that to divert the course of the Euphrates that ran through Babylon was one thing, but only God could ensure that the two leaved gates were left open allowing his troops into the city (see **Daniel 5; Isa 45:1-4**).

Darius had also come to recognise the power of Yahweh - see **Dan 6:19-20, 25-28**).

“and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah” - **“Charged”** = to attend to – ie Cyrus was entrusted the duty. If Cyrus was basing this on his reading of **Isaiah 44:26-28**, he misread it. Yahweh only charged him with overseeing the laying of the foundation of the temple. This he did and no more.

Ezra 1:8 - **“Sheshbazzar”** = “Joy in affliction”. The joy that was set before him (of the return to the land) enabled him to look beyond the current affliction of captivity (Typical of Christ who endured affliction - **Heb 12:2**). Sheshbazzar is more than likely Zerubbabel for the following reasons:

- Sheshbazzar is said to have built the foundation of the temple (**Ezra 5:16** - a work assigned to Zerubbabel in **Zech 4:9**).
- Both were governors (**Ezra 5:14; Hag 1:1; 2:2**).
- Jews in Babylon often had official Babylonian names.
- Josephus seems to identify Sheshbazzar with Zerubbabel (Antiquities Book XI chapter 1 Point 3).

The Account of Josephus:

“...for he {God} stirred up the mind of Cyrus, and made him write this throughout all Asia:- ‘Thus saith Cyrus the King:- Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship; for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea.’

This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision:- “My will is that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land and build my temple.” This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was so written;..”

Josephus Antiquities of the Jews Book XI chapter 1

OPTIONAL EXTRA MARKING:

Zerubbabel and Joshua - Men of Sign (**Zech 3:8** - mgn)

These two men worked to rebuild the nation of Israel, not only organizing their return to the land, but also supervising the work of building the altar and the temple of Yahweh. Both are types of Christ:

Zerubbabel was a descendant of Jehoiachin, and a predecessor of Jesus Christ (**Matt 1:11-12**). He was a prince and ruler in Israel and a governor of the land. He represented Jesus Christ as ruler. Zerubbabel means “shoot out of Babylon” - a type of Christ who was a “root out of a dry ground” (**Isaiah 53:2; 11:1**). Probably also called Sheshbazzar (see **Ezra 1:8** + notes).

Joshua was a descendant of Aaron and held the position of High Priest. He represented the appointed priest of God. Joshua means “Yah shall save”, being the Hebrew form of Jesus. He was the son of Josedech (**Hag 1:1**) which signifies “Yahweh has cleansed”. Thus showing that Yahweh will save because he will cleanse his people.

Combined they represent the Lord Jesus Christ and King-Priest of the age to come, who is to be the restorer of Israel (**Rom 11:26**), the Governor (**Jer 30:21**) and the Branch (**Zech 6:12-13**). He will build a literal house whose splendour shall be greater than that of the former of the days of Joshua and Zerubbabel (**Hag 2:8-9; Ezek 40-48**).

Six major incidents in their lives foreshadow the work of God in Christ building His spiritual house:

Zeubbabel and Joshua	The Lord Jesus Christ
Lead the return to the land - Ezra 1-2	The call to return to God through the ministry of Jesus
The altar set up that the temple might be built around it - Ezra 3:1-6	Jesus Christ is our altar set up that the temple of the living God might be built around him - Heb 13:10
The new temple commenced - Ezra 3:8-13	The foundation of a spiritual temple has been laid through the apostles - Eph 2:20
Opposed by adversaries who desired to help claiming they served the same God - Ezra 4; see 2 Kg 17:28-34	Opposed by the adversary who would claim to worship the same God, but had corrupted His way - 2 Thes 2:1-10
The people were exhorted by the prophets to continue to work - Ezra 5:1; 6:14	The Word continually encourages those who are to make up Temple of the living God if they hear it.
The Temple completed - Ezra 6:15-22	The ultimate completion of the spiritual temple - 1 Pet 2:5-12