

**Outline #1** Making Sense of History:  
Zerubbabel and Ezra

To You, O LORD, Psalm 25:1-2, 4-5

**1. The 1st Return of Jewish exiles with Zerubbabel 538 BC**

- a) What important revelation was given by the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah? Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10
- b) How did the prophet Daniel respond to Jeremiah's prophecy? Daniel 9:1-3
- c) Why is it important to trust the word of the LORD given through His prophets?
- d) Who was Zerubbabel? Why did he lead this first group of exiles back to Jerusalem from Babylon?
- e) What words of Scripture encourage us to remain confident in God's promises even when their fulfillment doesn't happen according to our expectations? e.g. 2 Peter 3:9-13, Psalm 27:13-14

**2. Historical context— Ezra 4:1-7**

- a) Kings of Persia
  - i) Cyrus II "the Great"—559-530 BC (Isaiah 45:1): issued a decree in 538 BC. (Ezra 4:3)
  - ii) Cambyses II—530-522 BC. Not mentioned in text
  - iii) Darius I—522-486 BC. (Ezra 4:5)
  - iv) Xerxes I—485-465 BC. (Ezra 4:6 as Ahasuerus, also in Esther 1:1). Story of Queen Esther.
  - v) Artaxerxes I—465-424 BC. (Ezra 4:7)
- b) Why does the Bible contain so much history?

**3. The 2nd Return of Jewish Exiles with Ezra—458/457 BC**

- a) Ezra 7:1-10 What can we learn about Ezra from this account?
- b) Ezra 7:11-28a Why do you think the Holy Spirit inspired Ezra to record the entire decree of Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in his book? (see Daniel 9:25)
- c) How did Ezra respond when he received this decree from King Artaxerxes? Ezra 7:28b
- d) Ezra 8:1-14 lists about 1,500 men who left Babylon. Why do you think so few returned with Ezra?
- e) What lessons can we learn from this story for our lives today?
  - i) God can use pagans to accomplish His work.
  - ii) We can become too comfortable in exile.

**4. Preparing for Service**

- a) Ezra 7:6,10 What important preparation had Ezra made that enabled the LORD to use him in such a significant way?
- b) Think of other individuals who made careful preparation in order to be useful in the service of God. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. (Dan. 1:8,11-14); Moses (Acts 7:22); Jesus (Luke 2:52)
- c) What are some ways you are making personal preparation in order to be useful in the service of God?

