Outline #1 Making Sense of History: Zerubbabel and Ezra

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?