

We will now begin the first lecture on the Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah. /The Book of Ezra was written by Ezra. /Ezra was recorded between 456 BC and 444 BC. /In verses 1-3 of today's passage, /the king of Persia made a proclamation that the people of Judah return to Jerusalem.

/The first year of Cyrus king of Persia was 538 BC. /However, this is only an estimated year. /This was the year of Cyrus king of Persia. /This was the time when he conquered Babylon and began his reign over the region.

/The word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled. /Jeremiah 25:11 says, /"This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, /and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years."

/Jeremiah 29:10 says, /"This is what the LORD says: /"When seventy years are completed for Babylon, /I will come to you /and fulfill my gracious promise /to bring you back to this place."

/The Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia so that his prophecy would be fulfilled. /Thus, Cyrus made a proclamation to send the people of Judah who were taken into exile back to their land. /Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled.

/The people of Judah completed seventy years of captivity. /God looked after them and allowed them to return to their homeland. /The prophecy that was spoken seventy years earlier was fulfilled.

/God let the people of Judah be taken captive by foreign nations when they sinned. /When they repented and cried out to God, they were allowed to return to their homeland. /This is the same today.

/When believers sin, God punishes them. /When believers repent and become upright, God gives them liberty, freedom, and spiritual blessings. /Seventy years earlier, King Nebuchadnezzar obstinately took the people of Judah captive.

/Seventy years later, King Cyrus was moved by God. /Thus, he sent the people of Judah back to their land. /Cyrus even sent back articles of the temple. /God controlled the heart of the king.

/Proverbs 21:1 says, /"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; /he directs it like a watercourse /wherever he pleases." /This is the same today. /The powers of the devil are obstinate and wicked like King Nebuchadnezzar.

/The powers attempt to take believers captive and make them its slaves. /However, when believers pray and persevere, /God will move the obstinate powers when its time is over, /and God will help believers.

/God kills those who must be killed. /God raises up those who must be raised up. /God

moves those who must be moved. /God liberates his people and gives them freedom according to his will.

/Then when the time comes, God leads his people to blessings. /King Cyrus, who received inspiration from God, /gave thanks for God's grace in giving him all the kingdoms of the earth.

/Second, Cyrus made a proclamation so that he could immediately obey God's command to build a temple in Jerusalem. /Third, Cyrus put God's command into action by making sacrifices of himself and his kingdom.

/If the Israelites returned to their land, Cyrus would lose laborers. /If the people of Judah built the temple at Jerusalem and served God, they would not serve the gods of Cyrus' kingdom.

/King Cyrus knew that his dignity and his kingdom's prestige would fall, /but he made the sacrifice and obeyed God's command. /King Cyrus knew that the Lord God was the true God. /Thus, he blessed God's people.

/Then the king commanded the people to go to Jerusalem and build the temple. /The king of Babylon made all his captives slaves, and he burned down the temple. /However, King Cyrus sent the people of Judah back to Jerusalem and told them to build the temple.

/This was something that was completely unimaginable by man. /This happened by the power of God. /When the people of Judah were freed from Babylon, they said they thought they were dreaming.

/Psalm 126:1 says, /"When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. /Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy."

/In verses 4-6 of today's passage, /the foreign peoples helped the people of Judah. /When the people of Judah returned to Jerusalem, /the people helped them with articles of silver and gold, and goods and livestock /wherever they were.

/Cyrus also told the people to give gifts for the temple of God. /These were people who once destroyed and burned the temple. /Yet, now, these people gave gifts and offerings for the construction of the temple.

/They also gave gifts to God. /This was God's miracle. /This was like the riddle that Samson told the Philistines. /Judges 14:14 says, /"Out of the eater, something to eat; /out of the strong, something sweet."

/Something to eat and something sweet /came from an obstinate foreign king, who was a strong eater like a lion. /That is why we must not be disheartened but pray /when others persecute and mistreat us. /We will gain something sweet and great rewards when we

persevere until the end.

/In verse 5, it says that the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites were moved to go to Jerusalem. /They were moved to go and build the temple in Jerusalem.

/At that time, they had settled in Babylon. /They were also extremely familiar with Babylonian customs. /They lived physically peaceful lives in Babylon. /It would be difficult for them to go to the desolate Jerusalem and construct the temple.

/It was extremely difficult for the people to establish new lives. /It would take them at least four months to get to Jerusalem. /There would be the danger of attacks on their way to Jerusalem.

/There would be thieves and many obstacles. /However, they did not think about these difficulties. /They were moved by God and they immediately made a courageous decision with faith.

/They were like the Israelites during Moses' time. /The Israelites who were enslaved in Egypt went out to go to the land of Canaan, a land they had never been to. /Their faith was like the following.

/They had faith that looked upon God's promise with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. /They had faith that looked upon God's temple. /They had faith that looked upon spiritual freedom and liberation, rather than physical peace.

/They had faith to follow the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. /When they stood in faith, /their neighbors began to help them. /Their neighbors gave them articles of silver and gold and other goods.

/Their neighbors assisted them with livestock and valuable gifts. /They also gave offerings to God. /This shows that we do not need the help of others to stand in faith.

/When we obey God's commands and stand in faith, /God will provide us with the things we need. /Haggai 2:8 says, /"The silver is mine /and the gold is mine," /declares the LORD Almighty."

/When people rose up to build the temple, /God gave them the things they needed through others. /A similar thing happened to Jesus. /When Jesus' family fled to Egypt right after He was born, /God sent the three wise men /to give them gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

/When Jesus entered the Jerusalem temple, /a man gave his donkey to the Lord, a donkey that no one had ever sat on. /When Jesus wanted to hold the Lord's Supper, /John Mark offered his attic. /A similar thing happened to Elijah as well.

/God sent Elijah to the Kerith Ravine for God's salvation movement. /God gave Elijah bread and meat through ravens.

/Then God led Elijah to the home of the widow at Zarephath /and helped him avoid famine and difficulties. /Thus, we don't stop doing God's work because we don't have material goods. /We don't do God's work because we don't have faith to obey and rise up.

/In verses 7-11, /King Cyrus sends articles of the temple to Jerusalem. /Seventy years earlier, /King Nebuchadnezzar took all the holy articles from God's temple in Jerusalem. /The king kept all the articles in the temple of his god.

/Now, King Cyrus made a proclamation. /He said that all the articles were to be returned to Jerusalem. /In verse 8, Cyrus had the articles brought out by Mithredath the treasurer. / There were 5,400 articles that were brought out.

/The articles were taken to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah to take back to Jerusalem. /"Sheshbazzar" was the Babylonian name for "Zerubbabel." /King Cyrus sent all the articles of the temple that were stored /back to those who rose up to construct the temple.

/God sent Babylon to the Israelites when they sinned, /and God disciplines believers through foreign nations when they sin. /However, when believers repent as they are disciplined, /God protects them /and restores them to their original state when the time comes.

/When the people rose up to construct the temple, /God saved his chosen people with his power. /Today, when pastors establish churches, people who once served idols repent and return to Jesus.

/We will continue with chapter 2. /Chapter 2 is about the first return of the exiles. /In verses 1-2 /are the names of the leaders who first returned to their homeland. /The chapter lists the people who first returned from Babylon.

/The representatives were Zerubbabel and Jeshua. /The people returned to Babylon at three different times. /The first return was in 538 BC. /They returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. /The second return /was in 457 BC. /They returned under the leadership of Ezra.

/The third return /was in 444 BC. /They returned under the leadership of Nehemiah. /The names of the exiles who returned in the first return are recorded in chapter 2. /The names of those who returned in the second return are recorded in chapters 7 and 8.

/Zerubbabel was a political leader who led the people during the first return. /Jeshua was a high priest and a religious leader. /Jeshua is also known as Joshua. /Nehemiah in chapter 2 /is not Nehemiah who led the people out in the third return.

/The names are the same but they were two different people. /This is because the first return of the exiles took place in 538 BC, /and the third return took place in 444 BC. /There was a 94-year gap.

/Mordecai in chapter 2 is also not Mordecai in the time of Esther. /They are two different people. /The first return of the exiles took place in 538 BC, /but the reign of King Ahasuerus, or King Xerxes, in the time of Esther was in 485 BC. /There was a 53-year gap.

/In verses 3-35 /are the names of the men of the people of Israel and the numbers of their descendants who returned. /The Israelites who were taken into exile returned with their families. /Their family names are recorded and there were 33 families.

/Even though the Israelites were taken captive to Babylon, /they lived with the people from their towns /and with their families. /Families were known by the names of their forefathers. /They were also known by the names of their towns of residence.

/When the people returned to their homeland, they returned with their families. /The numbers of family members were recorded. /Verse 35 says that the descendants of Senaah had the largest number of exiles who returned home. /There were 3,630 descendants of Senaah who returned.

/Verse 24 says that the descendants of Azmaveth /had the smallest number of exiles who returned home. /Forty-two descendants of Azmaveth returned. /Just as the Israelites recorded the number of those who left Babylon, /the salvation movement of the New Testament church /also has a similar system.

/This is written in Revelation 7:5-8. /It says that there will be twelve tribes of saved believers. /These twelve tribes are different from the twelve tribes in the Old Testament. /This is because Jacob's fourth son, Judah, and his tribe is listed first.

/The tribe of Dan is missing from the list, and it lists the tribe of Manasseh. /In the Old Testament times, there were physical tribes and families. /In the New Testament times, there are sects and denominations according to how believers understand the truth.

/Each believer is shaped by the truth that they recognize according to each system. /Believers' characters are formed by the truth that they recognize. /Believers who were shaped in character will receive appropriate rewards in heaven.

/People in the world live according to the things they understand. /The characters of believers' faith are formed by the truth that they understand. /They go to heaven with the spiritual characters that they live by in this world.

/Thus, those who understand the Bible gather together. /Then they become one family and one tribe. /That is why the truth of the Bible must be properly taught. /We must also

correctly understand and form our characters by God's word.

/Verses 36-63 /list the names of the priests, /the Levites, /and temple servants who returned. /In the passage, four families of the priests returned. /There was a total of 4,289 people. /They flourished.

/Priests are people who commit to doing God's work. /Hence, they may have flourished because of this. /It is the same in the New Testament period. /Believers who serve and do God's work will flourish and receive blessings.

/However, in verse 40, it says that nine families of the Levites returned. /There were nine families, but only 341 people returned. /The Levites were those who served in the temple.

/Because there was no temple in Babylon, /they did not serve in the temple for seventy years. /They were not able to carry out their calling and duties in the temple. /Therefore, they did not flourish, /and a small number of them returned.

/Even though there was no temple in Babylon, /the priests taught the people of Judah how to serve God. /The priests continued their duties before the people.

/Thus, the people's hearts looked upon the temple of Jerusalem. /The people wanted to give offerings to God. /However, because there was no temple, /the Levites were not able to fulfill their duties and serve.

/Thus, the Levites did not flourish, /and hence, a small number of them returned. /Those who fulfill their duties and responsibilities before God will flourish. /Today, those who fulfill their duties in the church will receive blessings.

/Those who neglect their duties like the Levites /and do not work hard /will grow weak in the work of life. /They will not be able to lead other people to church.

/The Nethinim are listed in verse 43, /and there were 35 families. /The Nethinim were originally foreign people. /They were Gibeonites. /They heard that the Israelites conquered Jericho and the city of Ai /when the Israelites conquered Canaan.

/Thus, the Gibeonites were afraid of the Israelites. /They deceived Joshua and made an alliance with the Israelites. /Later, their lies were revealed.

/Hence, they became woodcutters for the Israelite assembly and for the altar of the Lord. /They also became water carriers.

/The Gibeonites were foreigners, and yet, /because they served the temple, /they were included in the list of the Israelites. /This taught that /even foreigners /could participate in God's work and receive salvation.

/Verse 55 /lists the ten families of the descendants of the servants of Solomon. /The

Nethinim were included here, which totaled 392 people. /Many of the Nethinim and descendants of the servants of Solomon did not return.

/The Nethinim served in God's temple, /but they were not able to flourish because they were not able to serve /because there was no temple in Babylon. /Many of the Nethinim did not return. /Many of the descendants of the servants of Solomon did not return.

/The servants of Solomon were proud and had a sense of superiority that they were servants of the king in the past. /Hence, they did not flourish /and only a small number of them returned.

/Verse 59 /lists the people who could not show that their families were from Israel. /Here there are three normal families, /and there are three families of the priests. /The leaders considered these people unclean.

/The priests were considered unclean /until there was a priest ministering with the Urim and Thummim. /Therefore, they were not allowed to eat any of the most sacred food. /The "governor" in verse 63 refers to Zerubbabel the governor.

/The Urim and Thummim were objects that the priests used to find God's will. /The most sacred food were offerings that the God's people gave to God. /The priests ate the most sacred food after the people offered it to God.

/If we do not have full understanding about the truth through today's passages, it means that God considers us detestable. /Whoever stands between the truth and falsehood must not participate in God's work. /Therefore, we must stand firm on God's word.

/In verses 64-67 /are the records of the servants and their livestock. /When the Israelites returned from Babylon, they took with them many servants and livestock. /The whole company numbered 42,360.

/This was the number of those who registered for the first return. /However, the actual number of those who returned were 29,818. /It was the number of families listed in verses 3-63. /There was a difference of 12,542.

/Among those who registered to return from Babylon /were those who could not return because of different reasons. /Some probably did not return because it would take four months to return to Jerusalem.

/Some probably did not return because it would be difficult to move back to Jerusalem. /They were moved by the Holy Spirit to return to Jerusalem, /but some backed out because of physical thoughts.

/These people chased after temporary physical peace. /Therefore, they were not able to participate in spiritual liberation and freedom and the movement of life. /That is why we must not destroy the inspiration of the Holy Spirit when he moves us.

/We must immediately obey God's command. /We must go to the place God promised us, /and we must participate in the spiritual movement of life.

/In verses 68-70, /the exiles who returned gave offerings for the construction of the temple. /From among those who returned from Babylon, /the leaders focused on building the temple before building their own homes.

/In verse 69, the leaders offered 61,000 drachmas of gold. /They also offered 5,000 minas of silver. /They also offered 100 priestly garments. /The leaders gave to God according to their abilities. /They gave with joyful hearts.

/We too must give with joyful hearts when we give offerings to God. /We must have the mindset of first building the temple /before we build our own homes. /We must give according to our abilities when we give offerings.

/It is noble to wholeheartedly give to God what he allowed us to have. /Those who are financially powerful must give a lot. /Those who have little can give little. /God said that he demands much from those who have been given much.

/Those who have been given much from God but give less sin by disobeying God. /Luke 12:48. /All the people of Israel returned. /When the people returned, they settled in the towns of their forefathers.

/The majority of those who returned from Babylon were those who were born in Babylon. /They returned to the land of their forefathers for the first time. /Yet, these people did not complain, /and they resided in the land of their forefathers.

/Here we will conclude the first lecture on Ezra and Nehemiah. /Thank you.