

The Big Picture

- Ezra 1-6 covers the period of the initial return under Cyrus to the completion of the Temple 539 B.C. to 515 B.C.
- Ezra 7-Nehemiah 13 cover the period beginning with Ezra's return from exile 458 B.C. and extends to 430 B.C.

God provides the opportunity, motivation and means to accomplish His purpose. 1:2-11

- The purpose: Rebuild the Temple
- The opportunity-God moved on the heart of a pagan king, Cyrus, to issue the decree allowing for the return.
- The motivation
 - the Spirit of God v.5
 - Return of the Temple vessels

God provides the opportunity, motivation and means to accomplish His purpose. 1:2-11

- The means

- Leaders v.5

- Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. This would be the Chaldee name of Zerubbabel. (Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 3) Zerubbabel was a descendant of David through Solomon 1 Chronicles 3:10-19; Matthew 1:12
 - The heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin
 - Priests
 - Levites

God provides the opportunity, motivation and means to accomplish His purpose. 1:2-11

- The means (cont)

- Finances v.6
 - Travel provision v.6

- Note the stewardship and sense of responsibility in the accounting of the Temple vessels entrusted to Sheshbazzar (Zerubbabel) vs.9-11

Those who returned

- Men of the people of Judah
- The priests
- The Levites
- The Temple Servants and Sons of Solomon's servants
- Those who could not prove their descent
- Priests who could not document their genealogy
 - Excluded from practice and privileges of the priesthood
 - Required confirmation by the high priest by the Urim and Thummim. Exodus 28:30 gives origin) (1 Samuel 14:41-42 is the only description of the uses of the Urim and Thummim)
 - Barzillai is noted for helping David as he fled Absalom. 2 Samuel 17:27; 19:31-40

Immediate actions upon return

- Finances given for the construction of the Temple.
- People began to reclaim property.

The altar for burnt offerings was built with sacrifices beginning the seventh month

- Fear of the people of the land drove this action. v.3
- Reflects the fact that God is their defense. The walls of Jerusalem had not been rebuild and would not until many years later when Nehemiah arrives on the scene.
- No work had begun yet on the rebuilding of the Temple and preparations were made to begin the work.
- Burnt offerings were an integral part of virtually every aspect of worship and service. Ezra 3:2

The altar for burnt offerings was built with sacrifices beginning the seventh month

- Feasts of the Lord Leviticus 23
 - The Sabbath-every seventh day
 - The Passover-fourteenth day of the first month.
 - Feast of Unleavened Bread-fifteenth day of the first month, lasting seven days with a holy convocation on the first and seventh days.
 - Feast of the Firstfruits-the firstfruits of the harvest brought to the priest and waved before the Lord on the day after the Sabbath after they have been presented to the priest.
 - Feast of Weeks-seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath from the day the sheaf of the wave offering is presented.
 - Feast of Trumpets-first day of the seventh month.
 - Day of Atonement-tenth day of the seventh month.
 - Feast of Booths-fifteenth day of the seventh month and continue for seven days with a holy convocation on the first and seventh day.

The altar for burnt offerings was built with sacrifices beginning the seventh month

- Daily offerings were prescribed by the Law of Moses. Numbers 28:1-8
- Sabbath Day offerings Numbers 28:9-10
- Monthly offerings Number 28:11-15
- Passover Offerings Numbers 28:16-25
- Feast of Weeks offerings Number 28:26-31
- Feast of Trumpets offerings Numbers 29:1-6
- Day of Atonement offerings Numbers 29:7-11
- Feast of Booths offerings Numbers 29:12-38

Work began on the Temple in the second year of the return and proceeded to the laying of the foundation.

- Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the High Priest gave leadership to the effort.
- Levites, age 20 and up, given the responsibility to supervise the work.
- Praises offered to the LORD at the completion of the foundation (1 Chronicles 16; 2 Chronicles 5:13; 7:6)
- An extremely emotional experience for all of the people.