

Going Home

Sheshbazzar goes home

Foundation

Bible passage : Ezra 1.1-3.4

Powerpoint: ExileAndReturn-06.pptx One group of people return to ruins and to build houses.

Going home: Some of the children may have had the experience of going on holiday for a couple of weeks and when they come home thinking that things seem different to what they were before - but soon settling back. How would it feel to go home after being away for 50 years?

“the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia”

When: Cyrus conquered Babylon in about 536BC. It was 50 years since the last of the captives had been taken away and 70 years since the first of them, which included Daniel.

Background: Cyrus King of the Persians had a different approach to the Babylonians. They had plundered their enemies taking away the things from their temples. But Cyrus ruled over a great empire of many different people and wanted them all to pray to their own gods to him. So he started to send people back to where they had come from.

Who was Sheshbazzar?

The leader of the people at this time was Sheshbazzar. Some people think this is another name for Zerubbabel but that seems unlikely. Rather it seems that Sheshbazzar was an older man, who is called a prince of Judah, so presumably some relation to the royal line. But before long the work is being headed up by Zerubbabel who has taken over as governor.



The more intact face of the Cyrus Cylinder which refers to the King restoring worship in other previously conquered places.

God is King: Ezra 1.3 says that the LORD had told him that the Temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt and therefore that the people of Judah should return to their homeland. This was part of a wide policy by Cyrus but guided by God and fulfilling what has been prophesied by Jeremiah.

The Return: Chapters 1 and 2 of Ezra tell us about how the first people started to go home. The oldest of them would remember where they had lived, but they had been away for 50 years. In total there were nearly 50,000 people (Ez 2.64) led by Sheshbazzar. They took with them animals and money out of which they contributed for the rebuilding of the temple.

It would have taken a month or two to make the journey and the people went to live in the towns and cities of Israel. Presumably they had to rebuild many of the houses, clear them out and find food. At the beginning of the 7th month, the end of harvest, was the Feast of Tabernacles and the people all went to Jerusalem to celebrate together (Ezra 3.4). It must have been a joyful and heartfelt celebration.



The people were in exile but God was at work so that through Cyrus many were able to return to Jerusalem.