

Should I Stay or Should I Go Now?

I. Slide#1 **Announce:**

- A. JM4 - justice-matters.com
- B. **Linda Keeny** is moving Saturday morning (Mur-Wilomar), she's rented a U-Haul truck, and has no one to help her. Steve is still in the hospital really sick. *If you can help, they you call the church and we can give you the address and time.*
- C. **Slide#2 Patrick & Shari Bailey** - Share. *Peace Be With You* ministry in P.I. [*real/deal missionaries*]
 1. *Love their heart for working with* the **Muslims** in Davao. Working with the extremely poor **Bajau's** (Sea Gypsies).
 2. Medical outreach. Job Skills (*computer courses, Jewelry making, sustainable organic farming*). Church planting. Translating Oral Bible Stories into local dialects. Workshops for Oral Inductive Bible Methods. Cultural Studies.

II. Slide#3 **INTRO**

- A. I remember an article in our local paper when pastor Chuck 1st purchased the Hot Springs. He said (loose quote) *"Refurbishing & rebuilding this place is really no different then what the church is all about...rebuilding people lives. They've been used & abused, worn & torn down, then they come to Jesus & He does a wonderful transformation in them...& it's blessed to see."*
 1. We'll see this same *parallel* w/**Zerubbabel** rebuilding *the temple* & **Ezra** rebuilding *the people*.
 2. **Both** require **community** rather than *isolation*. **Both** meet **resistance**. **Both** require **time & commitment**. **Both** have **the Word of God** at the center. **Both** bring **Glory & Honor** to God.
- B. **Slide#4 The Book**
- C. Ezra **opens** with what **2 Chronicles** **closed** with (*see* 36:22,23).
 1. Ezra is very similar to Chronicles (which lead many scholars to conclude Ezra wrote Chronicles).
- D. **Ezra & Nehemiah** is **1 book** in the Hebrew bible. (They tell 1 story)
- E. *Where does this fit in World History?* [*i.e. during the writing of the book of Ezra*] **Gautama**(Goat'-ima) **Buddha** the Indian mystic & founder of Buddhism, was in **India**. **Confucius** was in **China**. And **Socrates** was in **Greece**.
- F. **Slide#5 The Background**
- G. **Judah** had rejected **Jeremiah's** warning of judgment...*and his prophetic message came true*.
 1. *What was Jeremiah's warning to Judah?* (kicked out of the land for **70 years**)
 2. *Why did Judah get kicked out of the land?* (*see* 2 Chron.36:21)

- a) To make up for almost *a half a millennium* of neglected Sabbaths.
 - b) 1/7th of 490 years = 70 years
3. **Daniel & Ezekiel** were among those who were deported.
4. **But, Jeremiah** also promised **Restoration!** - This is what the Lord says: "You will be in Babylon for 70 years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again. Jer. 29:10
- H. **Lesson:** What motel chain promises to...*keep the light on for you?* What does that mean?
- 1. God kept a **lamp lit** at Jerusalem in order that **His Son** might be born through the Hebrew nation and come to save the world.
- I. **Lesson:** What characteristics of **God** do you see by allowing them to return? God of 2nd chance.
- 1. Now matter how we've blown it in our past, God gives us an opportunity for a new beginning.
- J. **Slide#6 Ezra** covers the *1st 2 returns* to Israel. **Nehemiah** covers the *3rd return* to Israel.
- 1. **Return #1** - 49,897 people return [Zerubbabel leads, 538bc] **Purpose?** rebuild **temple**.
 - 2. **Return #2** - 1,754 return [Ezra is in, 80 yrs. later] **Purpose?** to rebuild the **people**.
 - 3. **Return #3** - Nehemiah leads (14 yrs. later) **Purpose?** to rebuild **the wall**.
- K. **Slide#7a The Main Characters**
- L. **Ezra** – A godly patriotic Jew. His name means **Help**.
- 1. **Read** (Ezra 7:6,8,9).
 - 2. He was a **devoted student** of the Scriptures.
He helped to restore the **Law** to the nation.
He was a man of **prayer** (8:21-23).
He was greatly **burdened** for the **spiritual welfare** of his people (9:3,4).
 - a) **He does not come on the scene till chapter 7.**
- M. **Slide#7b Nehemiah** – An officer in the kings court.
- 1. He had **no prophetic call or priestly lineage**.
 - a) He was the original **layman**. *The orig Joe the Plumber.*
 - 2. Nehemiah was **promoted** from cupbearer to governor.
- N. **Slide#7c Zerubbabel** – He was a leader under Ezra.
- 1. His name means **born in Babel** (i.e. Babylon).
 - 2. His **Persian** name was **Sheshbazzar**. (*shesh-batsar*)
 - 3. His official **title** was **tirshatha** (2:63) which means **governor**.
 - a) He served as *the political leader* of the restored nation.
- O. **Slide#7d Joshua** – He was **the high priest** at the time.

P. **Slide#7e Haggai & Zechariah** – They were the **2 Prophets** at the time. (See Ezra 5:1)

Q. **Slide#8 The Book Outline:**

R. The book is divided into **2 Returns**: [from Babylon to Promise Land]

1. **Ch.1-6** Led by **Zerubbabel** to *rebuild the Temple*. [536bc. then 80 yrs later 2nd]
2. **Ch.7-10** Led by **Ezra** to *rebuild the Spiritual condition of the people*.
 - a) The **Restoration** of *the Temple* & the Reformation of *the People*.
 - b) *Between these 2 returns* (60 yr gap) *Esther's story is told*.

S. **Tonights Outline:** [Ch.1] **The Proclamation** [Ch.2] **The People**

T. **Tonights Title:** *Should I Stay or Should I Go Now?*

1. What does the Clash

U. **Slide#9 Feel the anguish:** Listen in the poetry of **Lamentations** (this funeral for a city, in a *5 poem dirge*), penned in Babylon, where we can *hear* the longing of the captives for their homeland.

1. *How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave...All the joy is gone from our hearts. Our dances have turned into dirges. The crown of glory has toppled from our head. Woe! Woe! Would that we'd never sinned! Because of all this we're heartsick; we can't see through the tears. On Mount Zion, wrecked and ruined, jackals pace and prowl. And yet, God, you're sovereign still, your throne intact and eternal. So why do you keep forgetting us? Why dump us and leave us like this? Bring us back to you, God - we're ready to come back. Give us a fresh start. As it is, you've cruelly disowned us. You've been so very angry with us.* Lam. 1:1(NKJV); 5:15–22(Mes)

III. **Slide#10 THE PROCLAMATION (ch.1)**

A. **The Proclamation** (1-4)

B. **Slide#11 Persia** – *A Divine twist of irony...* The Lord raised up a nation (Persia), to overthrow the nation (Babylon), that He allowed to overthrow His nation (Jer) [**Daniel 2: Babylon; Medo/Persia; Greece; Rome**]

1. [**3 kings of Persia**] This decree by **Cyrus** (ch.1), the decree by **Darius** (ch.6), & the decree given by **Artaxerxes** (ch.7) remind us *that God remembers us & is working for our good...even in our darkest days.*

C. **Slide#12 Cyrus** – *Why does he do this?* (i.e. *let God's people go*)

1. As he takes over *the crumbling Babylonian empire*, one of his 1st acts of office is to reverse the Babylonian policy of *deporting conquered people from their homelands*.
2. **Remember** this was the Cyrus mentioned in *bible prophecy*, 170 years earlier. **Is.44:28**

- a) **Remember when the words & actions of world leaders disturb you, just remember God is still on the throne & has things in control.*
3. **Cyrus** – A true believer or a pagan ruler? “Archeological finds indicate Cyrus showed *similar respect to the deities of all conquered people*. This seems to have been motivated by **national policy** rather than **faith-motivated conviction**.”
- D. **Slide#13 The Decision...Should I Stay or Should I Go Now?** (5,6)
- Where I grabbed my title. **The Clash** (Eng Punk band 1976-86)
- E. **Judah & Benjamin** - Let's us know that *though* they had to assimilate into a pagan culture **they** still maintained their **tribal structure** (including the role of priests & Levites).
- F. **Not everybody returned...why not?**
- How many of you** (or your parents) **came to America from a different country?**
Would you move back now?
 - Let's all say we've been out of our country for 70 years.** So in 1945 we all were made to leave, let's say Syria. **How many of us were born after 1945?**
 - How would we look at moving to this new country** we'd never lived in nor even visited?
 - Keep in mind** their homeland was burnt & destroyed so it was a wasteland, & the place they were moved to was a place of luxury & beauty.
 - The trip was going to be difficult** (like the covered wagons in the old days here).
Life was going to be demanding.
 - They had settled into a district of their own in Babylon, found employment, & lived generally comfortable lives.
 - Note:** Those that returned were *all whose spirits God had moved*.
 - How does He do that today, how does your spirit personally sense His moving/promting?**
 - Note:** Those that didn't return *encouraged* those that did & helped w/expenses.
(Even their Babylonian neighbors helped out)
- G. **So why Go back?**
- It was worth the price to **do God's will** even though it was going to **cost**.
- H. **The Articles** (7-11)
- They couldn't** worship **without** them. **We can't** worship **with** them
 - Jn.4 **women at well** - It's not **where** you worship **or what** you worship with **but how** you worship. *i.e. in spirit & truth*.
 - Are articles/things needed today for your worship?** If so **what/which ones?** (sound system, instruments)

IV. Slide#14 THE PEOPLE (ch.2)

- A. **Those who returned** (1-63)
- B. The 1st in the list is appropriately...*Zerubbabel*.
- C. **Slide#15a Note break down:** Leaders (2); Families (3-19); Towns (20-35); Priests (36-39); Levites (40-42); Nethinim, Temple Helpers (43-54); Solomon's Servants (55-58); **and** Those who couldn't identify their genealogy (59-63) [**I like that this group is even mentioned...in a genealogy**].
- D. **Slide#15b What is the importance of this list?** - The Lord knows His people *personally*.
 1. The **common people** were important to this rebuilding. [They actually contributed more than *the heads of the fathers houses* & *the governor*] (Neh.7:70-72)
 2. This list was **also for** Israel's *Racial Purity* (pre-Messiah).
- E. **The Total of Returnees** (64-70) *Nearly 50,000 devoted pilgrims returned* (49,897)
- F. What does God's protection of His people **during captivity & after their release** tell you about **His commitment to maintain a relationship** w/His people, w/us?