

Manifest Destiny

Studies in Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther

The Wild, Wild West

Introduction to Ezra 1-3

In the 1800s American politicians developed the doctrine of "Manifest Destiny" to justify their westward expansion. This was one of many factors that led to the stretching of the USA from "sea to shining sea". As the movement into the western frontier occurred to fulfill America's "manifest destiny" many things had to be overcome to blaze the trails and establish the settlements. In the same way the people of Israel had a "manifest destiny" from God to fulfill. This fulfillment first began at the Exodus as God delivered them from the Egyptians, gave them a constitution (His Law), and then gave them a land—the country of Palestine. However, they rebelled against God so much and for so long that

He finally had to send them off as captives to a foreign country, Babylon (modern day Iraq). God was not finished with them, though; He promised to bring them back after seventy years in exile. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah recount this return to the wild west of Jerusalem, while Esther records God's preservation of the Jews while still in exile. As the book of Ezra opens the handprint of God is all over the exiled nation. God had deposed Babylon from power, had raised Cyrus up as the ruler of the world from Persia, and had placed it in his heart to allow the Jews to return to their homeland. As they headed westward under Zerubba-



Understanding how God's destiny for us is fulfilled.

bel's, Ezra's, and Nehemiah's leadership successively, they would have to overcome many obstacles to fulfill again their manifest destiny as the people of God. They had to rebuild the temple, reestablish the law, and settle their land. This week's study shows how God moved to establish the first stage of this, as His people escaped exile to reestablish their identity in the wild, wild west.

The 5 Purposes of the Purpose Driven Life

- Worship—You were planned for God's pleasure
- Fellowship—You were formed for God's family
- Discipleship—You were created to become like Christ
- Ministry—You were shaped for serving God
- Evangelism—You were made for a mission

Daily Questions for Ezra 1-3

(For answers to questions attend an ABF or go to www.celebrationnet.com/resources/leader resources)

<p>1. Read 2 Kings 17:19-23. Why did God send Israel and Judah into exile (v19, 22)? What did they lose because of this?</p>	
<p>2. Based on Jeremiah 29:10-14 how long would God's people be in exile in Babylon (v10)? What did He promise would happen at the end (v14)?</p>	
<p>3. According to Ezra 1:1-2 who did God use to send His people back home (v1)? Why was this significant (v2)?</p>	

(Continued on Next Page)

Ezra 1-3 Study Questions (cont)

4. From Ezra 1:3-4 what was the focus of Cyrus' proclamation (v3)? What else did he command (v4) and how does this show God's grace for His people?

5. In Ezra 1:5-11 how else did God move to help His people fulfill their manifest destiny (v5, 7-11)?

6. Looking at 2:1-70, who led the return to Jerusalem (v1-2) and how many were there (v64)? Why did some not get to serve as priests (v61-63)? What attitude does this reveal?

7. Using 3:1-3, what was the first thing they did (v2-3), and why (v3)? What else did they do (v4-5)?

8. According to 3:6-7 what had the returnees failed to do (v6), and what did they do about it (v7)? Why was this important (v7, see 1:2)?

9. In 3:8-10 who got involved in rebuilding the temple (v8, 10)? What did each do, and what lesson can we learn from this?

10. Read 3:11-13. What were the 2 reactions to the laying of the foundation (v11, 12), and why did each react that way? Who was right and what does this teach us?

11. Think about what Israel had been through and where they now were. What were the two keys to their restoration? How can you apply this to your life?

Scripture to Remember

"For I know the plans that I have for you...for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope."

Jeremiah 29:11 (NAS)

Celebration Fellowship

*Reaching—
Restoring—Raising Up*

We're on the web

www.celebrationnet.com

Life Group Questions—Hearing the Word for the First Time

(Using questions based on today's message, Life Groups meet in homes to build supportive relationships with others at Celebration Fellowship that enable us to grow in Christ.)

1. Share with your group the first verse of the Bible that you remember hearing. What did that mean to you? What would it be like to not have a Bible?
2. Read John 1:1-4. How do you think Jesus, as the living Word, relates to the Bible, the written Word? Why is the written Word important, too.
3. Each group member share what their reaction is to the number of people that don't have access to the Word in their language.
4. Why must all people have access to the written Word?
5. How can you as a group get involved in the biblical translation project to Madascar? Why is it important to get personally involved?
6. Discuss anything else important to you from the message today if you have time.