

# Returns from Exile

Books of Ezra and Nehemiah



250 miles / 400 km

# Postexilic Timeline

- 612-539 The New Babylonian Empire
- 586** **Fall of Jerusalem** — **Temple destroyed** — **Captivity of Judah**
- 539 Cyrus, king of Persia, **conquers Babylon**  
539-531 Persian Empire and Restoration of Judah
- 538** **Edict of Cyrus** — permits Jewish return to Judah to “rebuild the house of the LORD (Ezr 1)
- 537-536** **Return of Zerubbabel / 49,000+ Jews to Jerusalem** — including Zechariah (Ezr 2; Neh 7)
- 536 Altar rebuilt and sacrifices offered (7th month)
- 536-30** **Temple** — **Work begun, stopped** (Ezr 3.1-4)
- 535-520 Hardships, economic depression in Jerusalem; people neglect temple, focus on their own needs (Hag 1, 2)
- 530-522 Reign of Cyrus’ son, Cambyses II  
522-486 **Darius I, the Great** — saved the empire from civil war, friendly to the Jews
- 520 Haggai’s first three **sermons** (Hag 1.3-2.9)  
Zechariah’s first **sermon** (Zec 1.1-6)  
Haggai’s last **sermon** (Hag 2.10-23)  
Zechariah’s eight “**night visions**”; symbolic crowning of Joshua, prefiguring Messiah King-Priest (Zec 1.7-6.8)
- 518 Zechariah’s **message** of repentance and promised blessing (Zec 7-8)
- 516** **Temple Completed and Dedicated** — in the 12th month (Adar = c. Mar-April)  
— **permitted by Darius** (Ezr 6.15)
- 490 Darius I’s campaign against Greece, defeat at Marathon
- 486-465 Xerxes I (Ahasuerus), husband of Esther reigns
- 480 **Zechariah 9-14 written** sometime during this time (see Zec 9.13: reference to Greece)
- 480 Persians defeated at Thermopylae and Salamis by Greeks
- 479 **Esther becomes queen**
- 465-424 Reign of Artaxerxes I
- 458-457** **Return of Ezra** — with priests, Levites under Artaxerxes I (some believe later)
- 445** **Return of Nehemiah** — **to restore Jerusalem’s walls**  
— **authorized by Artaxerxes I**; completed in 52 days under threats
- c. 440 **Book of Ezra** written
- 430-420 **Malachi ministers**
- 430 **Book of Nehemiah** — a memoir to God’s faithfulness