**Key Dates I Old Testament timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  **1010 BC** | David becomes King |
| **971 BC** | David dies / Solomon becomes king |
| **957 BC**  | Temple completed (approximate) |
| **931 BC** | Division of Kingdom in to north (Israel) and south (Judah) |
| **722 BC** | Northern kingdom (Israel) taken into exile by the Assyrians |
| **587 BC** | Temple destroyed by Babylonians |
| **586 BC**  | Southern kingdom (Judah) taken into exile by the Babylonians |
| **539 BC** | Fall of Babylon to Persian empire |
| **538 BC** | First return of exiles to Jerusalem |
| **536 BC** | Temple rebuilding begins |
| **516 BC** | Temple officially dedicated |
| **478 BC** | Esther in palace of Xerxes (not in Israel) |
| **458 BC** | Second return of exiles under Ezra |
| **445 BC** | Third return of Exiles under Nehemiah |

Thus the mission of God’s people is both centripetal and centrifugal. It is first of all centripetal: the people of God are to manifest God’s presence in their midst by their life together and their relationship to others. A centripetal mission is possible only when the church is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle, drawing outsiders into its fellowship. The call to be a contrast society living out God’s creational intentions as a sign of the future kingdom over against the idols of the nations remains the mission of God’s people in this new time in Acts. But such communities are now sent out to embody this life in every culture of the world. This is the new centrifugal dimension of the church’s eschatological mission.

- Michael Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 131

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**Unfolding Grace**2022 Sermon Series

*We are spending several weeks in 2022 exploring the unfolding grace of God in major portions of the Old Testament. This means we often cover large sections of Scripture and skip many otherwise important things. We encourage you to supplement these sermons with depth reading of the surrounding passages on your own.*

**Ezra 1**

**1** In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:

**2**“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. **3**Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. **4**And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.”

**5**Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem. **6**And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered. **7**Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. **8**Cyrus king of Persia brought these out in the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. **9**And this was the number of them: 30 basins of gold, 1,000 basins of silver, 29 censers, **10**30 bowls of gold, 410 bowls of silver, and 1,000 other vessels; **11**all the vessels of gold and of silver were 5,400. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

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**Life as Freed Exiles**

October 9, 2022 | Ezra-Nehemiah | Pastor Taylor Bradbury

**Life as freed exiles often looks like ordinary faithfulness while waiting for God to act powerfully.**

**1. Ordinary faithfulness in worship (Ezra 3; Nehemiah 10)**

**2. Ordinary faithfulness in word and prayer (Ezra 7:10; Nehemiah 8:1–8; Nehemiah 9)**

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.” (Ezra 7:10)

“They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.” (Nehemiah 8:8)

**3. Ordinary faithfulness in a contrast community (Ezra 9–10; Nehemiah 13)**

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” (1 Peter 2:9–12)

**4. Ordinary faithfulness in waiting for God to come**

The Old Testament story ends with both failure and hope. Israel has failed in its calling to be a light to the nations; it has been overcome by the darkness of the nations around it. God had judged the people of Israel and sent them into exile. Nevertheless, the prophets have ignited in the hearts of the scattered people a small flame of hope. In the last days God will act again in power through the Messiah and by his Spirit to restore his rule over all nations, all creation. God will gather and purify Israel, the temple will be rebuilt, the land will be cleansed, and the Torah will be obeyed. God will be King again—over the whole earth.

-Michael Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 68