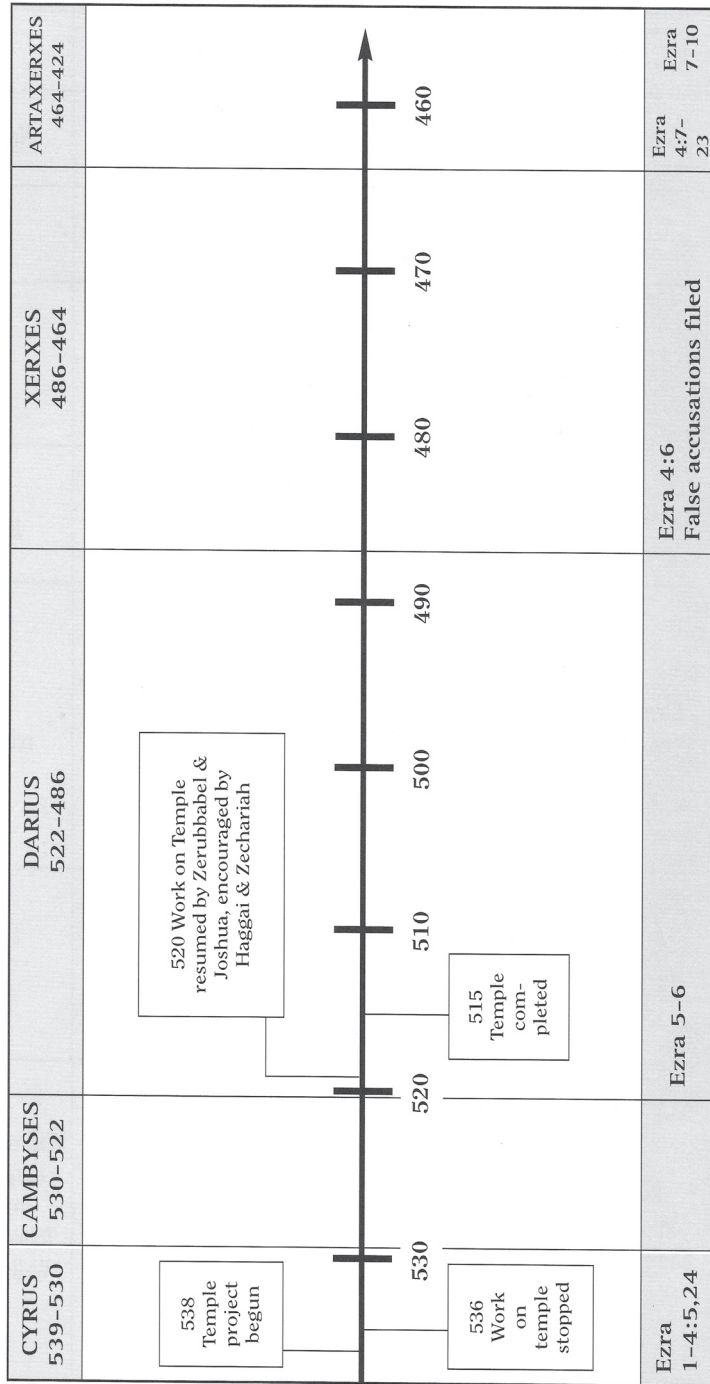


# Chronological Sequence in the Book of Ezra



# A Grace Shower

Long Beach Alliance Church • April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**THEN HE SHOWED ME JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST STANDING BEFORE THE ANGEL OF THE LORD, AND SATAN STANDING AT HIS RIGHT HAND TO ACCUSE HIM. NOW JOSHUA WAS CLOTHED WITH FILTHY GARMENTS AND STANDING BEFORE THE ANGEL. ~ZECHARIAH 3:1 & 3 (NASB)**

## 1) Jumping Back In Order To Move Forward

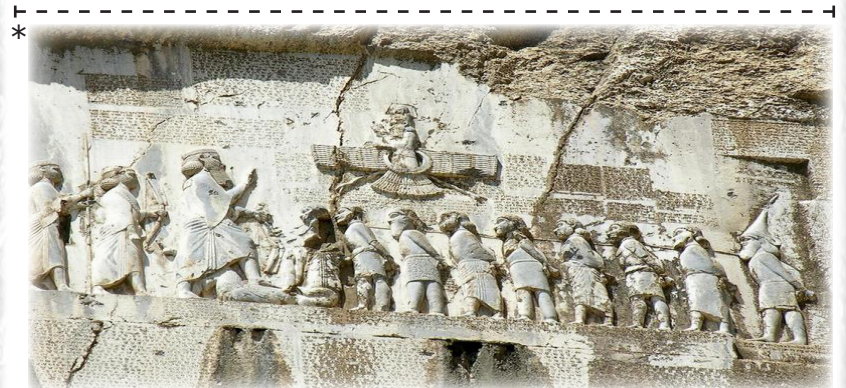
- A) The leadership of Zerubbabel & Jeshua, the High Priest, were unanimous in rejecting the subversive offers for help to rebuild the Temple of God which came from the Samaritan inhabitants of Israel (Ezra 4:1-3).
- B) This choice for purity caused a 20-year delay in the construction progress of the Temple, requiring great patience and sharp focus on God (4:4-5).
- C) The writer looks toward the future in Ezra 4:6-23 to illustrate the ongoing nature of the problems with the Samaritans (cf. 4:10), and the continuing delays with progress on construction in Jerusalem.
- D) Despite the 20-year delay (4:24), God was not silent (5:1).

## 2) Keep Your Focus In The Midst Of Discouragement!

- A) In the midst of the 20-year construction delay, God continued to speak to His people through three key "offices:"
- i) **The Prophets.** God spoke to His people through the prophets which He provided to Israel to carry His message (Ezra 5:1). During the post-exilic period, these prophets included Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.
  - ii) **The Priests.** God utilized priests to maintain worship within the Jewish community (including making sacrifices, Ezra 3:2ff) and remind the people of God's Word. During the post-exilic period, the High Priest was Jeshua.
  - iii) **The King.** Since Israel was under the authority of another nation (Persia), she does not have a functional monarchy after the exile. However, the Davidic line (the kingly line) was carefully preserved. During the post-exilic period, the "governor" of Israel, Zerubbabel (Haggai 1:1), was from the Davidic (monarchial) line.
- B) Note that all three of these "offices" are represented in Ezra 5:1-2. This is an important sign that restoration was arriving for the people in the reinstatement of these figures in the midst of the post-exilic community.
- C) In the midst of the 20-year construction delay, it was the ministry of the prophets which kept the community focused on God's vision of restoration (Ezra 5:1).
- D) It is notable that before the people could build the temple, they were first transformed into people of God's Word. Haggai's call leads to the passion to rebuild (Haggai 1:3-4).
- E) But it is Zechariah's words which bring prophet, priest, and king together in purity for God's people (Zechariah 3).

## 3) Grace For Today -- Grace For The Future

- A) Joshua (also called Jeshua) represented the people and their condition in the presence of God (Zechariah 3:1-3). With Satan accusing Joshua, the situation is grim.
- B) However, in a shocking act of grace (undeserved favor), God cleanses (gives a "grace shower") Joshua (representing the people) of their sin, and invites the community into a deeper relationship (3:4-7).
- C) This is all pointing forward to "the Branch" who will be prophet (3:8), priest (3:9), and king (3:10) -- the anticipated Messiah who remove the sins of the people once and for all (cf. Hebrews 10:11-13).



The first two years of Darius's reign were ones of universal political upheaval, as his own Behistun Inscription (pictured here) testifies. The inscription is located at a town in Iran (Bagastāna) whose name means 'place where the gods dwell.' Near the village is this isolated rock along the road which connected the capitals of Babylonia and Media, Babylon and Ecbatana (modern Hamadan). Many travellers passed along this place, so it was the logical place for the Persian King, Darius I (522-486), to proclaim his military victories. The Behistun Inscription was engraved on a cliff about 100 meters (328.08 feet) off the ground. Darius tells how the supreme god Ahuramazda choose him to dethrone a usurper named Gaumâta, how he set out to quell several revolts, and how he defeated his foreign enemies. The extent to which the political unrest of the early portion of Darius' reign may have influenced the biblical prophets is debated, but it certainly receives no emphasis in Ezra 5:1ff, written so long after the event. Collected from various sources including *Ezra & Nehemiah, Word Biblical Commentary Series, #16*, H.G.M. Williamson, Pages 75-76).