Lesson 7 · The Return

Key verse

Mal 3:1

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

Scope

- 539–430 BC · Daniel 5–12, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Esther, Obadiah, Malachi, Psalms Book V
- Fall of Babylon and First Return · 539–516 BC
- The Persian Period · 516–458 BC
- Ezra and Nehemiah · 458–430 BC

Before & after

- Previous: God's promise is greater than “Babylon”
- **This lesson: God's promise is greater than “Persia”**
- Next: God's promise “arrives”

Discussion

- Daniel knew about the decree, yet he still opened his windows and prayed three times a day (Dan 6:10). Where did his courage come from?
- Haggai asked, “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?” What are “our own houses” and “God's house” for us today?
- The problem in Malachi's day was not idolatry but going through the motions. What does half-hearted worship look like today?

Main sentence

God's promise is greater than “Persia”

Person

Malachi

Five key events

1 · The Fall of Babylon

- On the night of Belshazzar's feast, fingers wrote on the wall, and that night Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians (539 BC)
- In his first year Cyrus decreed that the Jews could return, just as Isaiah had prophesied 150 years earlier

2 · The Temple Rebuilt

- Zerubbabel led more than 40,000 people home
- They laid the foundation, then the work stopped for 16 years
- Haggai and Zechariah stirred the people up, and the second temple was completed in 516 BC
- Zechariah foretold the humble king riding on a donkey, the thirty pieces of silver, and the one who was pierced

3 · Esther

- The Jews who stayed in Persia were nearly wiped out by Haman
- “And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” The book never names God, yet his hand is seen everywhere

4 · Ezra and Nehemiah

- Ezra led the people back to the Law, and Nehemiah finished the wall in 52 days
- Together they led the people to hear the Law read, confess their sins, and renew the covenant

5 · Malachi and the 400 Silent Years

- Worship had become a matter of going through the motions
- Malachi foretold, “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me,” and that Elijah would come
- Then for 400 years there was no prophet, until John the Baptist