70 years exile to Babylon had taken place. II Kings 25:1-30

Isaiah warned Hezekiah that later his son’s would be conquered and taken captive by Babylon

Isa 39:5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: 6 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Jeremiah warned the people for forty years now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the LORD

Jer 20:1 Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. 3 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magormissabib. 4 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. 5 Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. 6 And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

Jer 21:3 Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah: 4 Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city. 5 And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. 6 And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence. 7 And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy. 8 And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. 9 He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. 10 For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

But the people refused to listen to the warnings of the prophets. In 597 B.C. Babylon attacked Jerusalem under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar. he invaded and laid siege to Jerusalem, eventually raiding the royal palace and temple. He stripped the city of all its wealth. He also deported a total of 10,000 people to Babylon: 7,000 soldiers, 1,000 skilled workers, and 2,000 others, including the prophet Ezekiel

2Ki 24:10 …Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.

11 …Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it.

12 …Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.

13 And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.

14 …all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.

16 And all the men of might, even **seven thousand**, and craftsmen and smiths **a thousand**, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

**Ezekiel 1:1** Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

2 In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

The chastisement from the Lord did not arouse the people to turn them from their sins and false worship. 11 years later, in 586 B.C., the Lord used the Babylonians to utterly destroy Jerusalem and the temple.

1. The date of the proclamation was 538 B.C., first year of Cyrus’ reign over Babylon.

Cyrus conquered Babylon 539 B.C. (modern Iraq), which extended the Persian Empire over the huge territory that is known today as Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Israel. 538 B.C. Cyrus issued the Proclamation of Freedom to release Jewish captives.

Ezr 1:1 Now 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, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

Major prophecies were fulfilled by King Cyrus. Isaiah prophesied that *Cyrus* would set the Jews free from captivity. Cyrus was actually named in Scripture 140 years before he issued the decree that freed the Jews—an astonishing fact that shows the truth of God’s Holy Word, that God will fulfill all that He says. Listen to Isaiah’s prophecy, predicted over 100 years before Cyrus was even born and 140 years before he freed the Jews:

Isa 44:28 That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

45:1 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.

Prophecy given by Isaiah and Jeremiah concerning the freeing of the Jewish exiles: Isa 41:2 Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. 25 I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon morter, and as the potter treadeth clay. Jer 25:11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

Jer 29:10 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

14 And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

**Jer 51:1 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;**

**Jer 51:11 Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.**

It was during the reign of Cyrus that Daniel gave some of his greatest prophecies, including the 70 weeks prophecy concerning Israel.

1. When it was time for God’s prophecy to be fulfilled, Cyrus’ decision to free the Jews did not just happen. The Lord God Himself “stirred,” “moved” the heart of Cyrus to free the Jewish captives

Ezr 1:1 ¶ Now 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, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

The royal Proclamation of Freedom and rebuild the house of God at Jerusalem was decreed to be 70 years after the Babylonian captivity

Ezr 1:2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Just as Jeremiah had so clearly predicted 70 years earlier, after the Jews had been exiled from the promised land, King Cyrus allowed them to return. The first deportation had begun in 605 B.C. during the reign of Jehoiakim ([Da.1:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Da+1%3A1)). And after Cyrus’ decree of freedom in 538 B.C., the first exiles began to return in 536 B.C. Including the time it took the Jews to return, settle down, and build the altar for worship, the 70 years were fulfilled.

Being stirred by the Spirit of God, King Cyrus issued his *Proclamation of Freedom.* Whether Cyrus knew the fact or not, the Proclamation included five points:

1. King Cyrus acknowledged the Lord as *the God of heaven*, source of his power to rule the Persian Empire (v.2). who rules over all, including King Cyrus.
2. Cyrus claimed that the Lord had appointed him to build a temple in Jerusalem (v.2). He was moved by God to free the Jews. He allowed them to return and rebuild their nation and temple in Jerusalem—just as Isaiah and Jeremiah had prophesied.
3. Cyrus allowed any Jewish exile to return to Jerusalem and Judah (v.3). He was not forcing them to return, only giving them the *right* to return. They were free to decide.
4. Cyrus ordered the returning exiles to rebuild the temple of the Lord (v.3). The rebuilding of the temple was necessary to establish true worship.
5. Cyrus encouraged Jews who did not return, to give support to the returning exiles (v.4).

Several prophecies had been made predicting that King Cyrus of Persia would free the Jews. Even his name, Cyrus, had been predicted some 100 years before his birth. The prophecies were fulfilled exactly as prophesied.

God’s Word is always fulfilled; every prophecy, every promise, and every judgment. Every prophecy concerning the past and the future has been fulfilled.

Ezr 2:64 The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, 65 Beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women.

Ezr 1:5 ¶ Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.

1. “The Lord raised”
   1. The Hebrew word means to awaken, arouse, stir, raise up.
      1. Raised, stirred, lifted, *moved* (*uwr* or *ur*) their hearts
      2. The Jews were aroused, constrained by the Lord to return to the promised land.
      3. The Spirit of God worked in their hearts, stirring them to make a concrete decision to return.
   2. Their purpose for returning: to rebuild their homeland and the temple of God.
      1. The Jews were the followers of the only living and true God.
      2. Through the Jews, God gave to the world
         1. True Worship
         2. Messiah, Savior of the world, Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ
         3. The written Word of God, the Holy Bible
         4. The hope of Eternal life

Ezr 1:4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. 6 And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

1. Cyrus encouraged Jews remaining to give willingly supplies, livestock, and freewill offerings. Their gifts were used for rebuilding of homes and temple of the nation.

Sheshbazzar is the prince of Judah (v.8). For Scripture says in one place that Sheshbazzar laid the foundation of the temple (5:16), but it says in two other places that Zerubbabel laid the foundation (3:8-13; Zec.4:9).

Any priest that could not prove his ancestry was excluded from the priesthood

Ezr 2:61 And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: 62 These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.

They were excluded until a true priest sought the Lord through the *Urim* and *Thummim*.

The **Proclamation of Freedom** offered to everyone return that will continue in the Word of God and know the Truth. Num.3:10

Israelites by birth, and others as priests, and yet could not make out a clear title to the honour.

**341 priests**

Ezr 2:40 The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. 41 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight. 42 The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, in all an hundred thirty and nine.

2Ch 29:34 But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.