

stimulated and the migration of the Hebrews to Palestine began. Cyrus gave them the decree that gave them the right to return and the first group apparently came to Judaea about 535-4. They began to rebuild and even started a rebuilding of the temple but were stopped by a decree following the death of Cyrus and the accession of Cambyses.

5. The accession of Darius I (the great) about 521 was a good event for the Hebrew people. During the interregnum following the death of Cambyses, the Jews had been a non-revolting territory and Darius looked on them favorably and gave permission to have the temple rebuilt. Under the leadership of Zerubbable and the prophetic ministries of Zechariah and Haggai, the temple was completed and Judah was formally a Persian state but with its own governing body and worship procedures.

6. In the fifth century BC there was some laxity in the Jewish territory both in societal development and religious activity. Around 480 we have the time of Esther and the attempt of Haman to annihilate the Jews. Shortly thereafter we have Nehemiah coming to Jerusalem to facilitate the building of the wall and we have the work of Ezra in instructing the people in the Word of God. The Book of Esther lies in the background of these affairs and it shows us, among other things, how scattered the Jewish people had become throughout all of the Medo-Persian territories.

IN CONCLUSION OF OUR BACKGROUND MATERIAL, WE LEARN A LOT OF THINGS:

- God's Word, promises and judgments, are not for trifling
- God knows just where His people are and what they need
- The work that God is doing may not be immediately visible but, when we look in hindsight we can see enough of what He has done to learn to trust Him for the present and the future.
- But the trials of life are never ended and the enemies of God and His people will use any means available to frustrate the work that must be done.

And with this in mind we may continue our studies...remembering that these notes are supplemental to the radio talks and not complete narratives and that the most important thing our listeners can do is to read the book...to give it a real personal study....and to learn to enjoy the wisdom and work of the Lord.

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MESSAGE # 2: Introduction to the Book of Esther

I. Particular Introduction to the Book