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Cyrus and Darius



As we study the books of **Ezra-Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Isaiah,** and **Dani’el**, we encounter two kings, **Cyrus** and **Darius**. It is important to understand the differences and similarities between **the** two Persian **kings**. **Cyrus** was born around **590 BC**, succeeded to the throne in **559 BC** following his father’s death. However, **Cyrus** was not yet an independent ruler. Like his predecessors, **Cyrus** had to reorganize Median overlordship. **He** died in **529 BC**. **Darius** was born in **550 BC**, began to rule in **522 BC**, seven years after **Cyrus’** death, and died **himself** in 486 BC.

Cyrus was named and identified almost two hundred years before **Isaiah** prophesied that **the** Persian **king** would bring an end to the Babylonian Empire and give **the Jews** the right to return to **Judah** (see the commentary on **Isaiah [1c](#)** - **This is What the LORD says to Cyrus His Anointed**).

In **539 BC**, **the first year of Cyrus (Dani’el 1:21)** was the **year** in which **the decree** was issued that enabled **the Jews** to return home (see **Ezra-Nehemiah [1c](#)** - **The Decree of Cyrus**), some **seventy years** after the time when **Dani’el** and **his friends** were taken into exile. Also in **539 BC**, **Darius**, viceroy to **King Cyrus**, captured **Babylon** without a fight. **King Belshazzar was killed** (see **Dani’el [1c](#)** -

Belshazzar was Killed) and Darius ruled over the province of **Babylon**, while **Cyrus** ruled over the entire **Medo-Persian Empire**. The description of the reorganization of **Babylon** that took place at that time (see [DI](#) - **Dani’el Promoted**) pertained only to that province. Later, **Darius** became **king** and endorsed the rebuilding of **the Temple** after construction had been stopped for many years (see **Ezra-Nehemiah Bc** - **King Darius Endorses the Rebuilding of the Temple**). **Dani’el** served in **his** role of **governor** of the province until **he** was at least about eighty-five years old.

538-515 BC First Return under Zerubbabel Ezra 1:1 to 6:22

538-537 BC Cyrus’ decree to begin construction of Temple Ezra 1:1-4

537 BC Return under Sheshbazzar Ezra 1:11

536 BC Zerubbabel returns with 49,897 Ezra 2:2

536 BC Zerubbabel began to build the altar Ezra 3:1-3

536 BC Zerubbabel begins building the Temple Ezra 3:8

536 BC Samaritan opposition during Cyrus’ reign Ezra 4:1-5a

522 BC Darius begins his reign

521 BC Opposition in the days of Darius Ezra 4:5b and 24

520 BC Haggai calls the people to build God’s House Haggai 1:1-2:9

520 BC Work resumed on the Temple Ezra 5:1-17

520 BC King Darius Endorses Rebuilding the Temple Ezra 6:1-12

518 BC Zechariah calls for obedience and observance Zechariah 7:1-8:23

515 BC The Temple is completed and dedicated Ezra 6:15

486 BC Cyrus died and was succeeded by his son Ahasuerus

486 BC Opposition in the days of Ahasuerus Ezra 4:6

A 57 year gap between the First and Second Return

480 BC Ahasuerus was defeated by the Greeks at the Battle of Hellespont

478 BC Esther becomes Queen between Ezra 6 and 7

478-474 BC Esther's deliverance and Mordecai became Prime Minister

465 BC Accession of Artakh'shasta to the throne

458-457 BC The Second Return under Ezra Ezra 1:1 to 6:22

458 BC Artakh'shasta issues decree for Ezra to return Ezra 7:1-6

458 BC Ezra departs from Babylon Ezra 7:7

458 BC Ezra arrives in Jerusalem Ezra 7:8-9

458 BC The book of the Torah is read Nehemiah 8:1-12

458 BC Feast of Sukkot Nehemiah 8:13-18

445 BC The Israelites Confess Their Sins Nehemiah 9:1-37

458 BC The people are assembled Ezra 10:7-15

458-457 BC Ezra reforms carried out Ezra 10:16-44

A 12 year gap between the Second and Third Return

445 BC The twentieth year of King Artakh'shasta Nehemiah 1:1

445 BC Nehemiah approaches the King Artakhshasta Nehemiah 2:1

445-432 BC The Third Return under Nehemiah Nehemiah 7: 12-13

445 BC Artach'shashta issues decree for Nehemiah's return Nehemiah 2:1

445 BC Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem Nehemiah 2:11

445 BC Nehemiah appointed governor of Judah Nehemiah 5:14

445 BC The walls around Jerusalem were completed Nehemiah 6:15

433 BC Nehemiah returned to Persia Nehemiah 13:6

445-433 BC Malachi rebuked the Jews Malachi 1:1-2:17

432 BC Nehemiah returned to Tziyon and final reforms Nehemiah 13:7

400 years of silence until the coming of John the Immerser in Mark 1:4