

# The Proclamation of the King!

## Ezra 1

**TONIGHT we are continuing our Journey through the Old Testament – pick up – Ezra**

A) Ezra is about the Restoration of a Nation – Restoration of a People.

B) Throughout this book we are given incredible insight into – How God restores a person

C) **BACKGROUND** Nebuchadnezzar's 1<sup>st</sup> invasion 605 BC

**July 18, 586 BC was a day of infamy in Judah**

A) On that day the Babylonians marched into the city, burned the Temple, destroyed the city and carried thousands into captivity.

B) Not a Surprise to God's Prophets:

C) The prophet Jeremiah was in Jerusalem watching this scene from beneath Golgotha.

1) You can hear the grief and passion of Jeremiah in the words of the Book of Lamentation.

D) For over 40 years he preached to Judah telling them that unless they repented they would perish.

1) **Sometimes I want to complain – feel like my message is not being heard**

**For 40 Yrs Jeremiah preached, prayed and prophesied and ended up in jail.**

A) All of this without ONE convert. He wept over the end of Judah.

B) His message fell on Deaf ears – Year after year after year.

C) Parents next time you're frustrated – your teenagers are ignoring you – think of Jeremiah.

**Daniel and Ezekiel were alive at this time too.**

A) Daniel had already been carried away into Babylon – earlier invasion by Babylon.

B) God would prosper him – gave him a position of influence among leaders

1) { Influenced Kings Nebuchadnezzar / Darius / Later Cyrus

C) But he did NOT have it easy.

1) He was thrown into the lion's den, faced the sentence of death and all sorts of other precarious predicaments.

D) Ezekiel on the other did NOT have a ministry to the politicians in Babylon

1) But he did have a ministry to the people

E) His fellow Countrymen who had been carried Captive – there in Babylon

**He too prophesied and preached and prayed.**

A) He had a tough ministry. In order to declare his message, he had to lay on his side in the streets for 340 days.

B) The Lord was **into giving ILLUSTRATIVE sermons** in order to drive home the point of His prophecies.

C) God had Ezekiel put his underwear (tunic) under a rock near the river,

1) and then a year later go retrieve them and put them on and walk around in them....

D) He had Ezekiel cook his food over **cow dung**, He had him cut his hair and burn it.

E) These are the ways that the Lord had Ezekiel preach - in order that the people would grasp the message.

1) **Shock Value – grab attention –**

**There are a lot of Crazy things being done today / shock value**

A) Difference is God directed Ezra to do these things

B) Today – people being weird – trendy / read in a book

C) In fact I'm sure the other prophets were saying I am sure Glad I am not Ezekiel

1) No one was trying to emulate his ministry!

**Reasons for Captivity - Why were the people carried away into Babylon?**

A) **Idolatry:** Saw in 2 Kings – Israel 2 Chronicles – Judah

B)The people were CONTINUALLY seduced into the worship of idols.

1)These images represented life styles.

C)They kept on finding themselves sucked into the lifestyle of intellectualism, materialism, sensual living,

1)Gross immorality – SO BAD – the people of Israel had become like the Canaanites

D)GOD FINALLY SAYS ENOUGH!

So what does God do? He sends them for 70 yrs to Babylon which was the CENTER of all false religions.

A)It was there that many of them got burned out on idols.

B)As a nation they would NEVER again fall into idolatry after their time in captivity within the center of false religions.

C)GOD'S DISCIPLINE HAS A PURPOSE!

WHOM THE Lord loves He chastens !

A)God might Cast out – But never Cast off.

B)He would send them to Babylon to get their attention

1)Work on their Flesh.

C)In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul deals with a Problem in the Church – man living in open rebellion

1)Carrying on Sexually with his Stepmother.

D)Showing up at Church – like no big deal – the Church people – were tolerating it.

1)Didn't want to make waves

God says through Paul – Throw him out!  
“turn him over to Satan for the destruction of His flesh that His soul might be saved.”

A)Let him live after those desires until he burns out on that lifestyle.

B)Let Satan destroy his flesh so that his spirit might be saved.

C)That worked – He repented and was Restored!

That is always God's Heart –

A)The people have been in Babylon for 70 yrs now –

B)Restoration is about to begin!

Sometimes that NEEDS to happen. The Lord allows one of his people to be turned over to Satan.

A)The flesh gets eaten up and destroyed.

B)NOTE: The purpose is not ex-communication. It is restoration. It is to see them brought back to the Lord.

1)THAT is what is happening here. After this 70 years in Babylon they NEVER again fall into idolatry.

C)They were cured of it in Babylon

D)Possible Path for America – Judgment coming?

The SECOND reason for their captivity is that they had ignored the Sabbath year.

A)Every 7th year they were to let the land rest.

B)But they thought that it was a waste to not work the land for a year.

1)They refused to let it rest for the purpose of more profit.

C)For 490 years they ignored the Sabbath year.

1)God was keeping score. God said: You owe Me 70 years.

2) So The land will get it's 70 years rest while you are in Babylon.

D)So these were the TWO reasons for their captivity

Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. They complete the list of the 17 historical books of the Old Testament.

A)They belong together as they are the three books which record God's dealings with the Jews AFTER they went into captivity.

B)Ezra and Nehemiah deal with the REMNANT which returned to Jerusalem and Judea.

1)(Ezra = Temple/Nehemiah = Walls)

C)While the book of Esther deals with those who stayed on in the land of their captivity.

D)Also Note There are three prophetic books that coincide with these three historical books –

E)Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, because these were the three prophets raised up by God during the post-exile period.

Ezra 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, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which *is* in Judah.

**NOTE: Historic changes had also taken place during their captivity**

A)Babylon had fallen to Persia, now the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, was in power.

B)The Jews fared quite well under the Persians. Prospered in Babylon

1)Not allowed to own land – but they were not slaves – they owned houses – started Business

C)God was going to use this King Cyrus

**In the First year: -**

A)When Cyrus overthrew Babylon he had been a King for about 20 years

B)In the first year – referring to the time when he was now in control of that whole area of the World

C)He had become a World leader!

**V.1 The Lord stirred up the heart of Cyrus the King of Persia.**

A)Daniel's Role In The Return

B)In Daniel 9 we saw this man of God reading the Scriptures and finding that they were coming to the end of their captivity.

C)Jeremiah had predicted this in Jeremiah 29:10-14

For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and

perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. <sup>11</sup> For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. <sup>14</sup> I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

**Daniel knows that the time clock has been ticking**

A)The 70 years is up - Daniel confesses their sin.

B)Daniel was aware of another prophesy – written by Isaiah

C)A prophesy that was written about Cyrus – 150 yrs before He was born!

1)Where God calls him by Name

**Why am I a Christian? Accuracy of Prophecy**

A)Reveals that God is Sovereign

B)He puts Kings into Power –

C)He controls the destiny of nations

1)Still Vote – but He is in Control.

**Isaiah Prophesied in Isaiah 44:24-28**

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,  
And He who formed you from the womb:  
"I am the LORD, who makes all things,  
Who stretches out the heavens all alone,  
Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself;  
25 Who frustrates the signs of the babblers,  
And drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward,  
And makes their knowledge foolishness;  
26 Who confirms the word of His servant,  
And performs the counsel of His messengers;  
Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,  
To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,'  
And I will raise up her waste places;  
27 Who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers';  
28 Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd,  
And he shall perform all My pleasure,

**Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built,"  
And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be  
laid."**

**This is INCREDIBLE**

A)When Cyrus shows up in Babylon - Daniel is like – I have been expecting you.

B) Can you picture Daniel going up to Cyrus and telling him: **"Hey, did you know that you're in the Bible?"**

C)Daniel informed Cyrus of the events foretold by the prophets.

1)150 yrs before you were born – one of our prophets wrote this about You!

**D)How you would conquer the Babylonians**

1)and how you would command them to go back into the land and rebuild the Temple.

E)The Lord says to Cyrus – You may not know me but I know you and have Chosen you.

Jeremiah 1:5

**"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."**

F)He Knew Jeremiah – Prophet – Cyrus – He knew you

**This was the work God ordained for Cyrus – Vessel used to Fulfill Jeremiah 29 That God was going to bring his people back from Captivity**

A)God calls Cyrus – **His shepherd** – I am going to use him – to bring my sheep back home.

B)This doesn't mean that Cyrus was a puppet – He still had a will –

C)He is so moved by this prophecy – for a time – He follows God

D)He issues this decree

Ezra 1:3-4

**3 Who is among you of all His people? May 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 God), which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help**

**him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.**

**The Book of Ezra chronicles the return of God's people to their home land.**

A)The return happened in 2 Phases

B)It **BEGAN** under Zerubbabel in the first year of Cyrus (536 BC)

1)and it was **COMPLETED** 80 years later under Ezra in the 7th year of Artaxerxes (458 BC)

C)Approximately 14 years later – Nehemiah would return to Rebuild the walls

1)The Final step in the Restoration of God's people.

**This provides us the 2 main sections of the Book.**

1.) The return under Zerubbabel 1-6

2.) The return under Ezra 7-10

D)We need to bear in mind the fact that Ezra is **NOT** *the* principle character in the account

**Ezra is the leader of the 2nd expedition, but the REAL leader of the remnant is Zerubbabel, 80 years before.**

A)It is Zerubbabel who is the chief administrator of affairs when the remnant came to Jerusalem

B)We won't even meet Ezra until Ch.7

C) So the book divides into two sections

1)The first section deals with the **RESTORATION** of the **TEMPLE**–Zerubbabel

**The second section deals with the REFORMATION of the PEOPLE – Ezra**

**The first section deals with REBUILDING and CONSTRUCTION – Zerubbabel**

**The second section deals with REVIVAL and INSTRUCTION – Ezra**

**Ch.1-6 The return under Zerubbabel**

- Ch.1 - The king proclaiming
- Ch.2-3 - The people reclaiming
- Ch.2 - Their genealogy / Ch.3 Their theology)
- Ch.4 - The enemy defaming
- Ch.5-6 - The Lord sustaining
- Ch.5 - Prophetically, Ch.6 - Politically)

So Verses 1-4 we see the proclamation of the King – Next we see who responded. Rd v.5

“Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.”

Ch.2:64-65 The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, 65 besides their male and female servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two hundred men and women singers.

So the final # of males/ females and servants were 49,697

A)Think about this: there are close to 2 million Jewish people living in Babylon at this time .

B)Out of national total of 2 million less than 50K return that is a remnant.

C)Why so Few? - three reasons

#1 was age:

A)During the 70 yrs of Captivity most of the older generation had died off.

B)And Those who didn't were too old to make the Journey.

C)Think about if a young person was 15 yrs old before the captivity

1)Old enough to remember the old Temple – remember the city - Are now 85 years old

E)Talking a 900 mile journey thru barren desert

1)So those who would have most wanted to go – were most likely too old to travel.

#2 Detachment: A whole 2<sup>nd</sup> generation had grown up in Babylon – no attachment to Jerusalem

A)That was the place of their forefathers – heard stories

B)The faith of their fathers wasn't as real to them

C)Problem with young people – 2<sup>nd</sup> generation believers

1)Pray – faith would become real –

D)Grown up in the Church –

1)Pray for our youth Pastors – Home groups

#3 Comfort

A)They were doing well in Babylon – Prospering!

B)They had homes – businesses –

C)They had grown accustomed to the ways of Babylon and now Persia

1)It wasn't so bad –

D)For MOST – IT WAS ALL THEY KNEW!

What was waiting for them? NOT A TRIP TO MAUI

A)IT was a 900 mile journey thru barren desert that would take 4-5 months

B)SOME OF THEM MIGHT DIE ON THE WAY

C)AND What is waiting for them in Jerusalem? RUINS!

D)A city that had been torn apart – Walls broken down – Temple destroyed!

1)So there was no great physical pull on their hearts

V.5 Says the Spirit of God moved on their hearts

A)Best way for ministry to happen.

B)Never respond to need – will not last

1)Pray – watch God move on your heart

C)You will not be disappointed.

D)Not saying it is not going to be Hard

1)Still hard – But it will be rewarding!

E)Question is will we respond?

1)My Calling from Baseball.

F)What if I said no way?- I would have missed out on so much.

Reason some don't see God move in their lives – they never respond – Play it safe.

A)My guess is that God called more than 49K – His spirit moved on more than 49K hearts

B)But this is the number that responded

C)The rest were too COMFORTABLE.

I wander what the Church would be and do if Christians were responding to God's call

A)Share their faith with .....

B)Give to His work

C)Go on the mission field

1)V.6 interesting

**6 And all those who were around them encouraged them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.**

A)Those who didn't go **willingly supplied** the ones who did.

B)Missions happens – can't all go –

C)Notice what happens next: RD v.7,8

**<sup>7</sup> King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods; <sup>8</sup> and Cyrus king of Persia brought them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah**

**WHO WAS Sheshbazzar? This was another name for Zerubbabel**

A)Chaldean name – both names are interesting – I think tell us something of his Character/CALLING

B)Zerubbabel = a Stranger in Babylon

➤ Sheshbazzar = Joy in affliction

**So here is this GUY born in Babylon — parents name him Zerubbabel = a Stranger in Babylon**

A)Zerubbabel – they no doubt were godly people who wanted him to grow up knowing – **this is not your home**

B)As parents they told him about his homeland

1)His heritage – His God – the temple.

C)For years and years growing up – he is hearing about this place

1)Opportunity to go arises – he is one of the first ones to sign up – volunteers to lead the group/project.

**I was sharing at a Family Conference this past Saturday – CCM –**

A)Reminding those families – love to remind parents of.

B)Genesis the first married couple – Adam/ Eve Blessed with a mission:

1)Love God – take care of what he had put into their hands.

C)Every couple: Every parent – Single – married

1)Love God – Love each other – TAKE CARE OF WHAT HE PUT INTO OUR HANDS

D)Biggest things is our Kids

**Our kids desperately need to understand:**

A)They are a part of God's mission

B)They exist for something bigger than themselves

1)This world is not our home

**Wiersbe: A Vagabond is someone who doesn't have a home - A pilgrim is someone who has left his home - sojourner someone who is going home.**

C)Pilgrims & sojourners who are Just Passing through !

**So his Parents name him Zerubbabel – Stranger in Babylon – Not your Home Son**

A)But he is the kind of person who is making the most of life – enjoying life

B)Pleasant to be around – so the Babylonians name him **Sheshbazzar – Joy in affliction**

1)The guy isn't complaining – not a pain

C)I think that is the best kind of Christian

1)One who realizes this world is not my home –

D)But one who also realizes I am meant to be a blessing in this world

E)Let your light so shine.....

1)Joy in affliction.

### Now Don't miss what King Cyrus does

A) He takes all the vessels that King Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem

B) Put in the temple of his god – sort of a way of saying – Our god is stronger than yours

C) Cyrus – takes all the vessels and He is going to send them back with Zerubbabel

D) God's restorative power – He is able to restore the years that the locust have eaten. Joel 2:25

#### RD V.9-11

<sup>9</sup> This is the number of them: thirty gold platters, one thousand silver platters, **twenty-nine knives**, <sup>10</sup> thirty gold basins, four hundred and ten silver basins of a similar kind, and one thousand other articles. <sup>11</sup> All the articles of gold and silver were five thousand four hundred. All these Sheshbazzar took with the captives who were brought from Babylon to Jerusalem.

This is interesting to me that the Lord keeps track of the vessels of the temple – vessels used for Sacrifice.

A) 29 Knives – Knives that were used for the Sacrifice.

B) 29 knives that were used to slit the throats of Bulls and Lambs.

C) 29 knives that for 70 years have been dry – no blood

If there is going to be a Restoration – the first step back is always going to be back to Jerusalem

A) First PLACE is always back to the altar where the blood flowed

B) This is a remarkable process as we follow it thru the Old Testament there is always a push back to the altar

C) ABRAHAM – EGYPT – BACK TO BETHEL

1) Jacob going back to Bethel building an altar and Sacrifices

Elijah calling the nation on MT Carmel

A) CALLS the nation to draw close as he rebuilds the altar of the Lord – after mocking the Prophets of Baal

B) Fire comes down –

C) Josiah takes the throne and institutes the greatest Passover celebration the nation had ever known.

1) Back to the altar – 41,500 sacrifices - these 29 knives were probably used to slit throats

D) Always a going back to the altar – we will see the same thing here in Ezra –

I think that if there is going to be a Revival in my heart / your heart/ this Church / America

A) It will initially involve getting back to the altar

B) Back to Christ Crucified and risen from the dead.

1) Back to a place in our hearts where they are moved by the reality of the cross

C) Not just something we know as good theology

1) Or we know academically

But that which moves us – deeply when we think on and realize how tremendous our sin was that Christ died for.

A) So great that God would have to send His son to die in our place

B) How tremendous the loss was that He would give up His son

1) To watch His only begotten son suffer and restrain Himself

C) I think there is a need for the message of the cross to capture our hearts again

1) Back to our first love

D) 1<sup>st</sup> step to revival

Revival – I want my kids to see it

A) Your kids

B) Judgment possible

Remnant lead REVIVAL

A) Too old ? Lead the work

B) Too detached

C) Too comfortable