

Ezra 1

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it in writing*, saying:

² “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³ Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴ Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.’”

- Tradition views Ezra as a second Moses. Through his work he became the “preserver of the religious tradition from it’s earlier stages”
- In Isaiah, God calls Cyrus “My shepherd” (44:28)



Our theme this year is “**Rise & Build.**” We started the year with a study of Nehemiah. Now, we finish the year with the book of Ezra.

A. Ezra and Nehemiah are complimentary books.

- In the Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah are one book
 - Ezra is the author of the book of Ezra and very possibly also Nehemiah.
 - The name “Ezra” is found 12x in the book of Nehemiah
 - Nehemiah’s name is found once in Ezra
 - Combined Ezra and Nehemiah show us what happened to God’s people after the Babylonian captivity. It reveals how they returned to the land, rebuilt the temple and repented of their sins.
 - The last two verses of 2 Chronicles are identical to the first verses of Ezra
 - The book of Ezra was written about 440 B.C.
 - Sections of Ezra (4:8-6:18; 7:12-26) are written in Aramaic
 - The book of Ezra mentions Jeremiah, Haggai, Zechariah
- ### B. Ezra is both a priest and a scribe (7:11)
- About 80 years after the first return to Jerusalem, Ezra leads a second group to Jerusalem

Persian Rulers

Cyrus (539-530)
 Cambyses (530-522)
 Gaumata (522)
 Darius I (522-486)
 Xerxes I (486-465)
 Artaxerxes I (465-424)
 Xerxes II (424)
 Sogdianos (424-423)
 Darius II (423-404)
 Artaxerxes II (404-358)

538 B.C. First return of Jews from captivity (Ezra 1:1-3; 2:1-2)
 537 B.C. The rebuilding of temple begins (Ezra 3:6-10)
 520 B.C. Continuation of temple rebuilding with encouragement from Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1-2)
 516 B.C. Completion of the temple (Ezra 6:14-16)
 483-473 Events of Esther in reign of Xerxes
 458 B.C. Ezra leads a second return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:1-10)
 445 B.C. Nehemiah leads the rebuilding of the walls (Neh 1:1)

70 yrs later (Jer 25:11)

Lessons

1. God remembers His _____ (2 Pet 3:9)
2. God works through the lives of _____, not just His people
3. God _____ the heart of Cyrus (Dan 2:21; Prov 21:1)
4. Cyrus _____ that God had granted him victories and that God wanted him to start the process of building a temple in Jerusalem
5. Cyrus allowed the Jews to go to Jerusalem with his blessings and with the financial support of others
6. King Cyrus _____ articles from the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had _____

In Your Life

- 1. God can do things that I am not _____ of (Hab 1:5)**
- 2. God can use people that I would _____ use**
- 3. God can _____ doors that I thought were closed for _____**

