

THE DECREE OF CYRUS. EZ. 1:1-4. 5/19/24. #01.

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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, ²Thus 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. ³Who *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. ⁴And 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.
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1. A jagged return

- a. Ezra 1 picks up where 2 Chron. 36 leaves off
 - a1. 70 years of exile are over (605-536 BC)
 - a2. Due to much opposition the decree to rebuild the temple was delayed by 20 years
- b. The books of Ezra & Nehemiah cover a century (538-430 BC) where 3 men are prominent
 - a1. Zerubbabel = appointed governor of Judah who led the initial return (536 BC) & over-saw the rebuilding of the temple
 - a2. Ezra (460 BC) – led reform of worship
 - a3. Nehemiah (450 BC) – rebuilt wall of Jerus.
- c. All events in Ezra/Neh. take place in Persian period
- d. 4 periods: Babylon, Persia, Greek, & Rome
- e. Persian Empire (539-330 BC) = time of Judah renewal
- f. God stirred up Cyrus (Is. 44-45) to send Jews home
 - a1. They were to rebuild their temple
 - a2. Cyrus (ruled 559-530 BC) conquered Media, Anatolia (Turkey), & Babylon (539 BC)
 - a3. Cyrus commanded that all people should return, build their temples & restart worship (to pray for long life for the king)
- g. Cyrus, Cambyses, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, & Darius II

2. The book of Ezra

- a. Ezra compiled a history from the decree of Cyrus to the implementation of his reforms as priest
- b. Ez. 1-6 cover the first few years of the return
- c. There is a 50 year gap between ch. 6 & 7
 - a1. Haggai & Zechariah cover some of the events in this gap
 - a2. The struggles of the returnees was due to the opposition of the surrounding nations (Samaria, Ammon, Arabs...)
- d. Jerusalem had dropped in population from 200,000 before the exile to 6,000 after the exile

3. By the decree of the king

- a. Cyrus decreed that the Jews were to return to rebuild their temple & re-establish their worship
 - a1. He sent all the temple vessels back
 - a2. He paid for the trip with his own provisions & materials (as did his successors)
- b. The decree was proclaimed in 338 BC & Zerub. led 50,000 returnees to Judah in 536 BC
- c. Cyrus called each god of each nation by its title
 - a1. God was called the Lord God of Heaven, a title used 21 times in Ezra & Nehemiah
 - a2. Cyrus sought the favor of each god
- d. Cyrus called upon all Jews who were not going back to send silver, gold, & provisions to support those who were returning
 - a1. Cyrus used the title “He is God” to show the same reverence that a devout Jew would show to God
 - a2. Cyrus showed proper respect to each god
- e. Is. 44:24-28 God called Cyrus “my servant”
 - a1. Not necessarily mean that Cyrus was a true believer, but God used him for His will
 - a2. Even though Cyrus showed reverence for God, he did so for Marduk & Amon-Re also
 - a3. God uses even non-believers for His purposes to accomplish His will (like Pharaoh)
- f. God planned a new restart to reseat Israel in land