



Israel, Decree of Cyrus and the Rebuilding of the Temple

The Stability of Godly Leadership

The Proclamation of Cyrus. Positive volition becomes visible. The initiation from Cyrus, the leader of the Persians. Ezra 1:1-4.

“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: ‘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. ‘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. ‘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.’” (Ezra 1:1-4, NASB)

The leaders of Israel respond. Ezra 1:5-11.

“Then the heads of fathers’ households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. All those about them encouraged them with articles of silver, with gold, with goods, with cattle and with valuables, aside from all that was given as a freewill offering. Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and put in the house of his gods; and Cyrus, king of Persia, had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and he counted them out to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. Now this was their number: 30 gold dishes, 1,000 silver dishes, 29 duplicates; 30 gold bowls, 410 silver bowls of a second kind and 1,000 other articles. All the articles of gold and silver numbered 5,400. Sheshbazzar brought them all up with the exiles who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem.” (Ezra 1:5-11, NASB)

It is beautiful when God and country are in step. Rom. 13:1-7.

“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.” (Romans 13:1-7, NASB)

The personnel of Israel. Ezra 2:1-70. God always works through people. Notice Paul’s appreciation of people in Romans 16.

The praise of Israel. The altar was established in Ezra 3:1-3. The ancient worship was established in Ezra 3:4-7.



“Now when the seventh month came, and the sons of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brothers arose and built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God. So they set up the altar on its foundation, for they were terrified because of the peoples of the lands; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, burnt offerings morning and evening.” (Ezra 3:1-3, NASB)

“They celebrated the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the fixed number of burnt offerings daily, according to the ordinance, as each day required; and afterward there was a continual burnt offering, also for the new moons and for all the fixed festivals of the LORD that were consecrated, and from everyone who offered a freewill offering to the LORD. From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, but the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid. Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and food, drink and oil to the Sidonians and to the Tyrians, to bring cedar wood from Lebanon to the sea at Joppa, according to the permission they had from Cyrus king of Persia.” (Ezra 3:4-7, NASB)

Praise to God begins because the foundation of the new temple in Jerusalem was completed in Ezra 3:8-13. The ancient men wept loudly. The young men shouted for joy.

“Now in the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers the priests and the Levites, and all who came from the captivity to Jerusalem, began the work and appointed the Levites from twenty years and older to oversee the work of the house of the LORD. Then Jeshua with his sons and brothers stood united with Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah and the sons of Henadad with their sons and brothers the Levites, to oversee the workmen in the temple of God. Now when the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD according to the directions of King David of Israel. They sang, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, saying, “For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever.” And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. Yet many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ households, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, while many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard far away.” (Ezra 3:8-13, NASB)

The Confusion of Conflicting Legislation

The pursuing of conflicting legislation. Ezra 4:1-24. Opposition. Pitting the country against the will of God. Legislation that forbids freedom of worship. The result was an order issued by the king for them to cease building the temple and use force or arms, if necessary.

The pathway of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Ezra 5-6. Zerubbabel the builder. This is the will of God. This is the decree of Cyrus - Darius. The satisfaction of finishing what is started. Ezra 6:14.

“And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.” (Ezra 6:14, NASB)



The Reflection and Reality of Living

The pause for preparation and appreciation. The preparation of Ezra in Ezra 7:10. The appreciation of Ezra in Ezra 7:27-28.

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.” (Ezra 7:10, NASB)

“Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king’s heart, to adorn the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, and has extended lovingkindness to me before the king and his counselors and before all the king’s mighty princes. Thus I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my God upon me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.” (Ezra 7:27-28, NASB)

The pressing reality. The personnel. The prayer in Ezra 8:21-23. The treasure in Ezra 8:24-30. The journey to Jerusalem in Ezra 8:31-36.

“Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, “The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him.” So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty.” (Ezra 8:21-23, NASB)

“Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and with them ten of their brothers; and I weighed out to them the silver, the gold and the utensils, the offering for the house of our God which the king and his counselors and his princes and all Israel present there had offered. Thus I weighed into their hands 650 talents of silver, and silver utensils worth 100 talents, and 100 gold talents, and 20 gold bowls worth 1,000 darics, and two utensils of fine shiny bronze, precious as gold. Then I said to them, “You are holy to the LORD, and the utensils are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to the LORD God of your fathers. “Watch and keep them until you weigh them before the leading priests, the Levites and the heads of the fathers’ households of Israel at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD.” So the priests and the Levites accepted the weighed out silver and gold and the utensils, to bring them to Jerusalem to the house of our God.” (Ezra 8:24-30, NASB)

“Then we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was over us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way. Thus we came to Jerusalem and remained there three days. On the fourth day the silver and the gold and the utensils were weighed out in the house of our God into the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them were the Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui. Everything was numbered and weighed, and all the weight was recorded at that time. The exiles who had come from the captivity offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: 12 bulls for all Israel, 96 rams, 77 lambs, 12 male goats for a sin offering, all as a burnt offering to the LORD. Then they delivered the king’s edicts to the king’s satraps and to the governors in the provinces beyond the River, and they supported the people and the house of God.” (Ezra 8:31-36, NASB)

The sin is intermarriage with the foreign peoples forbidden by God in Ezra 9:1-15. Order was restored in Ezra 10:1-44 by forcing separation from wives and children resulting from intermarriage with the forbidden foreigners. Sometimes harsh changes in life patterns were called for.