



### ***Biblical Building***

#### ***Sermon #2***

***‘When God Moves Government!’***

***Ezra 1:1-11***

Sunday, May 4th, 2025 at FBCG

#### **Last Week in ‘Biblical Building’ Sermon Series:**

- Last week in our Biblical Building Sermon Series we officially launched our Field of Dreams Giving Initiative.
  - ***Last Sunday, Dr. Lee Sanford spoke on behalf of our Marketing/Fundraising Team for the Field of Dreams Vision.***
  - Last week we officially began giving weekly towards our multi-purpose facility.
    - ***All throughout the duration of this series satan will do his best to deter and distract you from giving towards the building fund, but remember, this is an***

***incredible opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus for centuries.***

- ***Last Sunday I preached an overview sermon on the book of Ezra, with the hopes of giving a 30,000 feet view on the book.***
  - The reason for an overview sermon is to give a summary of the book and point out specific details so that once we get to the specific texts, we can have a general understanding.
- This morning, we begin our verse-by-verse study of the book of Ezra.

***‘When God Moves Government!’***

***Ezra 1:1-11***

#### ***Sermon in a Sentence:***

***In this text we see that God uses the Persia Government in the fact that we see the Probing of God, the Proclamation is made and God provides and provisions are made as God uses and works in the lives of people.***

#### ***Intro:***

- In our country, since its foundation, separation of Church and state has been a big emphasis.
  - ***While I completely agree with the separation of government from the Church, I do not believe in the separation of the Church from the government.***

- *I believe confidently that the Gospel that we have through Jesus Christ is not a 'toe in the water' kind of Gospel.*

- *When we have a real encounter with Jesus, we are immersed by His mercy and His grace, to where everything that we do, Jesus should be seen.*

- So, the Church should have a strong impact on the government for Christ, and those in government who claim to know Christ, should and must stand up for Him and our Christian values.

- *This morning as we get into the first verses of Ezra, we are going to find that God moves in the heart of a king, a government leader, to accomplish His own will for His own Glory.*

- ***\*Illustration\****

- In our nation, there have been countless times that God has intervened and moved in our elected officials.
- *One thing we must remember, is that even if we don't like or agree with certain political leaders or 'parties', God has allowed them to be in that position of power.*
  - He can (and does) move them at anytime, and can change their hearts and cause them to do things they never would have done previously.

- Though the story we are reading in Ezra this morning is thousands of years old, does not mean that God cannot still move in elected leaders in Government today.

- *\*This is one major reason why no matter who you vote for or feel politically, we must pray for our leaders constantly and consistently\**

- Some examples in our young nation over the years of God moving in leaders hearts are as follows:

- James Madison was a particular president who allowed God to use Him in amazing ways.
    - *He was a brave founding father that opposed federal domination (like the Church of England), but encouraged Public Religious activities.*
    - *In 1789 Madison served on the Congressional committee that approved for congressional chaplains to be employed and paid.*
    - *Madison is one of the only U.S. Presidents who unashamedly issued proclamations for national days of prayer during times of peace and crisis, times*

*for fasting, and times for  
thanksgiving all throughout his  
presidency.*

- James Madison also did something that no US President has ever done. He signed into law a piece of legislation that federally funded Bibles to be distributed in the newly founded nation.

■ *Sadly, after His presidency before his death, he recanted and regretted many of his actions after being heavily battered (verbally) for the actions that he took.*

- But, during James Madison's presidency, it is obvious that God moved and STIRRED in His heart to allow unprecedented things to occur. Things we don't even come close to seeing today.

■ *But, that doesn't mean those things can't happen. God moved in the Government of Persia in the days of Ezra, God moved in the heart of James Madison in the early 1800s, and God can move in our hearts today.*

- Politicians, be weary and aware of the position in which you hold...

### *Question to Ask:*

*How does this passage of scripture reveal that God can and does move earthly Governments for His Glory?*

### *Truth #1: The Probing of God. (v. 1)*

- '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.'
- The opening lines of verse 1, including through verse 3 of this text, are almost identical with that of 2nd Chronicles 36:22-23.
  - *Based on last Sunday's overview sermon, this is significant because this literary device by an anonymous author emphasizes the continuity of this narrative found in scripture.*
- *Immediately in verse 1 we are introduced to an interesting individual who God is going to use to fulfill His own purposes.*
  - *'Cyrus King of Persia'*
    - Verse 1 of our text this morning is full of a lot of information that shows us God moving and probing in the hearts of men, but I want to show you several things from verse 1...
- *The Character: Cyrus. (v. 1a)*
  - 'In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia,'

- The beginning of verse 1 tells us that this was the first year in the reign of King Cryus.
  - *This is true in the sense that it was his first year ruling over the Jews.*
- *Cyrus was the founding King of the Persian empire.*
  - *He ruled the Persian empire from 559 to 530 B.C., and like most first time leaders of a nation, he was the best they would ever have comparatively speaking...*
- He established Persia as a nation to be reckoned with in 550 B.C. when he defeated the Medes, and then conquered Lydia in 546, and then the mighty Babylonians in 539 B.C.
  - *Contrary to the Babylonians, the Persians were known as much kinder and understanding of the personal practices of the people that they took over.*
- *At this time in the ancient world, Cyrus would have been viewed as one of the most powerful and most loved people in the world.*
  - But, as Ezra is going to make clear, it is God who is ultimately in control and that the true King, God, is going to use this 'powerful' man to be a tool for His Glory to be accomplished.
- *The Call of God. (v. 1b)*

- '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:'
- After a brief introduction of who Cryus was at this time in the ancient world, can only understand the probing of God that occurred when we see the Call of God, way before Cryus was born.
- *In Isaiah 44:28, we find that Cyrus is mentioned by name, long before Cryus was even born...*
  - 'who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"
- *In good ways, and some times Consequential ways, God uses political leaders to fulfill His purpose. And this was the case with Cyrus.*
  - The Jewish Historian, Josephus, wrote that Cyrus was shown this prophecy in Isaiah 44:28 and that he acted this way because of it.
  - I find this hard to believe, because of the Hebrew verb that we translate the word 'STIRRED' from this morning...

● *\*Word Study\**

- The English word ‘stirred’ in verse 1 is translated from the Hebrew verb ‘he’ir’ (הִעִיר) which literally means to stir awake, arouse, move and essentially refers to actions that enliven a person to do something they wouldn’t be ‘predicted’ to regularly do.
  - *Meaning, God’s power is on display when He causes people (in this case political leaders) to do things they would not usually do...*
- *The use of this word indicates that Cryus did not let the Jews return to Jerusalem on His own accord, but because God is the one who led Him to do this!*
- *Ezra made this politically controversial decision because God moved his heart.*
  - The probing of God caused Him to do things that He would not of regularly done.
- *The Correct Interpretation of Jeremiah 29:11. (v. 1c)*
  - *Look at the middle of verse 1...*
  - ‘that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled,’
  - Jeremiah 29:11 is one of the most well known Scriptures in the Bible, and is also one of the most ‘taken out of context’ verses in the Bible.
    - *For many of you, this may be your favorite verse of scripture, and if it is or it isn’t, I want us to have a proper*

***understanding contextually of what it means...***

- God is MOVING Cyrus to make this action because the Prophet Jeremiah prophesied this and it must be fulfilled, because God DOES NOT and CANNOT go back on His Word.
  - *What Cyrus does in letting the Jews go back to Jerusalem, was fulfilling what Jeremiah prophesied in Jeremiah 29:10-14...*
- “For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare[a] and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. **12** Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. **13** You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. **14** I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.”
- *See? This verse isn’t about what YOU want to be done in your life and God following YOUR plan. It’s HIS Plan...*

- The STIRRING that God did in Cryus's heart caused this prophecy to be fulfilled.
- *Notice though, this letter by Jeremiah was when the Jews were sent INTO babylonian exile, and at first, it was really hard for them.*
  - *70 YEARS had to pass before this prophecy could be fulfilled.*
- *You may not want to hear this, But SOMETIMES the plans God has for you don't happen overnight and they may not even happen in your lifetime or the way that you want them to happen..*
  - Why is this? Jeremiah 29:12-14 answers this...
    - *So that we will:*
      - Call out to Him.
      - Pray to Him.
      - Seek Him.
      - Be Found.
      - He can Restore us...
- The story of the book of Ezra is that God's people were going to be redeemed and retored and because God had this great and perfect plan for them. They, just like us, constantly try to mess this plan up, but God really does have it!
  - *This portion of God's plan in verse 1 is evident with the probing of God in Cyrus's heart...*

**Truth #2: *The Proclamation Made.* (vv. 2-4)**

- 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. **3** Whoever 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 rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. **4** And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.'
- *The proclamation here is clear:*
  - The God of Israel has told me (Cyrus) to let you guys go home and build your House of Worship.
  - So, go home.
  - Go with your God.
  - Rebuild His house.
  - And each of the surviving Jews who choose to come home, my countrymen will assist you with resources to make this transition smoother for you.
- *The Perspective of 'SOME' Government Leaders. (v. 2)*
- The phrase 'God of Heaven' only occurs 22 times in the Bible, and 17 of those occurrences are in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel.

- *Cyrus uses the verbiage to identify the God of the Hebrews as a high god, rather than the local deity gods of their society that were often attached with nature.*
  - *In true 'political like fashion', Cyrus is using verbiage to tickle the ear of his intended audience. But why?*
    - *One scholar said 'He was willing to and ready to credit any and all gods for his successes as well as to seek their blessing for his rule.'*
- This proclamation that Cryus made had personal political ambitions in mind, but, God still used this has Isaiah and Jeremiah had foretold.
- Cyrus's personal perspective of God mady not be as High as we hold our God today.
  - *But even when different nations have different thoughts and ideas on God, He can still control them to act and do as He pleases...*
- *Cyrus had a perspective that many politicians and people have today: people pleasing...*
  - There is a well preserved document in the British National Museum called *The Cyrus Cylinder*, which was a copy of a decree that was sent to many other ethnic and religious groups once they were conquered by the persians...

- Most historians agree that Cyrus had allowed the exiled ethnic groups who had been displaced to return home, because it would (in his mind), bring thankfulness and loyalty throughout his earthly empire.
  - *Yes, God can and does move government leaders, but that doesn't change the fact that politicians are people, all people are sinners, and we must be aware that not all people (including politicians) have our best interest at heart.*
    - *This is why it is imperative that we trust in God!*
    - Pray for our leaders, don't depend on them...
- *The perspective of 'SOME' of those in government is to play God's people, but even in this, God can move things for His Glory.*
- *The Plan Given by the Government. (vv. 3-4)*
  - 'Whoever 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 rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. 4 And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be



assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.”

- ‘Whoever is among you of all his people,’
  - ***Cyrus obviously does not know all the locations in the country that the Jews were displaced and dispersed too...***
  - But God does. But notice in Cyrus’s proclamation, that God, through Cyrus, is calling all of God’s people to go back to Jerusalem and to worship the one true God.
    - *For the time of Exile was now over!!!*
- ***As we discussed last week, here’s the detrimental detail, only approximately 5% of the 1 Million Jews believed to have been around at this time came back to Jerusalem.***
  - Most scholars believe this was 42,000-50,000 people that returned home. Out of over a million.
- ***When the exile had just occurred, the first generation of Jews in Babylonian captivity (slavery) had a really hard life.***
  - They could not openly or even privately worship God without being killed (read Daniel), but, then the other generations came...

■ ***The 2nd and 3rd generations of Jews who lived in Babylon were getting farther and farther away from the faith of their ancestors...***

- Many of the ‘younger’ Jews didn’t leave Babylon. Why? They got comfortable. They loved the comforts of Babylon even if it meant continued slavery (though easier) under Persian rule...
  - ***This is a prime Biblical example that we are always just 1 generation away from not living and being sold out for the Lord...***
- ***The plan given by Cyrus is also specific in the fact that non-jews (non-believers), were to help in this transition...***
  - Cyrus makes it clear that the gentiles (non-jews), the people of his country, were to aide the return home for the Jews.
- Not only did the Jews not have to do all this themselves, God, through Cyrus, provided non-believers to help to make this transition easier.
  - ***Yet, 95% of the Jews would rather stay comfortable than committed to their God...***
    - I know and understand that this Building Fund is a big



commitment, and it is scary. But, we must not be only 5% willing to follow God, this number must be larger...

- But, as we will see in Ezra, God used the remnant, 42,000 to be used by Him to rebuild the temple, to begin following God's laws again, and for His Son our Savior to come through the remnant to die for our sins...

**Truth #3: *The Provision of God through Others.* (vv. 5-11)**

- 'Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem. **6** And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered. **7** Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. **8** Cyrus king of Persia brought these out in the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. **9** And this was the number of them: 30 basins of gold, 1,000 basins of silver, 29 censers, **10** 30 bowls of gold, 410 bowls of silver, and 1,000 other vessels; **11** all the vessels of gold and of silver were

5,400. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.'

- Verses 5-11 of Ezra show that we go from the King to the Citizens, but still, God's plan is on display and set into motion
  - *In these verses it is clear that God makes provisions for His people to return by giving them the resources they will need to be successful.*
  - *God can and in this case will, use non-believers to do so...*
    - God's provision through others in this text is clear, but there are several important things to point out...
- ***One Jewish People, Two Tribes, still... (v. 5)***
  - 'Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem.'
  - Back in 1st Kings chapters 11-12, the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms. Northern and Southern. This occurred after Solomon's reign.
    - ***10 Tribes made up the Northern Kingdom of Judah, while the Southern Kingdom of Judah consisted of Jews from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and the levites.***

- Now the text clearly tells us that Cyrus's proclamation clearly went throughout the entire nation.

- *But the author of Ezra is pretty distinct in letting us know that these two tribes responded.*

- *Not everyone who hears God's commands are going to listen and follow them...*

- Due to the silence in the text concerning the Northern Kingdom year (who were exiled by Assyria 140 years before), it is believed that no Jews from the Northern Kingdom returned.

- *Notice that the word 'stirred' has occurred again.*

- *Previously God has STIRRED in Cyrus's heart, now He is stirring in the leaders of Israel.*

- Oftentimes in Scripture when God starts moving it usually starts with leadership.
  - I know for a fact that in December of 2023 while on vacation, that God STIRRED in my heart and affirmed to me that it was time to start this process. Not just in my heart, but in leaders of our Church.

- *We must be thankful for the STIRRING and MOVEMENT of God among our fellowship because not every Christian is STIRRED.*

- 'Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses'

- Fathers, lead your families and teach them that giving and following God matters greatly!
    - Leaders in the Church, don't just teach SS, greet ppl, lead a d-group, or any other leadership position, actually be about it...

- **Obedient Neighbors. (v. 6)**

- 'And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered.'

- *The language and content of Ezra 1:6 is similar to Exodus 12:35-36, which is where the exodus out of Egypt occurred and the Egyptians gave departing gifts of silver, gold, and clothing.*

- The surrounding neighbors, though we don't know who they are, it is a vague description here, are obedient to the decree of Cyrus.

- God is all in this situation.

- *When God calls a group of people to do something, even if it seems crazy, He WILL provide the means and the resources with which to do it in whatever way He chooses to.*

- So if WE are confident in this STIRRING and MOVEMENT of God, why would we not think that He will provide and come through now?
- *Old Articles come home... (vv. 7-8)*
  - ‘Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. **8** Cyrus king of Persia brought these out in the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.’
  - *Cyrus is not just asking the persians and ex-babylonians to give, he is throwing his support behind this project as well.*
    - When the Babylonians had taken over the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar had taken away the items and articles that were previously in the temple, because He did not want the Jews to worship Yahweh.
  - *Cyrus shows the entire ancient world that he is legit in restoring the Jews and allowing them to worship their God again, because he returns this to them.*
    - Cyrus gets his treasurer, Mithredath, to take the Jewish valuables out of the royal treasury that they had successfully secured from Babylon.

- *Sheshbazzar:*
  - His identity is mostly a mystery in the realm of scholarship to this day...
  - *His name was Babylonian, but his title, ‘Prince of Judah’, suggests that he was Hebrew.*
    - Like all other deported Jews, he could’ve been given a Babylonian name... (Daniel’s was Belshazzar).
  - *Though we cannot confirm his identity 100%, he was a leader of Judah at this time, and in Ezra 5:14-16, we will find that Sheshbazzar will lay the foundation for the temple.*
- *Outpouring of Inventory. (vv. 9-11)*
  - ‘And this was the number of them: 30 basins of gold, 1,000 basins of silver, 29 censers, **10** 30 bowls of gold, 410 bowls of silver, and 1,000 other vessels; **11** all the vessels of gold and of silver were 5,400. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.’
  - *Cyrus did exactly what he said he was going to do...*
    - Though Cyrus was indeed a politician and certainly did some moving and shaking through all of this, it must be

made clear that he did do what he said  
he was going to do...

- ***According to the Torah, we know that the items in the temple were imperative to following the Biblical rules and guidelines, now they were getting those back so that they could resume Old Covenant Worship.***

- Here's what was returned...

■

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| Gold Dishes   | 30    |
| Silver Dishes | 1,000 |
| Silver Pans   | 29    |
| Gold Bowls    | 30    |
| Silver Bowls  | 410   |
| Other Items   | 1,000 |

- ***While it did take a few years for these items to be transported to Jerusalem by Sheshbazzar, they would eventually make it.***

■ ***I find this so symbolic of our God...***

- ***He restored the coveted items of worship to the temple, just as He was restoring the inside hearts of His people to return to worshipping Him and living for Him...***

- God always has a plan, and He always provides in that plan...

### **Conclusion:**

- Sure, we live in days where our hope is far from that of the White House or the Governor's Mansion down the road...
  - ***Neither should it be nor should it ever had been...***
  - ***Our faith and trust should always be in the Lord Jesus Christ.***
- ***As we close this morning, I know that this is a 'different' kind of sermon.***
  - Different can and is good.
- While all of our politicians are like us, sinners and imperfect, it doesn't stop that fact that we must pray for our Government leaders while always realizing that God is on the Throne. God Himself allows political leaders in their places.
  - ***He can Probe their hearts.***
  - ***He can lead them to make political proclamations and legislation.***
  - ***His Provision follows His Plan...***
- I want to leave you this morning with a quote from the 32nd President of the United States. I pray that this morning, you and I will echo his sentiments, and make this our prayer...
  - He said this on February 23rd, 1936...
  - ***"No greater thing could come to our land today than a revival of the spirit of***

*religion — a revival that would sweep through the homes of the Nation and stir the hearts of men and women of all faiths to a reassertion of their belief in God and their dedication to His will for themselves and for their world. I doubt if there is any problem- social, political or economic—that would not melt away before the fire of such a spiritual awakening.”*