

Ezra 1

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[0 : 00] All right, we're going into the book of Ezra tonight, the book of Ezra. Really excited. We finished up 2 Chronicles. I love the book of Ezra. We as a church have looked at Ezra in part. I'm sure you remember it. It was in 2018. So it was only seven years ago. I know it's right on the front of your mind.

But we looked at the first six chapters of the book of Ezra in 2018. As we were just looking in particular at a certain theme, we had not been preaching our way through the Bible at that point. We were looking at the restoration of worship.

This time through, we'll look at it in its entirety if the Lord carries and allows us to, which is really important because when we get to the seventh chapter, we meet the man, Ezra, that is the author of the book by most agreement.

I won't want to say all are in agreement, but more than likely, Ezra is the author of the book, and we meet him officially in the seventh chapter. One of my favorite verses in the Old Testament is found in Ezra chapter 7, where it declares Ezra's purpose.

In the tenth verse there in the seventh chapter, it says that Ezra committed to study the word of God, that he may practice the word, and he may teach the people of Israel the word.

[1 : 24] It's almost like an Old Testament commissioning of discipleship. He studied the word, that he may practice the word, so that he could teach the word. We meet Ezra in a number of passages.

In particular, we meet him in this book and in the book of Nehemiah. Jewish scripture had Ezra and Nehemiah combined because they are contemporaries. They both end up in Jerusalem at the same time.

What Ezra is on the spiritual front, Nehemiah is on the political front. Ezra was used to rebuild and restore the worship of the city, whereas Nehemiah is used of the Lord to restore the physical structure of the city, you know, the rebuilding of the walls.

Those events happen simultaneously. It is in the book of Nehemiah, by the way, that we have the very first mentioning. This is a good Bible trivia for you in case you, because you can't look at Ezra without looking at Nehemiah.

You also can't study the book of Ezra without studying the minor prophets of Haggai and Zechariah. We'll see those. So we will be looking at those two minor prophets as we make our way, in particular by the time we get to the third chapter in the book of Ezra.

[2 : 36] We will need to cross-reference the minor prophets of Haggai and Zechariah, because they were prophesying during that time frame. But going back to Nehemiah, Nehemiah, good Bible trivia if anybody ever asks you this, when is the first time anybody is ever described as being standing on a platform preaching?

And it's Ezra in the book of Nehemiah. When they build a platform, he's standing, everyone stands, all men, women, children stand for half a day while Ezra reads from the word.

And on either side of him are the Levites and the scribes. And it says that for half the day he read the word, and then the remainder part of the day they went and gave the sense of the word. So it's really an Old Testament picture of expositional preaching, of reading the word and then helping people understand the word.

But the very first time we ever see that, it's Ezra himself who is standing on the platform with the scribes and the Levites beside him on either side, and the people standing before him. That's also where we get the practice.

If you want to look for a biblical mandate and biblical practice historically from where we stand together and we read the word, it is found in the book of Nehemiah, but it is Ezra who is leading the people.

[3 : 47] He was a lot more long-winded than I was. He was reading for four hours at a time, and everybody was standing. Men, women, children, for four hours. While he just read from the word.

And then they would sit down and the Levites would go and give the sense. So that helps you understand a little bit about the person Ezra. What you need to know in the book in particular, and I know we're introducing it a little bit before we get into it, we'll look at the first chapter tonight, is that Ezra began a school of not prophets, but of Levites and priests.

Ezra is of Aaronic descent, so he is descendant of Aaron. He develops a school of scribes, which we really have to give a lot of credit to the maintaining of Scripture.

Many people believe, and I think accurately so, throughout history, that the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, came from the schools of Ezra. It was the scribes that he started.

We have to give a lot of credit to that for the preservation of Scripture. He's used historically, and his influence kind of outlasts his own life. He ascends to a pretty high position in the Persian Empire.

[4 : 58] We'll see the beginning a little bit of that Persian Empire tonight. But he ascends to a very high position. Nehemiah also ascends to a high position. But because of Ezra's position, he has access to things that others in the kingdom do not, some of that being the historical records of the Persian Empire.

And that's important when we study this book, because what you know is that the decree we're going to read about in just a moment from King Cyrus came about in 538 B.C.

Cyrus began his reign in 539 B.C., issued the decree within the first year of his reign, and more likely 538 B.C. Ezra does not come to Jerusalem until 458 B.C.

So there's a big gap of time. Just as there were multiple stages of deportation into the Babylonian captivity, we know that Daniel and the wise men around him were taken in the first, and then we know they came back and took more later, and then we know they came back and took some later until it eventually completely fell.

But in 586, I believe it's 586 B.C. is when it completely fell, Jerusalem fell. There are also multiple returns, so it doesn't happen all at once.

[6 : 15] When Ezra comes back in 458, a number of years after the decree was issued, he brings back with him 5,000 other individuals. Nehemiah comes back around that same time, and there are a small group of people.

But this is a lot of history involved in this, because we say that what we have in the first six chapters, chapters 1 through 6, is Ezra detailing for us historically what took place before he got there.

And he shows us the events that are going on. You need to understand when you read in the book of Ezra, you're not reading chronological order.

Some of these kings will kind of be jumbled up and mixed up a little bit. We'll try to work our way through the weeds. There are certain passages where we'll have to stop here and then go over to here to see it in chronological order so that everything can happen at that same time.

Just in case you were wondering in biblical history, between the return of the first exiles, we're going to read about it in just a moment, and the coming of Ezra to Jerusalem, there is a queen that happens to show up in the Persian Empire who is of Jewish descent.

[7 : 28] You know her as Esther. She is there. Mordecai is taking care of her. Mordecai ends up in the temple. So we should not be surprised that Ezra, a Jew, ascends to prominence too.

So in studying this, now I'm giving you a lot of information, right? You can't just study the book of Ezra. You've got Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and the book of Esther.

There's a lot that's going on at this time historically. There's a lot that is happening. And we're not going to read them all at the same time, but there will be things we pull into context that help us understand the impact of what's going on.

None of that begins if it does not happen in the first chapter here of Ezra 1. And so I want you to see tonight the historical movements of God.

Because the return of the Jewish people back to Jerusalem was a historical movement of the Lord God Almighty. It is His initiative. It is His decision.

[8 : 36] It is His working and His moving. It is a historical movement of God among His people solely for His glory. Which is, in understanding that, we understand why they get in trouble.

That's why the two prophets come. By the way, when we mention those two prophets, you should have all of a sudden thought of Zechariah chapter 9, right?

Where Zechariah says that the king would come riding on the coat of a donkey and he would come into Jerusalem and the town would be an uproar. That is a prophetic picture of Christ that we see in the New Testament, what we call the triumphal entry.

That prophet was prophesying during the days, immediately preceding Ezra coming to see a ramshackle city because Nehemiah hadn't even rebuilt the walls yet.

So, God is moving historically here. What He's doing, it's so much more. And I know when we're looking at it, by the way, in case you haven't figured it out, these are the matters I love in the Old Testament, okay?

[9 : 41] These are the matters. Where it's one grand story. And we know all the scripture is one grand story. But why did God take them out? We know why they went to Babylonian captivity.

We're not surprised. They couldn't obey. They couldn't keep the covenant. They kept faltering. They kept failing. Time after time after time again, they spurned the Lord God Almighty. We stand in wonder and amazement that God took so long in sending them there.

We would have sent them there a long time ago. If we're just to be honest, we would have sent ourselves there a long time ago. But yet God in His loving kindness and His patience, He has a purpose behind it. He eventually allows them to go into captivity.

The city falls and as scripture says, the people walk by and they shake their head and say, Wow, I can't look at this city that's in ruins. But why does God bring them back? Why does He move them back?

Why does He call them back? Is it just so they can be back home? Is it just so they're back where they're supposed to be? No, it is because He is preparing again.

[10 : 38] Think about this. He is preparing for the coming of the Messiah. Their return to Jerusalem begins, actually their departure when Jerusalem fell started the clock.

Of the coming of the Messiah. And so when they come back, the work that's going on, the movement of God that's taking place, is because it's bringing back, or it's bringing back the people to reestablish the temple, so that when the Savior shows up, it all aligns with all of scripture.

We also know, historically, if we're looking at it, we'll bring it back in our context, you say, Pastor, why does that matter? Well, it's because the prophetic word in the Old Testament says that God will call His people from the dispersed nations, and those that were not a nation will be made a nation in a day.

You do know, at the end of World War II, when a treaty was signed, that the nation of Israel was reborn in a day. Given their land and set upon their land, and in a day, they went from being a people group dispersed among multiple nations to all of a sudden being a nation, and the nation was born in a day.

Why? Was God just giving them land because that's their land and that's where they belong? No, it is because it again starts the clock on the historical movement of God of what He is doing. So we pay attention.

[12 : 01] It is not just matters that happened in the Old Testament, but we look at them, and we want to see how God moves. Right? That's our aspect of that. We want to see what He is doing.

And all of that to say, now we can read the first chapter of Ezra chapter 1. Okay? I think we've painted the picture enough. Let's read Ezra chapter 1. It says, 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.

Then the heads of the 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.

[13:24] And 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 Mithridath, the treasurer. And he counted them out to Sheshbazar, 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 the gold and silver numbered 5,400. Sheshbazar brought them all up with the exiles who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem. Ezra chapter 1.

I want you to see a historical movement of God. As a side note, I want you to note that this Sheshbazar here, who is considered to be the leader of the people of Judah, is more than likely the same individual we will meet later in the chapter, not in the chapter later in the book, named Zerubbabel.

[14:39] Zerubbabel. Same guy. And it is because it is in the third chapter that we are told Zerubbabel lays the foundation of the temple. And then we are told later on in the book of Ezra, I believe it may be Ezra chapter 7, that Sheshbazar lays the foundation of the temple.

The book of Haggai tells us that it is Zerubbabel who lays the foundation of the temple. So it is not uncommon for an individual to have two names.

One would be his legal name. The other would be his political name or a title name. Either way, what we notice here immediately looking at this is that individual who is of Jewish descent has a very Babylonian name and a Persian name.

This is how long the people have made themselves at home. As the book of Ezekiel says, make yourselves at home, build houses, pray for the peace of the nation where you are at. The people have been living in captivity so long that the majority of those who come back will have Babylonian and Persian names.

Zerubbabel actually is a name which speaks to the false god Baal. Which shouldn't surprise us because that was the god of the Babylonians. And they carry with them this.

[15:56] And that is something to keep in mind as we study this. And we wonder why Nehemiah and Ezra pull the hair out of people's head by the time we get to the end of the book of Nehemiah.

And we see the discipline that's going on there. But yet we move forward. To see the movement of God and to see how it took place here. And also to understand how it continues to take place today. Because we have this reality. When we study in particular the Old Testament, well for that matter, when we study any portion of scripture, the one thing that should resonate within our mind is that the Lord our God does not change.

He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. His ways do not change. The manner in which he does things does not change. One of the things that is so comforting to us as individuals is that he is a consistent God.

We do not have to wonder and be amazed at how he moves, how he works, or how he operates. For we have a record of the character and the attributes of the God we worship and the Lord we serve.

[17:02] And he is always true to his character and his movements and in the manner in which he does things. He does not wake up tomorrow and decide, all of a sudden he is going to change how he behaves.

It is very comforting for us to understand that when we see the character of God and we see it through the revelation of his name or the display of his movements, that is something that we can stand upon in confidence as we move forward walking by faith.

So we walk by faith and not by sight. We understand that. But we do not walk in ignorant faith. And that is something that we always must remind ourselves. Well, we're just living by faith. Well, true. But it is not an ignorant faith. It is a faith full of revelation. We know the God we serve. We know much about the God we serve. We know our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We see him in all of his fullness. God's character has been displayed in the Old Testament as much as it is displayed in the New Testament. We'll see a little bit of that here in just a moment.

[18:01] So when we study how God moved in the past to bring his people back, then it gives us a little foundation to stand on by faith to see how God moves today. How do we judge something if it is truly and genuinely a movement of God?

Or how do we discern, being wise as serpents but gentle as doves, to know when God is leading and guiding? And that is very beneficial for us even in our present day.

The first thing that we notice from our text before us is that God moves according to his promises. God moves according to his promises.

It is comforting, isn't it, that everything that God has done, he has first proclaimed that he would do it. The nation of Israel should not have been surprised when they were led away into captivity because God had declared even all the way back in the book of Leviticus that they would be led away into captivity.

And even if when Moses said that and after writing and penning the book of Leviticus, Joshua reminded them of it at the end of the book of Joshua, with Joshua 24, you know the chapter so well because it's choose you this day whom you will serve but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord and we find comfort in that.

[19:17] But what we don't find comfort in is in the phrases which follow that where Joshua says, yes, you declare that but there will be a day where you will fail to do so and God will lead you into captivity. So God had declared over and over and over again that he would do the very thing that he does.

He is what we call a self-revealing God. Many religions and faiths around the world serve in desperate hope and anticipation hoping that they are doing what their God wants them to do or they're acting as they should because they are really blind to the reality of what God has declared. But not so with us. Look at what it says. Now, in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, we looked last week because this same phrase, by the way, these same passages are found in the end of the book of 2 Chronicles how the prophet Isaiah had declared that this man Cyrus would come.

Many, many, many years, decades before this, Isaiah had named him by name. You find that in the book of Isaiah, chapters 48 and chapter 49. It said that he would issue this decree.

Some people believe that Daniel was probably in the palace. We know he was in the palace when Cyrus came in and took over reign from the Babylonians, evil Mordok. He took over from Nebuchadnezzar's son and he took reign over and Daniel was in the palace.

[20:38] We know that Daniel ascended and remained high in position. Many people believe that Daniel would have brought the book of Isaiah to him and said, hey, this says your name right here and kind of pointed it. And maybe that's the way God would have kind of stirred his heart and stirred his soul.

I don't know. Much like history tells us that when Alexander the Great went through his great sweeping campaign and the Greek empire was expanding, he spared the Jewish people because when he got to the land of Israel, someone showed him the book of Daniel and showed him how it declared that a king would rise to power suddenly and he would take all this and Alexander said, that's me.

So he gave a little mercy. Problem is that Alexander didn't keep reading a little bit further that said that that king would come to a sudden end and his empire would be divided into four kingdoms, which, by the way, happened shortly after he showed mercy to the people of Israel.

But anyway, we're kind of looking at a little history there. But we see here that Cyrus comes to reign. Daniel could have shown him this. We have to give credit for Daniel.

This is why the wise men come from the east. That's where Daniel would have been. Daniel would have been the chief wise man. Chief wise man gets to put books in the library and surely the book he would have put in the library would have been what we refer to as the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible.

[21:50] And so these wise men would have been reading Numbers chapter 24, 15. It said, there's going to be a king. There's a star. Let's go see. What a wonderful way God paints the picture, right? And shows us in all clear details.

But what we're noticing is that God always moves according to his promise. Because look at what it says. In the first year of King Cyrus, it says, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord, that is Yahweh. In order to fulfill the word of Yahweh. So now we have a people who are in captivity and have been in captivity for 70 years. The northern kingdom has been in captivity much longer than that.

When we start that 70 year countdown is dependent upon how you translate and interpret certain passages. We're not going to take our time to break down all that. It could have been the first deportation.

More than likely it was not when the walls eventually fell. But anyway, for 70 years now, enough time for the people to assume Babylonian names. Yet God still refers to himself as the covenant God of that people.

[22 : 57] Why? Because their disobedience and even their discipline did not thwart the covenant of God.

God keeps his covenants. He is a covenant-keeping God. He is a covenant-keeping God. Remember this. When reading scripture, there is a difference in the covenants. There are unconditional covenants.

The Abrahamic covenant is an unconditional covenant. When Abraham was making the covenant with God, they split the animals in two. You remember that each one was supposed to pass back and forth carrying a torch, and that's how you would shake hands.

Effectively. Abraham fell asleep. When he woke up, he saw a burning furnace going back and forth between the dead carcasses. And we're like, what in the world does that mean? Well, what it means is that God was making the covenant while Abraham was asleep.

[23 : 57] Why? Because Abraham had no part in it. God shook his own hand. Okay? God says, I'm making a covenant. I'm going to fulfill it. I agree with you. And Elohim, in the counsel of his own perfect will, and in his own holiness, he made the covenant in spite of Abraham.

So it's an unconditional covenant. And that covenant was tied to a land, to a people in a land with a promise. Right? Unconditional. People with a land with a promise.

The Davidic covenant is an unconditional covenant. David had nothing to do with it. The covenant in Mount Sinai is a conditional covenant. If you will obey my law, then I will be your God. Why?

Because that covenant is to a particular small group of people for a time. This is why we know, we're about to start preaching here without really getting into it, right?

This is how we know we are not saved by law. Paul says in the book of Revelation, not Revelation, the book of Galatians, is that the two mountains are two different covenants, right?

[25 : 00] There is the covenant of promise, and there's the covenant of law. The covenant of law was conditional for a time, as Paul would say later, until the fullness of time when the Messiah would come, the Savior would come.

Therefore, it has been ratified. But the covenant of promise, the Abrahamic covenant, has never failed. And what was the covenant? That I will raise up multiple descendants from you, right?

Which encompassed all people groups, of all tribes, and all tongues, and all nations. But what we see here, is that Yahweh, the Lord, moves Cyrus to issue decree, because he is still in covenant with these people.

These people are not deserving of it. These people are not even expecting it at this time. These people have done nothing to earn it. I mean, they're naming their children, who is the leader of the people of Judah, after the false god Baal.

And yet, he refers to himself as Yahweh, for I am still in covenant. Look at this. He says, in order to fulfill the word, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he sent this proclamation.

[26 : 01] And it says, thus says Cyrus, the king of Persia, the Lord, there you go again, his covenant name. One thing you need to know, and one thing we need to accept, and understand in scripture, God always moves according to his promises.

He keeps his covenants. Which means, that if he has declared it, and he has proclaimed it, then his movements will be in line with it.

Why is it important, that we know what scripture teaches us, so that we could stand up here, and say, oh, that's cool that we know all of that. No, it is important, so that when we know, that we see what we think, is a movement of God, if it's not attached, to a promise found in scripture, then it's not, it may be a movement, but it is not a movement, of the Lord God Almighty.

He will never move contrary to, or apart from, what he has already revealed, and declared to us. He binds himself, to his word.

So when he brought them back, he was bringing them back, as covenant God. We are told in the book of Hebrews, that we have the fullness, of the revelation, the fullness, in previous times, God

spoke in various ways, and various means, through various people, but in these latter days, he has spoken to us, through Jesus Christ, his son.

[27 : 22] The Holy Spirit comes, and this is one test, that we have for everything, that we do. When the Holy Spirit comes, Jesus says, he has a very particular purpose, right? We looked at the retreat, for those of you that were there, what a wonderful time.

We were looking at John 15, and we were, we were looking at, all these wonderful things, where Christ has abided in me. If we got to the 16th chapter, and we saw a little bit more, of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit comes, to remind you, to convict you of your sin, but then Jesus says, and he will remind you, of what I have said, and he will disclose to you, things that I have said, which tells us, the Holy Spirit, I'm not going to get too far, into this teaching, because we'll be looking at it, Sunday morning, so excited, Sunday morning, but anyway, we're, we're, the Holy Spirit comes, and declares to us, what Jesus has already said, the Spirit doesn't tell us, something new, if anyone ever comes to you, I've said this before, and I'll say it, until the Lord calls me to glory, if anyone ever comes to you, and says, the Holy Spirit revealed this to me, and you don't find it in scripture, then run away from them, we are not looking for a, quote, new revelation, we are looking for, a clarified revelation, we need, we need to understand it better, but we do not need, a new revelation, this is why, some of the, quote unquote, movements of God, historically, were not movements of God, because the Spirit gave, we even still have some here today, where the Spirit gave this new revelation, that is baloney, it is completely contrary,

I know that's not something, pastors are supposed to say, but it is, there's not, there's other words I could say, but that's probably the nicest, I could say, okay, but it is false, because it is completely, completely contrary, to the teaching of Christ, that when he comes, he will tell you, what I have already said, why, because God moves, according to his promises, he keeps his word, this brings us, great hope, and great comfort, because salvation, our redemption, is one of those, unconditional covenants, when you are redeemed, through Jesus Christ's blood, he didn't call you and say, hey, if you will do this, then I'll save you, right, he said, well, he says, if you'll humble myself, and call on my name, I'll save you, right, but no one comes to the Father, but through Jesus Christ, so the very ability, to call upon the name of Christ, was given to you by him, and it is an unconditional covenant, of salvation and redemption,

I had a meeting this week, where someone says, I just want to make sure, my salvation is going to stick, I said, are you trusting in Jesus Christ, yes, but I haven't been perfect, I didn't ask you that, are you trusting in Jesus Christ, yes, then it's stuck, it's stuck, it's stuck can be, right, there's nothing you can do about it, nothing can take you, out of the hand of the Father, neither powers, nor principalities, nor death, nor, no, nothing, and if death, and the powers, and principalities, and spiritual forces, of the air, some people say, well what if I jump out, friend listen, I got, I'm sorry, I'm a little preachy, I don't know why, but let me say, if Satan, who is stronger than you, are in the flesh, by the way, he is greater than you, and I are in the flesh, but greater is he that is in us, than he that's in the world, I get that, but we are not greater than Satan, we are not a created heavenly being, who once was so full of glory, and splendor, that we were referred to, as an angel of light, but if he can't take you, out of the hand of the Father, then who do we think we are, that we think we can take ourselves out, so when Paul declares, that nothing can separate you, from the love of the Father, in Christ, why, because it's an unconditional covenant, this is why we need to know, that the movements of God, are always according, to his promises, number two, the movements of God, are reminders, of his high position, they are reminders, of his high, and lofty position, notice what it says, verse two, thus Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord, thus says Cyrus, by the way, this is so good, let's go back to verse one, it says that Cyrus, issued a proclamation, throughout all his kingdom, and there's this little wording, when we read it in second chronicles,

I said pay attention to that, and I'm going to say it again, and he wrote it down, and he wrote it down, you know why we can trust, that what we're about to read, is exactly what was issued, is because Ezra, was actually in the archives, of the documents, and was reading, and copying, what had been written down, and the fact that Cyrus, wrote it down, by the way, is a grand display, of God's sovereignty, that he, so moved him, not to just say it, but to write it down, and we'll see it later, in the book of Ezra, for if it had not been written down, then what God had determined, would not come to completion, I don't want to get too far ahead of myself, but the, there's a law in the land of the Persians, and the Medo-Persians, that a law, cannot be broken, well if you just orally say the law, and nobody is around, who heard you say that law, then they don't know, if it's a law or not, but

when you write it down, it has to be fulfilled, you cannot break the law, that's important, the fact that he wrote it down, is important, now Ezra, he's reading it, so he's going to quote it for us, by the way, we'll read it again later, because Ezra, is in the archives, this man, who's high priesthood, descendant of a man, who is studying the word, is also copying this, he says, thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord, the king of Persia, said this, the God of heaven, notice his high position, he is Yahweh, but he's the God of heaven, he's not just the God of Jerusalem,

[33 : 04] I know he says a minute, that they, he is the God of Jerusalem, or he's the God of Judah, but no, before he's the God of Jerusalem, he's the God of heaven, and he exalts our view, of who this is, that's moving him, this is not just the God, who's in covenant, with these particular people, he is the God, Elohim of heaven, Elohim, what a wonderful name, I'm thankful at times, sometimes I'm not, for the radio stations, that have like the title of the songs, and we were going down the road, the other day, and Brayden says Elohim, what does that mean, he actually said it wrong, he said Elohim, I said well, it's okay, maybe I'm saying it wrong, I don't know, but he said, what in the world is that, dad, who is that, I said oh that's God, but what does Elohim mean, I said that's a great question son, I'm glad you asked me that, because Elohim, is the great creator, omniscient, all powerful God, in the beginning, Elohim created the heavens, and the earth, so Elohim is creator God, so now we have, the covenant God, who is also the creator God, he is Elohim, and for my good Bible students here, that were all the way here, back in 2016, which are just a few of you now, than when we started in Genesis 1, 1, there's this great statement,

Elohim is what, is it singular or plural, it's plural, thank you, thank you Bible students, El is singular, Elohim is plural, so the doctrine of the Trinity, is introduced to us, in the very first verse, of scripture, in the beginning, Elohim, the plural God, wait a minute, what do you mean plural, why are we using plural name, I'll show you why, Sunday morning, but anyway, so in the beginning, Elohim, he is creator God, he's almighty God, he's the God of heaven, right, look at his high position, and notice what it says, not only is it the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms, of the earth, so Cyrus, is the first king, of the growing Persian empire, by this time, and the Persian empire, is the largest empire, in the world, so keep this in mind, this isn't just some kind, of run the mill king, who's talking here, the Persian empire now, is larger than the Babylonian empire, ever was, it will be surpassed later, by the Greek empire, but at this time, it is the largest empire, in the world, so here's the king, and he says,

I was given this, he doesn't say, I earned it, I took it, I won it, he said, I was given this, by the God of heaven, and he goes on, a little bit further, and he has appointed me, so that's just, a random word, but think about this, for just a moment, the one who appoints, is greater than the one, who has been appointed, that is the superior, always appoints, the inferior, the one with the higher rank, gets to tell the others, what to do, so the king, of the largest empire, of his day, declares, this God, has told me, what to do, look at his high position, when God moves, according to his promises, the one thing, that we notice, is that God, exists, in an exalted, position, and we are reminded, of the position, which he holds, because he is not, limited in scope, he is a God, who is in control, of who, who is going to be king, who may be king, he's the God, who holds the heart, of the kings, in the palm of his hands, as we're told, in scripture, he is a God, who can call the king, by name, centuries before, he even comes into existence, he is a God, who gives, and takes away, and he's a God, who moves, and stirs the hearts, so we see, that the movements, of God, are reminders, of his high position, that when God, is moving, it reminds us, that he is in control, at times, in spite of us, that he is, high and lifted up, number three, we notice, that the historical, movements of God, not only, are according, to his promises, and reminders, of his high position, they also, the God moves, historically, through the hearts, of his people,

God moves, historically, through the hearts, of his people, now think about that, for just a moment, God has said it, and God will do it, the God who, in the beginning, God created the heavens, and the earth, he said, let there be light, and there was light, he said, let the land, and the sea, separated, and it was so, let there be animals, and it was so, the God who spoke it all, into existence, right, this is his high, and lofty position, but from the moment, where God, created man, out of the dust, the earth, he did create him, in his own image, he created him, and then he fashioned, a woman, in a more complicated manner, and then he gave them, a job assignment, to love the Lord, their God, with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind, and serve him, and obey him, and all they do, and to rule, over the face of the earth, from that moment on, God has, and it feels bad, to even say it this way, but God has, limited himself, in moving, through his people,

it blows my mind, when I think of this, much like the psalmist, where I cry out, when I look to the heavens,

I say, what is man, that you think of him, I read a statistic, the other day, that if you were, to try to count, all the stars, in the heavens, and if you were, counting one star, every second, it would take you, like three thousand years, to count the stars, in our own galaxy, that's just the stars, in our galaxy, and our galaxy, is not a big galaxy, but yet God knows, the name of every star, calls them forth by name, and tells them, where to go, what is man, that he thinks of us, but I'll take it, a little bit further, not only what is man, that he thinks of us, what is man, that he works, through us, that when God, declares, he's going to do a work, he doesn't do it, apart from his people, he works, through his people, in the beginning, when God created, the heavens and the earth, don't you think, that God could have said, let there be a temple, in Jerusalem, and boom, there was a temple, God could have, spoken all into existence, if he wanted, just to display his glory, if he wanted the world, to know the splendor, of who he is, he who creates, all this around us, that declares the glory, of the creator God, could have spoken, to existence, the rebuilding of a city, he didn't need a Nehemiah, he didn't need an Ezra, he didn't need a Zerubbabel, he didn't need any of those, right, he could have just said, let there be a temple there, let it be the grandest, of all temples, if we can't believe it, then wait until we get to glory, and we see the temple, he's building, when they use, for asphalt, what we cherish, as precious, they pave their streets, with gold, and we work our whole life, just to try to gain it, and they're paving the streets, with it, right,

[39 : 58] I mean, what a wonderful thing, the pearly gates, that are one solid pearl, people say, oh well, I mean, I don't think, I've never seen a pearl that large, it doesn't matter, I know the one who created the pearls, in the bottom of the ocean, so surely when we get to glory, when he creates the pearls, up in glory, they can be whatever size, he wants them to be, he is high, and lifted up, but yet, what we notice, is the historical movements, of God, are always, through the hearts of his people, he doesn't separate himself, from his people to work, the savior is coming, this is the beginning of the movement, to start the clock, for the coming of the one, who will ride on the coat of a donkey, into Jerusalem, as they cry out, Hosanna, blesses he who comes, in the name of the Lord, but the city had to be rebuilt, before that could ever happen, and to rebuild the city, he calls, a bunch of people, that are in Babylonian captivity, through a king, of Persia named Cyrus, what does it say, then the heads of the fathers, households of Judah, and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites arose, notice this,

God stirred the heart of Cyrus, to issue the decree, but look at this, and everyone whose spirit, God had stirred, to go up, and rebuild the house of the Lord, which is in Jerusalem, those who responded, that God stirred their hearts too, can I give you just one, kind of side note here, I'm giving you a bunch of side notes, I'm going to give you one more, okay, if you ever want to try to reconcile, now don't throw anything at me, okay, make your brain smoke, for just a moment, pastor, how do you reconcile, John 3, 16, that God so loved the world, that whosoever believes in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life, that's there, I believe it with all my heart, with all my soul, how do you reconcile that, with the book of Ephesians, those whom God foreknew, foreknew, he ordained, and predestined, that they would be called, the sons of God, how do you reconcile that, how do you reconcile, the free will of man, and the sovereignty of God, and salvation, well the answer is just like this, and it's in this passage before you, the decree issued by Cyrus, was whosoever of God's people, wants to go up, let him go, so in Cyrus issued a decree, it said whoever wants to go, can go, only those that God stirred their hearts, went, the invitation was to whosoever will, the only ones that did, were the ones that God stirred their hearts, man extends the invitation, but it is God that moves the individual, to respond right, it's much the same way in salvation, the invitation of salvation, is that whosoever believes in Jesus Christ, will be saved, but we know the other side of that, that only those whose hearts, are stirred and moved, by the Holy Spirit, and drawn to the Father, are actually saved, it does not belittle the invitation, as a matter of fact, it exalts it, because we had the assurance, that when Cyrus issued the decree, that whoever wants to go, that when God moved Cyrus to issue a decree,

God was also moving in the hearts, of individuals to want to go back, do you see that, you say, well why wouldn't they want to go back, well the better question is, why would they, they were born, in Babylonian captivity, but it wasn't like Egyptian slavery, right, they had nice houses, they had nice homes, they had good money, they had farms, they had everything, this was comfort, they were in, the most prosperous nation, and kingdom, and living life at large, it was sacrificial, to respond to

that, but when Cyrus was moved, to issue the decree, the people's hearts, were being moved, to respond to it as well, and God's moving, through the hearts of his people, I have to move forward, for the sake of time, God moves historically, through the hearts of his people, fourth and finally, and this will be quick, God ensures, there are sufficient provisions, when God moves, there are sufficient provisions, while there were only, a limited amount, and it's a very, very small amount of people, that actually respond, to the invitation of Cyrus, to go back, only a few respond, many were called, but few were chosen, we understand that, because their hearts were moved, that does not remove, everyone else from responsibility, you say well I'm glad, I wasn't called to go back, I'm thankful God, didn't stir my heart, no because Cyrus says, in his decree, as he was led by the Lord, and let those men around them, support them with gold, and silver, and cattle, and free will offerings, and we find that when they go, the people that were next to him, supported them, because they were giving up, everything to follow this calling, they supported them, with gold, and silver, and cattle, and free will offerings, God stirred the hearts, of the people to go, but he was also stirring, the hearts of the people, to fund their going, even King Cyrus, takes the, precious things, from the temple, out of Nebuchadnezzar's, false god temple, and gives it back to them, so that they can bring it, back to Jerusalem, what we see, is that God, ensures the provisions, a sufficient means, to accomplish, what he calls his people to do, when God moves, everything that is needed, to fulfill that calling, is also there, we don't have to be afraid, that oh God does something, and we won't be ready, it's much like I tell, young couples, when they sit down with me, and they say, well we're going to have kids, when we're ready, I usually laugh, and say you'll never be ready, nobody's ever ready for kids, they're crazy, so don't wait, until you're ready, right, when God calls us, it's not because we're ready, it's because he already, has the means, to do, what he's calling us to do, and this is how God, moves historically, not only in the book of Ezra, but through all time, we find it in Ezra chapter one, thank you my brothers, and sorry, brothers and sisters,