

## FREEDOM PROCLAIMED

EZRA 1:1-3

Children of Israel – been taken into captivity – in exile in Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC

- Spoken of by Prophet Jeremiah

Jeremiah 25:11

*This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. <sup>12</sup> Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste.*

So in 539 BC, King Cyrus of Persia overthrow the Babylonian king, Nadonidus

- In doing do so, he took control of a vast empire -including the territory of the former kingdoms of Israel and Judah.
- The Persian empire, including Persia, Media, Babylonia, and Chaldea

Vs 1.

I. Fulfilment of prophecy – return from exile – end of exile

Jer. 29:10

<sup>10</sup>“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.

Fulfilled – Heb - ***kalah***

- Root word - *to be complete, at an end, finished, accomplished*

Every Word of the Lord has to be fulfilled

- It is spoken for a particular reason and for particular season
- There is an appointed time for its fulfilment
- It may tarry, it may linger
- But it will certainly come to pass and it will not delay – Hab. 2:3

Ez 22:14

I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it

Isaiah 55:10

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater <sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

God fulfilled His word in the life of Israel

- He is God and not man -
- He is not a liar
- Does he speak and not act?
- He has exalted his word above his name – Num.23:19

He did it then and He is doing it again for you in this season.

This was an end to an era and a beginning of a new one

- There is an end to that suffering, sickness, poverty, etc
- One chapter was closing and a new one was opening
- Story of starting over – a new era – a new page

### **How does He do it for Israel – during this time?**

- He used a man – King Cyrus

## **II. God stirred Cyrus’ spirit to fulfil His word**

Stir:

to disturb, move, awaken, excite, arouse, set in motion

The spirit of Cyrus: mind, intellectual frame, heart – breath – so all he breathes is the will of God.

Jer 51:1

Thus, says the Lord: “Behold, I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon,

Vs.11

“Sharpen the arrows! Take up the shields! The LORD has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, because his purpose concerning Babylon is to destroy it, for that is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance for his temple.

Isaiah 41:25

“I have stirred up *and* put into action [d]one from the north [the king of Persia, Cyrus the Great], and he has come; From the rising of the sun he will call on My Name [in prayer]. And he will trample on [the Babylonian] officials as on mortar, Even as a potter treads clay.”

Isaiah 44:28

“*It is I* who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd (ruler), And he will carry out all that I desire—’ Saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall [again] be built,’ And of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall [again] be laid.’”

Isaiah 45:1

This is what the LORD says to His anointed, to Cyrus [king of Persia], Whose right hand I have held - To subdue nations before him, And I will ungird the loins of kings [disarming them]; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:

Vs 13

“I have stirred up Cyrus *and* put him into action in righteousness [to accomplish My purpose] And I will make all his ways smooth; He will build My city and let My exiles go, Without any payment or reward,” says the LORD of hosts.

Moved by God – shows and emphasises God’s sovereignty – in fulfilling His Word

### **III. PROCLAMATION OF FREEDOM – RESTORATION – BRINGING BACK TO OUR LAND**

- The edict/proclamation/decreed
- Written – documented
- Not by man but by God

#### **Vs. 2 – SOVEREIGNTY OF THE LORD**

FULFILLMENT OF THE WORD OF GOD CAME IN THE FORM OF:

- Shows the sovereign hand of God behind the events of history

The fulfilment of Jeremiah’s words – was indeed the Lord’s doing

Ezra 1:2

King Cyrus – ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah’

What is happening here?

- King Cyrus – acknowledging that there is a higher authority – far powerful than him
- This is in spite of the fact that he did not worship this great God
- he was not a true believer in Yahweh
- the Lord had caused Cyrus to act in this way so that specific prophecies would be fulfilled.
- Yes, the king is in control of a vast empire
- But there is one higher than him – who reigns from his throne in heaven (Isaiah 66:1)
- Cyrus may be in charge of other territories and became the king of Babylon, a title of honor denoting the highest position in the civilized world of the day.
- But Yahweh is far, far greater than him for he rules from heaven
- In essence – it was not King Cyrus acting – it was God turning things around
- He will always use men – to do His will coz he is the Sovereign God.
- And when Yahweh speaks – no man can say no – when He opens no one can shut the door

### **Decree – Freedom from all the chains of slavery/exile**

- Cyrus – issued a decree that Jewish exiles were free to return to their ancestral home

#### **IV. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD**

- The king's edict – not only declared freedom so returnees can go back to their land and rebuild the temple and temple worship
- It also instructed the returnees' neighbours to give them the equivalent of money ( gold and silver, goods, livestock) for the people and
- freewill offering for the house of God
- For the house of God in Jerusalem
- what we require is already here – in other people's hands – there is going to be a shifting
- there is going to be a transfer of wealth
- you are not coming out of this empty handed
- you are coming out better than when you entered the situation

### **Reminiscent of Exodus from Egypt**

- This is similar to the Exodus from Egypt when God miraculously took the nation out of bondage and
- had the Egyptians aid them with gifts of silver, gold, and clothing (Ex. 3:22; 11:2; 12:35).
- Now God was orchestrating and ordaining a new "Exodus,"

- again, bringing His people who had been in bondage back into the land of promise,
- The people had been in bondage to Babylon because of their failure to keep their covenantal obligations, which Moses had given them during the first Exodus.
- Once more God was miraculously working in the life of the nation.

#### Conclusion

- This is your time – a time to start again
- A time to rebuild
- A time of restoration
- A time of fulfillment
- And God has provided for you
- On this next phase.