

Blessed!

Ezra 1:1-4

Dr. Paul Cannings

A. God is Providential (vs. 1-2):

1. Fulfilled – In the first year of King Cyrus God’s Word preached through Isaiah and Jeremiah had come to its’ time to be completed.

- a) These words, and those that follow, to the middle of verse 3, are identical with those that conclude II Chronicles. The two books are thus connected by a common link. It is quite possible that Ezra wrote I and II Chronicles. Cyrus, who by 550 B.C. had welded the Medes and the Persians into a dual monarchy, finally conquered Babylon in October, 539 B.C.; “The word of the LORD by ... Jeremiah”. It was in 605 B.C. that Jeremiah had prophesied the seventy-year captivity of Judah (Jer. 25:12; cf. 25:1), and it was this prophecy that caused Daniel to pray for the deliverance of his people in the year of Babylon’s fall (Dan 9:2).^[1]
- b) God had promised the Jewish remnant that He would raise up Cyrus as His servant to restore the fortunes of His people (Isa 44:28; 45:1,13). Under the Holy Spirit's guidance, the Prophet Isaiah referred to Cyrus by name about 150 years before the king made his decree. (From Bible Knowledge Commentary/Old Testament Copyright © 1983, 2000 Cook Communications Ministries; Bible Knowledge Commentary/New Testament Copyright © 1983, 2000 Cook Communications Ministries. All rights reserved.)
- c) God is in control of the nations. It was the Lord who raised up Nebuchadnezzar—“My servant” (Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10)—to chasten the people of Judah; then He raised up Cyrus to defeat the Babylonians and establish the Persian Empire. “Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to His service? He hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him” (Isa. 41:2, NIV; see also v. 25). The Lord called Cyrus “My shepherd” (44:28) and “His anointed” (45:1), and Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus would liberate the exiles and enable them to rebuild their city and temple (v. 13).^[2]

2. Word – The Word of God has once again proven itself to be true so that even though King Cyrus did not know God, he is still moved by God to fulfill what God had stated He will do for His people. God’s Word cannot be prevented from being fulfilled no matter how powerful the person may be. King Cyrus was the most powerful king in the known

world.

- a) Nearly two hundred years earlier, Isaiah had prophesied that Cyrus would be God's chosen instrument for liberating the Jewish exiles and initiating the restoration of the Temple (Isa 44:28–45:7; 45:13).^[3]
- b) "Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you" (Josh. 23:14, NKJV). "There has not failed one word of all His good promise" (1 Kings 8:56, NKJV). "Heaven and earth shall pass away," said Jesus, "but My words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).^[4]

3. The Lord stirred up – The Lord who is all powerful and is always in control, no matter how powerful the person may be, is the One who completely aroused Cyrus to release His people. Cyrus did not complete this action on his own initiative.
4. Spirit – The Lord in all His power (Cyrus was the most powerful empire of his day) aroused the inner immaterial consciousness of Cyrus so that his decision would come from a deep conviction to release God's people back to their Jerusalem.
5. He sent – Cyrus in his very first year, continuously made it his mission to send out a written document (this plays a key role when trouble arises; Ezra 6:1-5) stating what the Lord had moved his heart to accomplish.
6. Proclamation – Even though the document was developed it was also loudly sounded out throughout all his kingdom which was most of the known world.
 - a) The proclamation was sent throughout the entire empire. Every Jew had a chance to return but not all of them did; so comes the book of Esther. Many of them did as Jeremiah told them to do. They had built homes and gathered wealth in Babylon and were not willing to return.
7. Thus says Cyrus the King – Cyrus is completely committed not just to his written word but also to his spoken word. He is not going to stop saying these words across his kingdom, until everyone hears it.
8. The Lord God of heaven – Cyrus who is not a believer has been so influenced by the movement of God in him that he announces that the Lord of Israel who has all power and authority and is supreme over all gods (there were many in his empire) and rules all of the heavens (that which is visible and not visible) is the One who has empowered him to be king over his empire.
9. The Lord God of heaven – The Lord God can move anyone at any time no matter how powerful they may be (Nebuchadnezzar) to do whatever He needs them to do for His

people.

10. Has given Cyrus all the kingdoms of the earth – Unlike Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus praises God for generously, powerfully putting him in charge of all the kingdoms of the known world. He viewed all his accomplishments in conquering all the cities he has acquired as being empowered by God.
11. Appoint me to build – The Lord God who empowered Cyrus has instructed him to construction and to firmly establish the rebuilding work of the temple.
12. Appoint me to build – Even though Cyrus is the leader of the known world, the Lord God of the heavens determines how he is established and what he does.

B. Committed and Desires Our Commitment (vs. 3):

1. May God be with him – The same God that Cyrus knows, from experience, is powerful; he wishes that this same Lord God would endlessly be with Israel in the manner the Lord has been with him.
2. Go up – The people of Israel are to continuously make it their mission to leave Babylon and never stop putting in the time and effort to return to Jerusalem with a purpose in mind.
3. Rebuild the house – The main purpose for going back to Jerusalem is to construct the dwelling place of God. God sends two prophets to continually inspire His people, in the midst of much resistance, to accomplish this goal. They are Haggai and Zechariah.
4. House of the Lord – The One who gave Cyrus his kingship does not dwell in Babylon He dwells in Jerusalem so the people must establish His dwelling place.
5. He is the God who is in Jerusalem – The word for God used here refers to the One who sovereignly rules and judges the entire earth and is the subject of all divine activity, creator of all and supreme over all gods.
6. He is the God who is in Jerusalem – Even though Cyrus is not a believer, he had the right view of God.

C. Together Let's Be a Blessing (vs. 4):

1. Every survivor – Cyrus calls upon all who lived the seventy years after the devastating invasion of Babylon as prophesied by Jeremiah to return to Jerusalem.

- a) Notice that those who went had to *decide* to go. This decision would result in insecurity, hardship, and suffering as the returnees started a new, precarious community. However, they had a purpose: they were concerned that the faith of their community continues. Their faith, decision, and action were of great importance in the continuation of God's plan of redemption, both in providing the Scriptures and in preparing the way for the Redeemer.^[5]
2. Live; Sojourn – It did not matter what part of Cyrus's empire they had completely established their families in, they needed to return to Jerusalem.
- a) The wealthiest people would be most likely to remain for commercial reasons, and they are the ones able to contribute most. — *With silver and gold, goods and cattle, besides the free-will offerings for the house of God*] implies donations for the caravan of pilgrims as well as for the temple.^[6]
3. Let the men of that place support him – Each man in all the places where these families have made a home for themselves must continuously make sure they are fully supplied for the journey and to re-establish themselves back into Jerusalem.
- a) Josephus (*Ant.*11.1.2) preserves the tradition that the Jews showed Cyrus (the specific prophecies of Isaiah 44–45) in which the Persian king was named as the deliverer of God's people 150 years before he was even born! This would suggest that God used Scripture to stir up the spirit of Cyrus. The important truth is that God can influence the hearts of even those who are not among his people. He is sovereign over Gentiles as well as Jews.^[7]
4. Freewill offering – Cyrus is so focused on the rebuilding of the house of God that he orders his citizens that reside, where each Israel family lives, to provide them resources so that they have the ability to spontaneously, on their own freewill, willingly dedicate an offering to God when they return to Jerusalem.
- a) The "freewill" offerings may be compared to those made to equip the Tent of Meeting in the wilderness (Ex 25:2–9). In this way, both the needs of the returnees (livestock and other provisions) as well as the means of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem were provided for.^[8]

^[1] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Ezr 1:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

^[2] Wiersbe, W. W. (1997). *Be heroic* (p. 13). Colorado Springs, CO: ChariotVictor Pub.

- [3] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). [*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*](#) (Ezr 1:2). Chicago: Moody Press.
- [4] Wiersbe, W. W. (1997). [*Be heroic*](#) (pp. 12–13). Colorado Springs, CO: ChariotVictor Pub.
- [5] Breneman, M. (1993). [*Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*](#) (electronic ed., Vol. 10, pp. 69–70). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- [6] Batten, L. W. (1913). [*A critical and exegetical commentary on the books of Ezra and Nehemiah*](#). (pp. 59–60). New York: Scribner.
- [7] Smith, J. E. (1995). [*The Books of History*](#) (p. 671). Joplin, MO: College Press.
- [8] Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). [*The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament*](#) (electronic ed., Ezr 1:5–6). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.