

Ezra 1-2 –29 December 2022

“The Restorative Plan Of God”

Introduction

*Entirety of Bible is God’s plan to restore mankind back to a peaceful, joyful, satisfying, holy relationship with Himself (Pm 23:3 - He restoreth my soul)

*OT is how He’ll redeem us

*NT is that He did it

*In the 8th Century, just before any of the 12 tribes began to fall into captivity, God sent the nation Hosea

*Told to go take back his adulterous wife Gomer

*This was an example of God’s grace toward us!

*God is always ready to rescue & restore, if we’ll only turn toward His and ask (Read Hos 5:15)

*In the Kings & Chronicles, we saw Israel go into the Babylonian Captivity in 3 waves, so now we see them return the same way

1. Ezra 1-6 is the 1st wave (536-516 BC)
 - a. They're led by Zerubbabel the governor & Joshua the priest (prophets: Haggai/Zechariah)
2. Ezra 7-10 is the 2nd wave (457-432 BC)
 - a. They're led by Ezra the priest & scribe
3. Nehemiah is the 3rd wave (445-425 BC)
 - a. They've led by Nehemiah
4. Book of Esther happens between 1st & 2nd waves

*So who is this Ezra?

*We will find that he is a priest, scribe and faithful servant of God – w/o faith it's impossible to plz God

*God is always looking for those that would be faithful to use in His restorative eternal plan

***Today let's look at 3 steps in this restorative plan of God for humankind**

1st step in God's restorative plan is that God sovereignly initiates a work (Intro & Chap 1:1-2)

Intro

1. Whole 70 yr captivity was designed by God
2. Read Jer 25:11-12 – Serve Babylon 70 yrs, then God would punish Babylon
3. Read Jer 29:10-12 – All for their spiritual good
4. Read Dan 9:2 – Daniel knew 70 yrs complete
 - a. Read Hos 5:15- 6:3 – The faithful knew if they only faced God, He would initiate a work
5. Turn to Isa 44:28-45:4 – God already knew what His plan would be when the time came
 - a. Cyrus is here called by name 150 yrs before he was even born!
 - b. Daniel also predicted the overthrow of Babylon by the Medo-Persians
 - c. Faithful Jews were watching for the 70 yrs to end and then Cyrus became king!!!
 - i. Should be the same for us today!
 1. Read John 14:29

Read Chap 1:1-2

1. Cyrus the Great is the 1st king of the Persian Empire after the Babylonian collapse
2. Jeremiah was moved by God to predict 70 yrs
3. Daniel was moved by God to know they would be going back now
4. Cyrus, this Gentile king, was moved by the hand of God to accomplish God's purposes
 - a. Even with limited cultural background in knowing of the LORD, Cyrus is mightily used
 - b. God's will will be accomplished
 - i. Question isn't how much we know of Him or what our background is, but whether we'll faithfully serve Him in spirit & truth!
5. It says the Lord "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus" & "charged" him to command this work, God's work be completed
 - a. How God did this is a mystery, but it happened (direct revelation? Used a prophet?)

2nd step in God's restorative plan is that the faithful respond to the call (Chap 1:3-11)

Read Chap 1:3-4

1. Who is there among you that will go?
 - a. Takes faith to uproot and go after 70 yrs
2. Notice the charge is to build their spiritual life back up 1st – no promise of a good physical life

Read 5-6

1. Notice that this is a spiritual work motivated by the Spirit of God within them, but it will take every one's physical energy to do
2. Even those that couldn't go had the chance to directly support the work of the Lord

Read Vs 7-11

1. Jews committed their lives, others committed money and the king now commits money and reputation
2. True faith in valuable things will take action!

3rd step in God's restorative plan is that God honors the faithful remnant (Chap 2:1-70)

Read Chap 2:1-35 (only read vss 1-3)

1. These are Israelis and the towns that they were from and went back to – faithful people
2. Notice in vs 2 they're led by Zerubbabel
 - a. He is the G-grandson of King Josiah, thru the cursed son of Josiah named Jeconiah
 - b. But remember, the curse is that his lineage can't have independent rule in Israel
 - i. He'll have governorship but not kingship
 - ii. Messiah will be king & come thru another lineage of King David

Read Vs 36-39

1. 4,289 priests are returning led by Joshua (H.P.)
2. Zerubbabel & Joshua's name will become inseparable in doing the will of God faithfully

Read Vs 40-42

1. Other Levites (that weren't priests) returning

Read Vs 43-54

1. The word Nethinim means Temple servants
2. In Jos 9 as Israel just began conquering Israel, many Canaanite peoples began to scheme
3. The Gibeonites came to Joshua & tricked him into thinking they were from outside the land & therefore God's judgement was NOT upon them
4. Since Joshua made a pact w/ them, once he found out he was lied to, he made the servants
5. The descendants of the Gibeonites became loyal to Israel & even here in Zerubbabel's day identified with Israel and their faith in God
6. Even these Gentiles faith in the true God is here honored

Read Vs 55-57

1. Solomon's servants were former Canaanites that became proselytes
2. All those that honor God, will He honor

Read Vs 58

1. Sum of the Nethinim and Solomon's servants

Read Vs 59-63

1. They had such a respect for the Law that they wouldn't allow those that couldn't prove it to be priests
2. The Urim & Thummim were the dices the H.P. had to divine God's will

Read Vs 64-67

1. 10% that returned were Levites (see vss 36-39)

Read Vs 68-70

1. These leaders offering would have set the tone for how they would all act back in the Land

Close - Why these lists of names?

1. It's a historical record – continue to track family until we get to the Messiah
2. It's a permanent reward for those whose faith prompted them into action

Conclusion

The Lord is consistently seeking to restore us to a place by His side, in His will, w/ joy, peace & love. How does He do it?

1. **God sovereignly initiates a work**
 - a. We're completely depraved w/o God
 - b. Then God opens a door & we have hope!!
2. **The faithful respond to the call**
 - a. It doesn't make for an easy life to respond
 - b. The faithful know what it means to follow God in spite of hard circumstances
3. **God honors the faithful remnant**
 - a. The faithful give up the temp for the eternal
 - b. What grace that God bestows on us

How should we respond to God's gracing us with a fresh start, and new chances to serve & love Him?

This is the motivation to live for Him daily and share His great love and grace!