

God Offers Judah A Second Chance

BIBLE BASIS: Lesson Scripture:

Ezra 1:1-7

BIBLE TRUTH:

God is always willing to forgive if we are willing to repent and turn from our wicked ways. 2Chr. 7:13-14, 1John 1:8-9, Matt. 18:21-23

MEMORY VERSE:

Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. Ezra 1:3

Lesson Aim:

To learn that God's people will never be abandon by God not even in captivity. God works behind the seen and will use anything and anybody to fulfill his purpose. 2Sam 7:12-15, Isa. 49:13-15, Heb. 13:5, Ps. 139:1-12,

Introduction

- The children of Israel were called by God and separated by God to represent Him to the rest of the world. Israel's captivity had legally voided this purpose. The return of the children of Israel from their captivity recovered the purpose that God had called them. Gen. 1:26-27, Gen 12:1-3, Ex. 19:5-6, 1Peter 1:15-16
- Even among us, individually, whoever is defeated in his spiritual life has been captured by the enemy. He will remain in captivity until he repents of the sin that is holding us. Through our repentance, God will restore us to fellowship. Isa. 55:6-9, 1John 6-7
- Today we are in a situation that is typified by the situation at Ezra's time. Some of us have come back already, and others are still in the valley of decision. Prov. 29:19, 1Kings 18:21
- The lesson this week helps us see how God gives his people a chance to return. After God deals with us in discipline, we should be ready to return back to Him in repentance. We should know that even repentance is a gift from God. Rom. 2:3-4
- We must be willing to return to God because God will never violate your will. Our prayer must become, “Not my will but thine be done.” Matt. 6:9-10
- The good news is when we repent God help us cleanup our lives. Phil 2:12-14, Eph. 3:20, Phil. 4:19
- However, there are others who in spite of the offer will continue to reject the call of God on their life for many reasons, What is yours?
- 2 Cor. 4:3-4, Acts. 26:18

God Uses A Gentile King To Fulfill His Purpose

- Ezra 1:1- Now 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, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, [2] Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.
- The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. The hearts of kings are in the hands of the Lord. God governs the world by his influence on the spirits of men; whatever good they do, God stirs up their spirits to do it. 2Chron. 20:6, Prov. 21:1
- It is important to note that God is using a gentile king to free his people. This is a reminder to us that God is not limited in his resources. He can use anyone and anything He wants, even those who do not believe in Him to fulfill His plans on this earth.
- The 70 year captivity prophesied by Jeremiah was over and God was ready to return His people to the land. Jer. 29:10
- Israel didn't have the ability nor the resources to free themselves from the Babylonian captivity. However, God stirred up the spirit of a gentile king to conquer the Babylonians and then show mercy to Israel and return them to the land.

God Stirs His People To Return

- [3] Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. [4] And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.
- The same God that stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to proclaim liberty to the Jews, stirred up the spirits of the people of God to take the opportunity to return. The temptation was for some to stay in Babylon. Some reasons were they had become comfortable in this strange land and the journey back to Jerusalem was long and dangerous. However others feared not to return, and they were those whose spirits God stirred, by his Spirit and grace. As believer, we must understand that whatever good we do for God must be initiated by God or it becomes a work of the flesh. Rom. 7:5, Gal. 5:19-21, Phil. 2:12-14
- Our spirits naturally bow down to this earth and the things of it; if they move upward in any good affections or good actions, it is God who raises them. James 1:17
- The calls and offers of the gospel are like the proclamation of Cyrus. Those bound under the power of sin, may be set free by Jesus Christ. Those that refuse to return loves the things of the world more than they love God. John 3:17-19,

God Stirred The Leaders Of Judah

- [5] Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.
- The priest and the Levites were also stirred up by God. Here we must remember that to restore the temple worship and reinstate its rituals, there were some specific religious rituals that had to do with the utensils of the temple that only the priest and Levites could do.
- God intended to have His house built and His kingdom established on the earth through Israel's participation in God's purpose and plan. There would have been no way to accomplish this unless the children of Israel returned to the land from their captivity.
- God intended for His house and His kingdom to be in the earth. Satan, the enemy of God, has usurped the earth. He is active in keeping the earth as his house as his kingdom. This has caused a great problem for God establishing His kingdom through His church. 1Cor. 4:7
- God needs a people because He wants a house where He is the Father and a kingdom where He is the King. The Lord needs His house and His kingdom in order to carry out His eternal purpose. Matt. 16:15-19

God Stirs The King

- [6] And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered [7] Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;
- All the Jews who were staying behind gave them vessels of silver and gold, and supplies needed for the long and dangerous journey home.
- Here is a lesson for us. When Gods people begin to obey Him, He will stir up all kinds of human and physical resources for us that we would have thought would have been impossible. Eph. 3:20
- King Cyrus had already made a proclamation to his people and to the neighboring people, but he did not stop them. He was going to give sacrificially of his own resources. This is hard for us to contemplate. Here was a pagan king who was willing to sacrifice his own resources to help Gods people obey Him. Prov. 16:7
- Here's what he did. The valuable items that King Nebuchadnezzar had robbed from the temple forty-eight years before and put in his own pagan temples were brought out and returned to the people to take back to the temple at Jerusalem. This is simply amazing. There is just absolutely nothing God will withhold from his people when we obey him. Rom 8:31-32