

Are you moving back to Jerusalem?  
(An outline of a sermon/ bible study)

F. W. 2-18-2019

## Ezra Chapters 1-3

The Jews in the time of Ezra, Jerusalem is the place of God's dwelling where the Temple should be built (re-built). When you think about God's dwelling, what do you have in mind? A huge and awesome temple, a big and beautiful church, the incredible and glorious heaven, or inside your and my heart? - These are good answers.

Today, we study Ezra chapters 1-3 on this topic. For background, the book of Ezra happens about 538 to 458BC. The book of Ezra records two separate time periods directly following the seventy years of Babylonian captivity and exile. The first time period is described in Chapters 1-6 on the first group of people return from Babylon to Jerusalem (about 538 to 515 BC), and the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the book (Chapters 7-10) is about the second group of Jews return to Jerusalem. Today, we talked about the first group. After the fall of Babylonian, King of Persia took control. King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

### 1) Freedom given – what do you do with it?

King Cyrus is not God's people. He gave the Jews the freedom to move back to Jerusalem. In fact, he will provide the Jews gold and silver to go with them. Jerusalem is the Jew's hometown, their place of worship and the place where the temple should be (God's dwelling). However, Jerusalem is many miles away. (Note, Babylon is located at today's Iraq). Some of the Jews were so used to the living style in Babylon. They have family, relatives and friends in Babylon.

Today, many countries are free for you to worship. Like in North America where people are free to worship. The government gave non-profit status to churches where no property tax is needed. People can build churches and form Christian groups. The question is "Are you moving back to Jerusalem? Similar to situation in the book of Ezra, what do you do with that freedom. Are you really going back to God wholeheartedly and let God in control in your heart? or just treat worship and follow God as a low priority?"

### 2) Going back to God needs effort and dedication

a) Physical involvement and financial offering

As you read in Chapter 1, The Jews have to travel many miles to go back to Jerusalem and surrounding towns. It took about 4 months through the hills and deserts. It was a tough journey.

Today, you need to make choices. Put aside some of your favorite activities so that you can participate more in prayer, worship and serving God. Although the King and neighboring citizens provided some gold, silver and offerings, the Jews themselves also offered- gold and silver even they have limited resources. Are you willing to offer financially cheerfully for His kingdom?

b) Your name will be permanently kept in Heaven's citizen log

Chapter 2 covered the people that went back to Jerusalem where it is the place of the temple -God's dwelling place. Jews took census, but God already have all the names and information in His book. (Heb. 6:10, Rev. 20:12)

**3) Wholeheartedly back to God means be part of His plan**

Chapter 3 described about the Jews involving in building the temple. "They assembled as one man in Jerusalem" (Ezra 3:1). This shows their unity of serving God together in one accord. Ezra 3:3 showed oppositions around them but they still built the altar and sacrificed burnt offerings to the Lord. Ezra 3:4 showed they followed God's direction. Ezra 3:7 and on described their start on building the House of the Lord. All these are God's plan and God's instruction. Today, are you serving in unity with brothers and sisters in Christ? Are you putting priority of building God's house- both the physical building and material needs as well as outreach for spiritual fruits - sharing Good News to bring more souls to God's family?

**Conclusion: You will truly see God when you are wholeheartedly turn to God**

Ezra 3:10-13 shows people are rejoice seeing God is Good; his love to Israel endures forever. When you turned to God and serve God, you will see His amazing grace, love and providence. Matt 7:7 "“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Let us all focus on seeking God and serve Him.