

# **THE GOOD HAND OF GOD RESTORING AND PRESERVING HIS PEOPLE (A Study of Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther)**

## **Lesson Two: “Though He Cause Grief, He Will Show Compassion” (Ezra 1-2)**

**OVERVIEW OF EZRA 1-2:** The book of Ezra picks up where the book of 2 Chronicles ends, with the decree of Cyrus, King of Persia, that the Jews could return to their homeland after seventy years of captivity in Babylon, which they suffered as God’s judgment for persistent unbelief and sin (2 Chronicles 36: 14-23 with Ezra 1: 1).

The book of Ezra chronicles the return of two Jewish remnants which were divided by a space of eighty years. Chapters 1-6 deal with the first return led by Zerubbabel and ends with the rebuilding of the temple. Chapters 7-10 record the events of the second return led by Ezra and focuses on the reformation of the people through instruction in God’s Law.

**Ezra 1-2, our focus for today, is comprised of three sections.**

- 1. Ezra 1: 1-4 - God stirs up the spirit of King Cyrus which results in his decree to allow the Jews to return to their homeland.**
- 2. Ezra 1: 5-11 - A second exodus is put into motion as Jews who choose not to return are ordered to provide gold, livestock, & other items of worth for the rebuilding of Jerusalem to those who are returning. In addition, King Cyrus returns all the sacred articles of gold & silver, totaling 5,040 pieces, which were taken from the temple when it was destroyed by the Babylonians, to be returned in the new temple to be rebuilt.**
- 3. Ezra 2: 1-70 - Just as Israel was numbered before their initial march to the Promised Land in the book of Numbers, the people are numbered and prepared for their new march back to the Promised Land and there is evidence which implies all twelve tribes of Israel were represented. The small returning remnant, numbering close to 50,000 people, was proof of God’s commitment to redeem the earth from sin & judgment through the coming Messiah, and establish an eternal kingdom of righteousness.**

## LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

1. God is SOVEREIGN. Therefore, when LIFE seems against me, the LORD is for me, and *if God is for me, who can be against me?*

*...the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom...Ezra 1:1 (Isaiah 44:24 - 45: 6)*

*Then the heads of fathers' households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. Ezra 1: 5*

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

**Romans 8: 28**

2. God keeps His PROMISES. Therefore, I can TRUST God even in the DARK.

*...in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah...*

**Ezra 1: 1**

*“This whole land will be a desolation & a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,” declares the Lord, “for their iniquity... & I will make it an everlasting desolation.”*

**Jeremiah 25:11- 12**

*For thus says the Lord, “When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place... I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,” declares the Lord, “and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.”*

**Jeremiah 29: 10 & 14b**

3. God's discipline is a loving Father's hand of CORRECTION, not a harsh judge's verdict of CONDEMNATION. Therefore, SUBMIT TO rather than RESIST God's discipline.

*For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you... Jeremiah 29: 11-14a (compare Jeremiah 18: 1-6)*