

# Sermon Series Notes

## REDEMPTION

A STUDY IN EZRA



### "The Hope & Reality Of Restoration" - (Ezra 1)

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Intro: The plan was to move right from II Kings to I Chronicles. Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be broken. The books of I & II Chronicles cover the same period of history as II Samuel through II Kings, but the perspective is different. II Samuel through II Kings gives us a political history of Israel and Judah. I & II Chronicles present a religious history of Judah, especially focusing on the Davidic dynasty. II Chronicles ends on a note of hope (see II Chron.36:20-23). The Chronicles are meant to encourage the reader that, though the glory has departed and for 70 years they are under the control of Gentile powers, God is still with them. Not only is He with them, but he has a plan to restore them. We fast forward through the Babylonian captivity to the beginning of that restoration (Ezra).

The Hebrew Old testament considered Ezra & Nehemiah to be one book containing the continuous story of the return of the remnant of Israel after the Babylonian captivity, the rebuilding of the temple, then the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem. But the repetition of Ezra 2 in Nehemiah 7 indicates that the books were originally two separate compositions.

#### I. THE TEXT

v.1 See Jer.25:11-14; 29:10

\* This prophecy was spoken some 200 years before!

\* Prov. 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.

v.8 Sheshbazzar is probably Chaldean for Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was appointed governor of Palestine by Cyrus.

v.9 And what were these articles used for? Worship

#### II. LESSONS

A. God Is Able To Sustain A Remnant Under Any Circumstances

\* Esther

## B. When God Desires To Do A Work Of Restoration, He Calls People To Respond.

### 1. Some must be willing to go

\* This would require faith, courage, sacrifice, a persevering spirit

### 2. Some must be willing to support those willing to go

\* When God is on the move doing a fresh new work, we should want to support it in every way possible

## C. God Is Sovereign

\* One of those deported to Babylon was a man whose name I think is familiar to all of us - Daniel. See Daniel 1:1-5; 4:17, 25, 32.

\* Though a foreign power now holds the remnant captive, God is still in control!

## D. For People Of Faith There Is Always A Future Hope

\* During this captivity, God has prophetic voices that speak not only to the children of Israel, but to the Gentiles who temporarily rule over them as well.

\* Ezekiel 36 & 37; 40-48 (note 47, the river)

\* Haggai

\* Zechariah 8:1-12, 23; 9:9-10; 12:1-4, 5, 8-10; 14:8-9

\* Daniel 2

- Daniel held a high position in the kingdom under Darius the Mede, the father in law of Cyrus.

- v.4 An interesting thing takes place here in the book. Up to this point, the writing is in Hebrew. Verse four here until the beginning of chapter eight is written in Aramaic. Why? Aramaic was the language of trade and government communication. God was speaking especially to the Jews in chapters one, eight through twelve. But in these sections he speaks to all the world.

- v.39a Silver (Medo-Persia) was the standard of value and the medium of exchange. Medo-Persia was known for basing its power on money which was collected through an extensive tax system. Medo-Persia was not inferior to Babylon in size or military might, but as a partnership empire, it lacked the absolute unity that Babylon enjoyed. Medo-Persia conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.

- v.39b Bronze (Greece) The Greeks developed this metal and used it extensively in their implements of war. Alexander the Great's empire extended further than either Babylon or Medo-Persia. As a matter of fact, when Alexander had finished conquering, he drank himself to death because there were no more lands to conquer! Greece conquered Medo-Persia in 331 B.C.

- vv.40-43 Rome, two legs = eastern and western divisions of the empire; in 364 B.C Rome was divided politically into two divisions the Western Roman

Empire with Rome as the capital and the Eastern Roman Empire with Constantinople as its capital. Iron was used in military weaponry. Iron is able to crush gold, silver and bronze. Rome conquered Greece in 146 B.C. Rome was ruling in the time of Christ. Died out in 476 A.D. (internal deterioration). Two stages of Roman Empire. Last is a confederation of nations that are a mixed people that do not wish to lose their national identities and distinctives; ten nation confederation.

- vv.44-45 The chief Babylonian god, Marduk, The Great Mountain. The temples of their gods were intended to be imitations of mountains. To the Babylonian way of thinking, mountains were associated with what is divine. God wanted Neb to know that this fifth kingdom would be divine rather than human in origin!

#### \* Daniel 7

- v.1 Daniel has been known to interpret others' dreams, but here he has his own dream that needs some interpretation!

- Lion with wings of an eagle = Babylon; The lion is king of the beasts and the eagle is king of the fowls, signifying Babylon's superiority over other nations in her day. Winged lions were practically the national symbol of ancient Babylon. Sculptures of huge wooden lions stood at the entrance of their palaces. Wings torn off, given the heart of a man. God humbling Nebuchadnezzar.

- The bear = Medo Persia; Raised on one of its sides signifying Persia's dominance of the Medes. Three ribs in its mouth, three major conquests: Lydian empire in Asia Minor (546 B.C.), The Chaldean Empire (539 B.C.), and the Egyptian Empire (525 B.C.). Just as a bear is more massive but slower moving than a lion, so Medo-Persia became larger than Babylon as a kingdom but slower in conquest; Medo-Persia's army was also huge but slower in movement. It was told, "Get up and eat your fill of flesh," which speaks of Medo-Persia's insatiable desire to conquer MORE!

- The leopard = Greece; Two wings on the lion, but four on the leopard. The leopard is faster, signifying Greece's incredibly swift conquests. Under Alexander the Great, Greece conquered the known world faster than any ancient power! In eight years they conquered more than 11,000 miles of territory, from Greece in the west to India in the east. After the death of Alexander, the kingdom was divided into four parts ruled by four generals.

- The unidentified beast = Rome (Revived); Terrifying, frightening, very powerful! Large iron teeth; It was Rome that developed iron weaponry. Ten horns. Up to this point we have seen these beasts before, but from a totally different perspective. In Neb's dream of Daniel 2, the giant image of a man contained these four beasts, only the image was from man's perspective. It is the image of man exalting himself above God, and ultimately that image will be toppled! Man's inner nature is that of a beast, always striving for power, seeking to conquer, yet never satisfied. It is God's perspective of man, the revelation of his sin nature at its core!

## CONCLUSION

\* One day God is going to restore all things