

✞ *There is no way to explain the words and actions of Cyrus other than that God was at work in his heart. God was fulfilling prophecy.*

#### 4. God Raised the Spirits of His People

##### a. The Lord raised up their spirits (v.5)

- 1) God raised up workers to return to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem from four groups of the Jews.
  - a) The chief of the fathers
  - b) The priests
  - c) The Levites
  - d) All them whose spirit God raised up
- 2) The journey would be long and dangerous. They would be returning to a city that was burned and had lain in ruins for 70 years. They had not homes or farms for food. They would face many enemies. Yet, God did a work in their hearts and gave them a desire to return.
- 3) Perhaps they had also been stirred biblically. Daniel or other spiritual leaders may have read the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah to them.

##### b. The Lord stirred the hearts of others to give (v.6)

- 1) They gave willingly.
- 2) They gave generously.

✞ *Most of the Jews alive in Babylon at that time had been born in Babylon. Only the oldest citizens had come from Canaan. Leaving the land that was the only home they had ever known would not be easy. Truly God was working in their hearts.*

✞ *This is a good reminder to us that if God has not called us to go to the mission field with the Gospel, we ought to willingly and generously give to support those who have been called.*

**Conclusion:** Here in Ezra 1 we have found several amazing facts that ought to **fortify our faith** in God. God fulfilled humanly impossible prophecies. God stirred the heart of a pagan king to release his slaves and send them back to rebuild their homeland temple. That is amazing! May these Bible facts increase our faith! (Romans 10:17) "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*"

**Song:** Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus, **257**

# Faith Fortifying Facts

27 August 2017 PM - Ezra 1:1-11 - EzNe17 - Scott Childs

**Introduction:** The book of Ezra is about the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. The opening chapter of the book is one of the greatest faith fortifying sections in the Bible.

**Transition:** Here in Ezra 1 we find several amazing facts that ought to fortify our faith in God.

## 1. God Fulfilled Isaiah's Prophecy

### a. Isaiah lived from about 766-686 BC

- 1) Isaiah's preaching ministry began about 740 BC, 134 years before the captivity began in 606 BC.
- 2) It is estimated that Isaiah made the prophecy about Cyrus about 697 BC. Timeline.BibleHistory.com If that date is accurate, it was 159 years before Cyrus made the decree.
- 3) He fearlessly rebuked the people for their sin and urged them to repent and turn back to God.

### b. Isaiah's prophecy was very specific

- 1) He named Cyrus in Isaiah 44:28. "*That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*"
- 2) He described Cyrus's mission, Isaiah 45:1-13 (Read).

✞ *The chances of Isaiah making such a prophecy 159 years before it took place are incredible. Truly he was writing under the inspiration of our omniscient or all-knowing God.*

## 2. God Fulfilled Jeremiah's Prophecy

### a. Jeremiah lived from about 643-570 BC

- 1) He began preaching about 626 BC
- 2) Jeremiah's ministry lasted for more than 40 years, extending beyond the Captivity in 586 BC (Jer 39:1-2).
- 3) By the time Jeremiah began preaching, the Captivity was inevitable. He warned the people to repent and told them to surrender to Babylon that they might live.

### b. Jeremiah's prophecy was also very specific

- 1) He prophesied that Judah would be in Babylonian captivity for seventy years. (Jeremiah 25:11-12) "*And this*

*whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations."*

- 2) He prophesied Judah's return home after 70 years. (Jeremiah 29:10) "*For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.*"
- 3) Ezra 1:1 tells us that one of the reasons God stirred the spirit of Cyrus was to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah.

☞ *As the prophecy of Isaiah, Jeremiah's prophecy was also humanly impossible. No human could know the exact number of years of a captivity. Besides, no nation freely allowed slaves to return home. As our text reads, Jeremiah's message was the word of the LORD not his own. Truly God had inspired his words.*

### 3. God Stirred the Spirit of Cyrus

#### a. God may have also used Daniel to stir Cyrus

- 1) Daniel lived in Babylon through the captivity into the reign of Cyrus. Either Cyrus and Darius worked together to conquer Babylon or Darius being 62 only reigned for a couple of years before Cyrus took over.
- 2) Daniel was praying that God would fulfil Jeremiah's prophecy. Read Daniel 9:1-4.
  - a) Daniel understood by the books (Dan 9:2) – that is the inspired books of the prophets. "Prophecy is meant to be understood - perhaps not in every detail, but certainly in its main points." David Guzik
  - b) "These verses show Daniel as a diligent student of Scripture who built his prayer life on the Word of God." Archer quoted by Guzik
  - c) Spurgeon once said, "Oh! That you studied your Bibles more! Oh! That we all did! How we could plead the promises! How often we should prevail with God when we could hold him to his word, and say, 'Fulfill

*this word unto thy servant, whereon thou hast caused me to hope.' Oh! It is grand praying when our mouth is full of God's word, for there is no word that can prevail with him like his own."*

- 3) It is possible and rather probable that Daniel read to Cyrus the prophecy of Isaiah that contained his name and the details of what he would do. God may have used His Word to stir up the heart of that pagan king.
- 4) We are reminded again of the power of the Bible. (Hebrews 4:12) "*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*"

#### b. The Lord stirred up Cyrus' heart

- 1) The Persian armies conquered Babylon in 539 BC.
- 2) God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus in about 537 BC which was 89 years after Jeremiah began preaching.
- 3) Note the details of what he did.
  - a) He acknowledged God as the LORD God of Heaven as the one who gave him power (v.2). (Isaiah 45:6) "*That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.*"
  - b) He said that God had charged him to build the Temple in Jerusalem (v.2). (Isaiah 45:13) "*I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.*"
  - c) He gave permission for any of God's people who desired to return home to help rebuild the Temple (v.3), (Isa 45:13). These people had been slaves in Babylon for seventy years.
  - d) He encouraged those who chose to remain to give freewill offerings to help with the rebuilding of the Temple (v.4).
  - e) Cyrus also returned all of the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple (v.7-11).