

A Fresh Start

(Ezra 1-2)

- Introduction:
1. Few words have the ability to stir one's emotions as does the word "Home."
 2. Typically, home invokes thoughts of love, family, friends, and security.
 3. For most people, going home after a long time away is filled with excitement and anticipation.
 4. Thus is the setting for the book of Ezra.
 5. I'd would like for us to appreciate three things from the first two chapters of Ezra.

I. The Providence of God

- A. (Ezra 1:1-2).
- B. (Isaiah 44:24, 26-28).
- C. This prophecy was made 150 before the time of Cyrus.
- D. Josephus said Cyrus had read Isaiah's prophecy and was moved to honor such a powerful God and fulfill it.
- E. (Ezra 1:1-2)
 1. God stirred Cyrus' heart and hardened Pharaoh's (Ex. 10:1).
 2. God uses angels as ministers of his providence (Heb. 1:14).
 3. God uses weather to accomplish his purposes (Josh. 10:11; Jer. 23:19).

II. The Priorities of the People

- A. (Ezra 2).
- B. There were approximately 50,000 Jews who committed to return to Judah.
- C. But for most of these people, Judah wasn't their home. Remember, they had been in exile for 70 years.
- D. They were uprooting their families, leaving their homes and farms, their communities, in exchange for a lot of hard work.
- E. Why would they make such a decision?
 1. They returned to fulfill the plans and promises of God (Mic. 5:2; Is. 2:2-3).
 2. They were homesick for a city to which they had never been.

III. The Particulars of Obedience

- A. (Ezra 2:61-62).
- B. They were not about to make the same mistake of disobedience; they learned their lesson.
- C. They sought authority, not feelings or pragmatism.

- Conclusion:
1. I hope this lesson impresses you with the power of God (Jer. 32:27).
 2. Then I hope it will move you to serve him faithfully, even at great expense (Matthew 6:33).