

10/13/19

## **God Is Faithful To His Word**

### **Ezra 1:1-4**

Every prophecy in Scripture has its various details and factors announcing what will take place at a set time in the future, the prophets search carefully to see to understand the time of their fulfillment, some they understood others they did not. 1Pet. 1:10-12

\* There are 31,124 verses in the entire Bible, 8,352 are predictive material, or 27 % of the whole.

We want to look at the prophecy of Jeremiah regarding God bringing back the Jewish nation of Israel after the Babylonian captivity to build the temple that is characterized by three things. Ezra 1:1-4

**I.** The declaration about the prophecy. vs. 1

**II.** The proclamation of the prophecy. vs. 2

**III.** The instruction for the prophecy. vs. 3-4

#### **I. The declaration about the prophecy. vs. 1**

**A.** The time of the prophecy is stated, “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia.” vs. 1a

1. An insurrection dethroned the last Median king in 559 B.C. and the throne was taken by Cyrus the Achaemenid king.
2. Gaining their independence from Babylon, two three year after, the Medes and Persians became one empire, under Cyrus the Persian and reigned over the Medo-Persian empire

in 557 B.C., establishing Persian dominance and supremacy over the Medes. in 550 B.C.

3. Cyrus made Gobryas a viceroy, who is Darius of the book of Daniel. Dan. 6:2, 28
4. Darius was the son of Ahasuerus by lineage of the Medes made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, his first year. Dan. 9:1; 11:1  
\* No where is Darius called the king of the Medes or of Persia in the book of Daniel!
5. Cyrus the king of Persia was known as “Cyrus the Great” who ruled from 536-30 B.C. Ezra 1:1
6. The Persian empire lasted from 536-330 B.C. , the first year of the reign of Cyrus the king of Persia was 536 B.C.  
\* Daniel continued till the first years of Cyrus and Darius (Gobryas) was a co-regent with Cyrus”. Dan. 1:21; 6:2, 28

**B.** The nature of the prophecy was Divine revelation, “that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah.” vs. 1b

1. The expression “that the word of the LORD” indicates two things.
  - a. First the revelation of the very mind and will of God in human language.
  - b. Second the word “that” indicates there was a purpose behind the mind and will of God being made known.
2. The origin and source of the word is God.

- a. The word LORD in all capital letters refers the covenant name Yahweh.
  - b. God told Moses, “Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My **name forever**, and this is My memorial to all generations.’” Ex. 3:15
3. The instrument making the mind and will of God known was a man, Jeremiah.
- a. God called Jeremiah to be His prophet to declare Judgment to the nation of Judah.
    - 1) God commissioned Jeremiah, “Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a **prophet** to the **nations**.” Jer. 1:4-5
    - 2) God enabled Jeremiah for his commission, “Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,” says the LORD. Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull

- down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant.” Jer. 1:8-10
- 3) God warned and exhorted Jeremiah for the hard task, “Therefore prepare yourself and arise, And speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, Lest I dismay you before them. For behold, I have made you this day A fortified city and an iron pillar, And bronze walls against the whole land-- Against the kings of Judah, Against its princes, Against its priests, And against the people of the land. They will fight against you, But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you,” says the LORD, “to deliver you.” Jer. 1:17-19
  - 4) Jeremiah spoke the words of God to the people and also wrote them.
- b. God gave to Jeremiah the title of prophet.
- 1) The word prophet “nabiy” means a spokesman, speaker or announcer, found 159 times in the Old Testament, 69 times in the New Testament.
  - 2) The other title used is seer “ra’ ah” or “chozeh”, found 21 times only in the Old Testament.
  - 3) Both terms describe the ability of a person to receive and perceive the words of God, through direct

revelation from God to his mind,  
audibly or through visions or dreams.

- C. The purpose of the prophecy is clearly stated that it, “might be fulfilled.” vs. 1b
1. The word fulfilled “kalah”, means to be accomplished, completed in full, finalizing the predictive announcement. Gen. 2:1
    - a. Be it in judgment.
    - b. Be it is blessing.
  2. The prophecy to be fulfilled marked the end of the 70 year Babylonian captivity for Israel predicted by Jeremiah.. 606-536 B.C.
    - a. The captivity, ”And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy years**.” Jer. 25:11
    - b. The judgment of Babylon, “Then it will come to pass, when **seventy years** are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,” says the LORD; ‘and I will make it a perpetual desolation.” Jer. 25:12
    - c. The repatriation of Israel, “For thus says the LORD: After **seventy years** are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.” Jer. 29:10

- d. One reason for Israel’s captivity was they had not let the land rest for 490 years, every 7th year totaling 70 sabbatical years. Lev. 26:33-34; 2Chron. 36:21
- D. The method to fulfill the prophecy was initiated by God and man responded, “the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia.” vs. 1c
1. This is always the order.
    - a. God deals with or speaks to a person’s spirit, but does not force a person to act or to do good or evil.
    - b. Man then responds of his will to obey in whatever God revealed and prompted.
    - c. Now God knows who is going to respond or not, as well as knowing if it is going to be in a good manner or evil.
    - d. Therefore God having foreknowledge of all things He declares things before they happen, so when they take place He proves to be the Omniscient God.
  2. The person God used was Cyrus.
    - a. The name Cyrus appears 19 time in the Old Testament, 15 are in Ezra.
      - \* The name Cyrus “Kowresh” means “posses thou the furnace”.
    - b. Cyrus was God’s chosen vessel.
      - 1) To fulfill the prophecies, His Shepherd and anointed. Is. 44:28; 45:1
      - 2) To fulfill the interpretation of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar’s image. Dan. 2; 7

- c. The prophet Daniel was being stirred up by God also, “In the first year of Darius of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans in the first year of his reign I, **Daniel**, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face towards the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fastings, sackcloth and ashes.” Dan. 9:1-3

- E. The manner of the decree about the prophecy is two-fold, “so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying.” vs. 1d-e
1. The liberator of God’s people proclaimed throughout all the kingdoms that God had called him to fulfill the prophecy.
    - a. The decree was heard by all in his kingdom in the various languages.
    - b. Cyrus came from Pars and his kingdom was called the Achaemenid Empire after his family descent, modern day Iran.
  2. The liberator of God’s people wrote out the decree also.
    - a. His orders were obeyed completely and dispersed throughout the kingdom.

- b. Daniel without doubt had part in this written decree for, “Daniel continued till the first years of Cyrus.” Dan. 1:21

### **Illustration**

God illustrated this very prophecy by the “chest and arms of silver” in the image of Nebuchadnezzar, as the dominance of the Persian Empire by the image of “a **bear** that was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: ‘Arise, devour much flesh’” Dan. 2:32; 7:5

### **Application**

1. The manuscript evidence regarding the Bible.
  - a. Has more manuscript evidence than any 10 pieces of classical literature.
  - b. A.T. Robertson N.T. Greek Scholar declared that we have:
  - c. 8,000 Manuscripts of Latin vulgate.
  - d. 1,000 earlier versions.
  - e. 4,000 Greek manuscripts.
  - f. 13,000 portions.
  - g. Most, if not all of the New Testament can be reproduced from early church writers.
  - h. Warfield and Philip Scholl, both declare that the word has been transmitted to us with no, or next to no variations.
    - \* Scholars are misleading at times for each misspelled word is counted in every manuscript, so if there were 3,000 mss. that

would account for 3,000 variations, while in reality it is only one misspelling.

2. Compared to other authors of the past.
  - a. Bible was written in the latter part of 1st Century.
  - b. The 7 plays of Sophocles are accounted as authentic texts, yet the manuscripts are 1400 years after his death.
  - c. History of Thucydides (460-400 B.C.) known to us by 8 manuscripts, the earliest 900 A.D.
  - d. History of Herodotus (488-428 B.C.) no one doubts them, yet the earliest manuscripts we have are 1300 years later.
  - e. Most Mistakes or variations are in spelling or style (98.33% is pure).

***The declaration about the prophecy was from God!***

**II. The proclamation of the prophecy. vs. 2**

- A. The acknowledgment of Cyrus about his great authority by the God of Israel. vs. 2a-b
  1. The authority of his words were absolute, “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia.” vs. 2a
    - a. Cyrus was the most powerful king at the time.
    - b. Cyrus was speaking as the representative of God.
    - c. Cyrus was the next empire by the hand of God, the shoulders and arms of silver, after the head of gold, Babylon.

2. The possessions he had obtained were from God, “All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me.” vs. 2b
  - a. All the kingdoms that were under Babyloian control were his now.
  - b. All the people that had been under Babylon were now under his authority.
    - 1) Free people and slave.
    - 2) Civilian and military.
  - c. All the wealth of Babylon was now his wealth.
    - 1) An indescribable value of properties.
    - 2) An unimaginable spoil of gold, silver, brass, gems and precious stones.
    - 3) An inexhaustive resources of taxes.
3. The phrase “the God of heaven” appears 20 time in the Old Testament.
  - a. Nine in Ezra. Ezra 1:2; 5:11, 12; 6:9, 10; 7:12, 21, 23
  - b. Four in Nehemiah. Neh. 1:4, 5; 2:4, 20
  - c. Five in Daniel. Dan. 2:18, 19, 28, 37, 44
  - d. These 18 appear in these three post-exilic books, 12 are in Aramaic and used in a document produced by a foreign king,
  - e. The reason is no Temple or Shhekinah glory that exists any more.
  - f. The phrase is translated from an Aramaic for the decree of Cyrus for the reader and exiles. Ezra 1:2
  - g. The four occurances in Nehemiah in Hebrew are in a Persian context or in a

conversation with a foreigner or enemy of Israel, in the land of Israel. Neh. 1:4; 2:4, 20

**B.** The acknowledgment of Cyrus being the servant of God, “And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.” vs. 2c

1. Cyrus understood he was under Divine orders.
  - a. The word commanded “paqad” means to pay attention and attend to the decree.
    - 1) Cyrus recognized that as powerful as he was, God was more powerful.
    - 2) Cyrus understood as God had given him all the kingdom, He could take them from him.
  - b. The Scriptural evidence that Cyrus came to know Yahweh is very strong.
    - 1) Even as that of Nebuchadnezzar!
    - 2) What a contrast these two men are to Pharaoh of Egypt that rejected the God of Israel and paying a great price.
2. Cyrus knew exactly what God had called him to do by command, “to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.”
  - a. The word “temple” appears 18 times, “house of God, Lord, etc” 43 times.
    - 1) The focus of the book is the temple.
    - 2) Like Chronicles with the order of priest, singers, etc.

- b. The prophet Isaiah sheds greater light. Is. 44:28
  - 1) Isaiah confirmed the person by name, “Who says of **Cyrus.**” vs. 28a
  - 2) Isaiah declared the title God gave to Cyrus of caring and protection His people, “He is **My shepherd.**” vs. 28b
  - 3) Isaiah confessed the obedience of Cyrus, “And he shall perform all **My pleasure.**” vs. 28c
  - 4) Isaiah described the specific two things to be built, “Saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,” And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.”” Is. 44:28d-g
  - 5) Isaiah revealed all this about Cyrus by name 150 years before his birth and Josephus affirmed Cyrus knew of Isaiah’s prophecy. Antiquities xi:1:2
  - 6) The last two verses of 2Chronicles 36 are identical to the first two verses of our text, revealing the common author and important connection. 2Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-2
- c. The prophet Isaiah details the conquest of Babylon to fulfill the command of Cyrus to build the city and temple. Is. 45:1, 13
  - 1) Isaiah states the removal and death of Belshazzar the very night, “Thus says the LORD to **His anointed,** To **Cyrus,**

whose right hand I have held-- To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings.” vs. 1a-d

**a)** The Babylonians were so confident in their fortress city as the Medo-Persian armies were outside the walls of Babylon surrounding the kingdom they were having a drunken feast, the watchmen were also drunk. Dan. 5

**b)** Belshazzar was saying, Babylon is impregnable and indestructible with her walls 300-350 feet high, 80-90 feet thick, 250 towers 100 feet high, 100 gates of brass, motes, bridges, ferries, an underground tunnel under the Euphrates, etc. The length of the walls was about fourteen miles on each side of the city. A river flowed through the city guaranteeing its water supply. There was enough land within its walls to supply the city with food. It had no fear of a siege.

**2)** Isaiah gives the entry to the city of Babylon, “To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut”. vs. 1e-f

**a)** Cyrus had the Euphrates River deflected and General Darius went under the levy gates that were left unlocked that night, as prophesied.

**b)** They conquered the Babylon without a fight, Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans was slain that night and Darius (Gobryas) took the temple vessels and became co-regent with Cyrus. Dan. 5:30; 6:1-2, 28

**3)** Isaiah affirmed God’s guidance of Cyrus, “I have raised him up in righteousness, And I will direct all his ways; He shall build My city And let My exiles go free, Not for price nor reward,” Says the LORD of hosts.” vs. 13

### **Illustration**

The prophecy of Babylon, written 600 B.C. Is. 13:19-21; Jer. 51:26, 43

**1.** These prophecies state seven predictions:

- a.** Babylon shall be destroyed.
- b.** It shall never be re-inhabited.
- c.** The Arabs shall not pitch their tents there.
- d.** There shall be no sheepfolds there.
- e.** Wild beasts shall occupy the ruins.
- f.** The stones shall not be taken away for other buildings.
- g.** Men shall not pass by the ruins.

**2.** Peter Stoner said, “Though the Arabs will pitch their tents at nearly any spot, they are superstitious about Babylon; and though you hire one as a guide, he will not stay there at night. The ruined city is uninhabited by humans; jackals and many kinds of

wild beasts live in the ruins. There are no sheepfolds about Babylon.”

- a. Bricks and building materials of many kinds have been salvaged from the ruins for cities round about, but the rocks that were imported to Babylon at such great cost, have never been moved.
- b. Though nearly all ancient cities are on prominent tourist routes, Babylon is not, and has very few visitors.
- c. The probable fulfillment of each item was estimated as follows: (1) 1 in 10; (2) 1 in 100; (3) 1 in 200; (4) 1 in 5; (5) 1 in 5 (6) 1 in 100; (7) 1 in 10. This makes a probability for the whole prophecy of 1 in  $5 \times 10^9$ .

### **Application**

1. Tyndale was strangled and burned to ashes at the stake, with his last breath he prayed, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes."
2. Inquisition, took the Bible from the people.
3. Survived the critics, emperors, popes, kings, etc.
4. Many said the Pent. had to have been written after Moses because there was no known writing until they found the detailed law of Hammurabi, pre-dating Moses and Abraham.
5. So called higher critics, said there was no Hittites, but through archaeology we know of a 1200-year span of Hittite civilization.
6. Daniel was disputed until the Elephantine papyrus were discovered.

7. The Bible was the first book taken to outer space on microfilm.
8. The longest telegram was the New Testament from New York to Chicago.
9. It is one of the most expensive books.
10. Russians sold the Codex Sinaiticus to England for \$510,000.
11. It was written much closer to its origin than any other writings.
12. The late Scholar F.F. Bruce said, “There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the N.T”.

***The proclamation of the prophecy was through Cyrus!***

### **III. The instruction for the prophecy. vs. 3-4**

- A. The people to rebuilt the temple were not forced, but only if they were willing. vs. 3
  1. The inclusiveness of the invitation, “Who is among you of all His people?” vs. 3a
    - a. The context indicates the Jews, as Cyrus had reversed the policy of transporting and cross-populating people as the Assyrians and Babylonians, but permitted people to return to their countries and restore their own religious institutions.
      - \* The Cylinder of Cyrus discovered in the 19th century gives record of this to the cities beyond the Tigris.

- b. A very small contingent went back with Zerubbabel, only (42,360) 49,897. Ezra 2
- c. Then 80 years after Zerubbabel 1754 returned with Ezra in 457 B.C. Ezra 8
- 2. The blessing of the excepted invitation, “May his God be with him.” vs. 3b
  - a. The reconciled oneness with their God after 70 years of captivity.
  - b. The enabling, provisions and protection by their God.
- 3. The place of the invitation, “and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah.” vs. 3c
  - a. Jerusalem is mentioned 776 time in the Bible, more than any other city, 635 in the Old Testament, 141 in the New.
  - b. Jerusalem appears 48 time in Ezra, an average of 4.8 times per chapter.
  - c. Jerusalem is the city of God, the holy city. Neh. 11:1; Is. 52:1
- 4. The task of the invitation, “and build the house of the LORD God of Israel.” vs. 3d
  - a. The very same location the temple of Solomon stood and was destroyed.
  - b. The house is for LORD God of Israel to be sought in prayer.
- 5. The identity of the One who commanded him to proclaim the invitation, “(He is God), which is in Jerusalem.” vs. 3e-f
  - a. Yahweh, the covenant God is the only true God. Is. 45:14, 18

- b. The city chosen for Himself to put His name there. 1Kings 11:36
- B. The command to the people to provide the material for the building of the temple. vs. 4
  - 1. The all inclusiveness is stated, “And whoever is left in any place where he dwells.” vs. 4a
    - a. The word left “sha’ ar” refers in the book to survivors or remnant, also for refugees and escapies, the Jews.
    - b. These were the majority of Jews that remained in Babylon or any other part of the kingdom.
    - c. This would also include all other foreigners of Gentiles living in the area.
  - 2. The particular material to be donated, “let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, goods and livestock.” vs. 4b-c
    - a. After the example of the heads of the father’s house and Cyrus. Ezra 1:5-11
    - b. The precious metals of silver and gold.
    - c. The miscellaneous materials needed.
    - d. The animals for food and sacrifice.
  - 3. The open invitation to the benevolent giver, “besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.” vs. 4d
    - a. The only thing God every honors is what is given and done of one’s own free will.
    - b. The temple was the only place offerings could be offered by the priests.

**Illustration**

“There is no archaeological discovery that has ever controverted a biblical reference”. Archaeologist Nelson Glueck

**Application**

1. What book written by man can you rely on as the final authority and never been updated? 2Tim. 3:16
  - a. Not one, the Bible has never been updated.
  - b. The Bible communicated needful absolute truth to every generation about God, man and sin!
2. What people in past human history have agreed to die for a lie and the succeeding generations? Acts 1:8

\* None, Christianity has not only survived, but flourished despite persecution and suffering!
3. How do people explain the entire Bible, Genesis to Revelation, the harmony and unity of one God Who is revealing Himself to redeem mankind, except that it is the word of God, not man's? 1Thess. 2:13
  - a. They can't, but they say the Bible has errors and contradictions, yet have never read the Bible!
  - b. Next time you are told that, ask the person to show you the particular passage or text!
5. How often have you heard, “there are so many interpretations of the Bible”. 2Pet. 1:19-21
  - a. The Bible interprets the Bible, the best commentary about the Bible!
  - b. The Bible is to be interpreted by the context, historical background and the original languages, Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek.
6. Ask them if they have ever read the Bible?

- a. They most likely haven't, but are merely repeating what they have heard or told.
- b. They need to be confronted with their dishonesty and hypocrisy about judging something they never have examined!

7. Do you gather with the church and serve God?  
\* “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Heb. 10:24-25

***The instruction for the prophecy was for the people!***

**Concluision**

This is he prophecy of Jeremiah about God returning the Jewish nation of Israel after the Babylonian captivity to build the temple characterized by:

- I. The declaration about the prophecy was from God!
- II. The proclamation of the prophecy was through Cyrus!
- III. The instruction for the prophecy was for the people!