

- D) God's restoration of Israel is so complete, He even arranges for King Cyrus of Persia to return the holy worship articles from the Temple of God\* (Ezra 1:5-11).

### 3) A Revolution With An Expanding Future

- A) Unfortunately, when we encounter a list of ancient names and numbers in the Bible, our minds tend to wander since the significance of the ancient list is lost to most of us (Ezra 2).
- B) Rather than picking the list apart, let's focus on some important highlights which will encourage our faithfulness to God and His revolution in our own lives.
- C) The list is divided into lay people (2:3-20, 21-35), priests (2:36-39), Levites (2:40-42), Temple servants (2:43-54), Solomon's servants (2:55-58) those who could not prove their ancestry (2:59-63), culminating in the total of the list (2:64).
- D) Perhaps it is coincidental, but the beginning of the list (2:1) has eleven names, and when combined with the "prince of Judah" (Sheshbazzar, 1:8, 11), produces twelve leaders of the people of Israel. This section reads like a second exodus.
- E) Most profound though, is the mention of the house of Judah returning (1:5, cf. Genesis 49:9-10), and the head of Judah's house returning, Zerubbabel (2:2), through whom God's people would experience the true revolution of the covenant promises (cf. Matthew 1:12ff) -- the Messiah.

\* Clearly the story of Daniel 5:1-31 and the subsequent conquering of Babylon by Medo-Persia is firmly in King Cyrus' mind with the return of these sacred articles to the Jewish Temple. Cyrus did not want to have anything to do with the same articles which contributed to the demise of his Babylonian predecessor, King Belshazzar (son of Nebuchadnezzar). The text is subtle in its mention of the Temple articles, but is clear in setting a tone of God's re-establishment of Israel in the land with no crippling loss of blessing. This kind of restoration is dramatically revolutionary for all of God's Chosen People, and loudly pronounces the Sovereignty of God over all His people.

# The Revolution Has Begun

Long Beach Alliance Church • March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**NOW THESE ARE THE PEOPLE OF  
THE PROVINCE WHO CAME UP...  
TO JERUSALEM AND JUDAH, EACH  
TO HIS CITY. THESE CAME WITH  
ZERUBBABEL...  
~EZRA 2:1-2A (NASB)**

## 1) The National Identity Of God's Chosen People

- A) When God made a promise (covenant) with Abraham to establish a "chosen people" (Genesis 12:1-3), the covenant contained three critical components:
- i) **Land.** God promised Abraham that his family would inherit a land in which to live (Genesis 12:1).
  - ii) **Descendants.** God promised Abraham that he would be a "great nation" (12:2), despite Abraham already being 75 years old (12:4).
  - iii) **Blessing.** God promised Abraham that his name would be great so that through Abraham "all the families of the earth will be blessed" (12:3).
- B) The story of God in the Older Testament is the working out of these components among God's chosen people. The great stories and themes of **the entire Bible** fit into this special set of promises which God made to Abraham.

- C) The incredible increase of **descendants** through the twelve tribes of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 1:1-7), the miracles associated with possessing the **land** of Israel (e.g. Conquest of Jericho, Joshua 6), and the miracle of **blessing** which God provided to the Jews (e.g. In Egypt, Exodus 3:6ff) are all examples of how the special promises of God were worked out amongst His chosen people, the Jews.
  
- D) These components of the Abrahamic Covenant defined the national identity of the Jews. To be Jewish was to live out these promises by following God's Law and living out these promises was the life and breath of being Jewish.
  
- E) When Israel was invaded, Jerusalem destroyed, and the Jews taken into exile (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:15-21), the essence of being Jewish was crushed. The Jewish identity of the covenant promise, like her people, was scattered.

## 2) A God-Styled Revolution

- A) In order to fulfill His prophecy (Jeremiah 29:10ff), God arranged to rescue and restore His chosen people (Israel) through means which were extraordinary and miraculous (Ezra 1:1-4).
  
- B) Some 150 years before these events occurred, God prophesied through Isaiah that Cyrus would rebuild Jerusalem and restore the exiles "without payment or reward" (Isaiah 45:1-2, 13).
  
- C) Not only would God restore Israel, He would do it in a way for which Israel could take no credit. God even made sure they wouldn't be financially crushed, so they could not make excuses for being under undue persecution.

