



RETURNING FROM EXILE

Stephanie Fehr | December 15, 2024




CONTEXT

- Babylonian Exile
 - Babylonian Empire - Iraq
 - Began 597 BCE, Jerusalem fell 586 BCE
 - Persian Achaemenid Empire conquers the Babylonian Empire 539 BCE
 - Cyrus the Great (King)
 - Iran
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CONTEXT

- Ezra 1 - decree from King Cyrus
 - Judah is now a semi-autonomous province of Persia
 - Theocratic state: ruled by religious leaders who answer to King Cyrus
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CONTEXT

- Ezra-Nehemiah
 - "One book with the same heartbeat expressed in slightly different ways"
 - Ezra: priest, passionate about teaching and preaching
 - Nehemiah: lay leader, organizational skills, spiritually mature, prayer
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EZRA 1:1-4

- Edict from King Cyrus of Persia: allow the people to return to their homeland
- v. 1: fulfill Jeremiah's prophecy
- v. 1: God is moving King Cyrus's heart
- v. 2: "the Lord, the God of heaven"
- Cyrus is being used by Yahweh to fulfill his promises
- God's anointed - Messiah



EZRA 3:1-4 - THE ALTAR

- 7 months later, the people gather to build "the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it" (3:2)
- v. 3: original foundations of the altar



EZRA 3:10-13 - THE TEMPLE

- Levites supervise
- v. 11: "He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever"
- v. 12: many shouted for joy



EZRA 3:10-13 - THE TEMPLE

- First Temple:
 - Destroyed in the Babylonian invasion
 - Built by Solomon (2 Chronicles)
 - "He is good; his love endures forever" (2 Chronicles 5:13)
 - During a time of strength (1 Chr. 1:14-17)





EZRA 3:10-13 - THE TEMPLE

- Temple:
 - Symbol of God's presence
 - Where they atoned for sin
 - Matter of identity



EZRA 3:10-13 - THE TEMPLE

- The new temple - a "new beginning" (v.8)
- v.12: older priests, Levites, and family heads - weeping
 - The new temple was not as grand as the first temple



EZRA 3:10-13 - THE TEMPLE

- "There is perhaps another lesson here to be learned in church life. It is easy for older believers to sometimes unhelpfully compare a present church activity to what happened "in my day." ...we need to celebrate what God is doing now among his people, not just look back wistfully, which can be so discouraging to a new generation." - Wallace P. Benn



EZRA 3:10-13 - THE TEMPLE

- The people were idolizing a time period that may not have been as great as they remember





EZRA 3:10-13 - THE TEMPLE

- Preparing for the coming Messiah
- Make the sacrificial system unnecessary
- Jesus “moved into the neighbourhood” (v.14, MSG)
- The Holy Spirit continues to dwell with us



EZRA 3:10-13 - THE TEMPLE

- A life transformed by God, worship is our lives as a living sacrifice, serving God and people (Romans 12:1-2)
- We are God’s temple where God’s Spirit dwells (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)



EZRA 3:10-13 - THE TEMPLE

- The church is not a building
- The church is:
 - a body (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27)
 - the bride of Christ (Eph. 5; Rev. 19:6-8),
 - a flock of sheep (Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet. 5:2-3)
 - a family (Gal. 4:5; Matt. 12:48-50; 1 John 4:20; 1 Tim. 5:1-2)



EZRA 3:10-13 - THE TEMPLE

- Psalm 139:7-10: Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.





IN CLOSING

- Let us not dwell in the past - we might miss what God is doing now
- This story reminds us of God's faithfulness as he fulfills his promises
- "He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever" (3:11)



HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good

His love endures forever

Give thanks to the Lord of lords

His love endures forever

To him who provided a way through his son Jesus Christ

His love endures forever



HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

Who made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant

His love endures forever

Who humbled himself and was obedient to death on a cross

His love endures forever

Who defeated death and rose again

His love endures forever



HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

Who, together with the Father, sent the Holy Spirit

His love endures forever

Who gives us life, peace, joy, and goodness

His love endures forever

Give thanks to the Lord for his presence with us

His love endures forever





HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

Give thanks to the Lord for his church that meets here on the Brow of the Hill in New Westminster

His love endures forever

See he is doing a new thing

His love endures forever



HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

As he forms us together to be more like Jesus Christ

His love endures forever

As he forms us for a life of service toward God and others

His love endures forever



HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

And gives us the gift of community as we love one another

His love endures forever

Praise God who raises the valleys and lowers the mountains

His love endures forever



HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

And who calls us to do the same

His love endures forever

To him who forgives us when we are selfish and in the wrong

His love endures forever

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good

His love endures forever

