

From Babylon to Jerusalem - (Ezra) ch.1 & 2

by Zac Poonen

The book of Ezra describes the movement of God's people from Babylon to Jerusalem, highlighting the sovereignty of God over kings and rulers, and the importance of understanding the new covenant.

Duration: 59:44

Scripture: Ezra 1:1

Topics: "From Babylon To Jerusalem", "Spiritual Journey", "New Covenant"

Description

Zac Poonen explores the transition of God's people from Babylon to Jerusalem as a significant spiritual journey, emphasizing the importance of understanding the new covenant in this movement. He draws parallels between the exodus from Egypt and the return from Babylon, highlighting that while the former was marked by miraculous signs, the latter is characterized by God's quiet sovereignty over circumstances and hearts. Poonen stresses that true deliverance from spiritual Babylon requires a commitment to the new covenant, which is essential for becoming part of the body of Christ. He encourages believers to recognize their role in building God's house, whether by going to Jerusalem or supporting those who do, and underscores that God values those who sacrifice for His purpose. Ultimately, he reminds the congregation that God can move even the hearts of kings to fulfill His plans.

Transcript

Today to the book of Ezra, the book of Ezra, so a few books before the book of Psalms and this is a description of the result of Daniel's prayers that we considered when we studied the book of Daniel and in our study of the Old Testament from Daniel the next book to move on to logically is Ezra because we see the results of that movement which began with Daniel taking a stand for God in Babylon and thereby influencing the kings of Babylon and Persia and one man it's amazing what one man can do and his windows were open towards Jerusalem he lived through the 70 years of captivity prayed that God's people would go back to Jerusalem from Babylon and we know that all this has a spiritual meaning for us because when we studied the book of Revelation we saw that Babylon and Jerusalem are

pictures of spiritual entities Babylon the false Church the mother of harlots it's a big system and in history it began with the Roman Catholic Church but it's multiplied in many Protestant and Pentecostal denominations that's why it's called the mother of harlots there are many harlots and in contrast to that we find in the book of Revelation Jerusalem the bride of Christ and the bride of Christ is put in contrast in Jerusalem to the spiritual harlot that claims to be married to Christ but lives in spiritual adultery and when

we have this picture in our mind and we find that we are living in those days where there is a harlot system and there is the preparation of the body of Christ which is going to be the bride of Christ when Jesus returns in the light of this it's very interesting and

important for us to look at these Old Testament books particularly the books that relate to the movement of God's people from out of Babylon into Jerusalem and this is why after we finished Revelation we moved into Daniel because Daniel is the book where you see the as it were the baby being born in the womb of Daniel this movement back to Babylon and in Ezra we see a little bit of the beginnings of that so we turn to the book of Ezra and chapter 1 now in an earlier study I mentioned that in the Old Testament there are two big movements of the people of Israel and both these movements of the people of Israel have a spiritual lesson for us one is the movement of the people of Israel from Egypt under Moses into the land of Canaan with that movement most Christians are very familiar and that

movement is a picture of salvation to be under Pharaoh in Egypt is to be under Satan in the land of slavery to sin and to be saved out of that through the Red Sea is a picture of water baptism and the pillar of cloud coming down from above is a picture of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and through the blood of the Lamb that was shed on the door water baptism and the baptism in the Holy Spirit all symbolized back there in Egypt in the deliverance of the Israelites God brought his people out the other movement of the people of Israel is something which is not so well known among Christians and that is the movement of the people of Israel from Babylon to Jerusalem the first was from Egypt to Canaan a picture of deliverance from the power of sin into a life of victory it relates to the

personal life personally I put the blood outside the door symbolically thrusting in the blood of Jesus personally I go into the waters of baptism personally I am baptized in the Holy Spirit the pillar of cloud personally I enter the promised land the life of victory but the other movement is not so much a personal movement as the movement that brings together the body of Christ that is the movement from Babylon to Jerusalem and that is the movement that we've been studying and I want you to see one contrast between these two movements in the movement from Egypt to Canaan it was with mighty signs and wonders that God did in the land of Egypt supernatural miracles all along the way and that is God's way when he brings people to Christ even in the Acts of the Apostles we read that when

people were initially brought to Christ it's very often with supernatural healings signs and wonders that God does to bring people out of Egypt but when we study in the Old Testament the movement of God's people from Babylon to Jerusalem we do not find any of these external supernatural signs or wonders rather we see God working quietly in a sovereign way in circumstances and in people and whereas in Egypt what we see is God's supernatural power and physical miracles in Babylon what we see is God's sovereign control over people and circumstances and governments now this teaches us one very important thing in relation to the work of God today that when it comes to delivering people from the power of Satan and sin God does it with supernatural healings miracles the casting out of demons and

many other supernatural signs and wonders like he did in Egypt but when he is bringing people out of Babylon into Jerusalem it is not necessarily with supernatural signs and wonders and thunder and lightning but rather in a quiet and in a hidden way not so impressive in the eyes of carnal believers but yet a much deeper work in reality and so that's something that we must bear in mind now there were two other prophets that I want to mention before I enter the book of who also prophesied around the period of the Babylonian captivity I mentioned them before one was Jeremiah who prophesied for about 40 or more years immediately before the children of Israel went into Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar and the

burden of Jeremiah's prophecy and whenever you read the book of Jeremiah you can

bear this in mind that Jeremiah had one burden to turn God's people away from their sin so that they don't end up in Babylon that's the ministry we need today and in Jeremiah we find perhaps for the first time in the Old Testament a prophecy concerning what we call the new covenant and I just want to turn to that chapter for a moment Jeremiah 32 verse 40 he says I will make an everlasting covenant with them and I will turn away I will not turn away from them I will put the fear of me in their hearts and a little more clearly in Jeremiah 31 verse 31 behold the days are coming and this is what is quoted in Hebrews chapter 8 Jeremiah 31 31 when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel in the house of Judah now Jeremiah was the first prophet in the Old Testament who used the words

a new covenant not like the covenant verse 32 which I made with their fathers when I took them out of Egypt verse 32 but this is the covenant I will write my laws within them and on their heart I will write it and this is the new covenant age in which we live I just want to mention this fact it's very important for us to bear in mind that Jeremiah the man who preached and preached for 40 or more years to prevent God's people from going to Babylon was the first prophet who spoke about the new covenant now a second prophet who spoke about the new covenant was Ezekiel Ezekiel was a prophet who succeeded Jeremiah Jeremiah did not succeed in turning God's people away from Babylon they did not listen to him and they went into Babylon but God was merciful and God sent a prophet to his people in

Babylon and that was Ezekiel so Ezekiel came up as a prophet after the Israelites had gone into captivity and we read in Ezekiel 36 that Ezekiel also speaks about this new covenant though he calls it a new heart and a new spirit in Ezekiel 36 he says in verse 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you verse 27 I will put my Holy Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and we know that that is the new covenant now there are no prophets in the Old Testament who speak about the new covenant as clearly as Jeremiah and Ezekiel and it's very significant that both these prophets prophesy in relation to Babylon what does that teach us in relation to what we are speaking of today just this that the fundamental difference between spiritual Babylon and spiritual

Jerusalem is this that in spiritual Babylon they have no understanding of the new covenant everything is old covenant the priests and pastors are old covenant priests and pastors they type according to the old covenant they are defeated in their sins according to their old covenant they have forgiveness of sins like they had in the old covenant they have special robes and dresses for their priests like in the old covenant they have a special building called a temple or a church like in the old covenant they are not a body but they are a congregation like in the old covenant it is 100% old covenant it is the new covenant that moves us out of Babylon into Jerusalem and that's why Jeremiah and Ezekiel are the first prophets who speak about the new covenant this is what delivers us we must

keep that in mind that if I do not have spiritual revelation in my heart on the new covenant and all that is involved in the new covenant I shall never experience even if I sit in any particular assembly I shall never experience that deliverance from spiritual Babylon and becoming a part of spiritual Jerusalem the Bride of Christ this is why an understanding of the new covenant is absolutely fundamental to being a part of Jerusalem now we can move to Ezra and we get a little bit of background to the study of this book when we studied the book of Daniel we had considered the last few verses of 2nd Chronicles 36 which is the book that immediately precedes Ezra so if you just look above the book of Ezra to the top of the page you'll find the last few verses of 2nd Chronicles 36 and you

remember it says there in 2nd Chronicles 36 verse 20 that the king of Babylon carried the people away to Babylon they were servants to him until the rule of the kingdom of Persia to fulfill the word of the Lord 2nd Chronicles 36 21 by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed its Sabbath you see they had cheated God of 70 years of leaving the land fallow during 490 years and God caught up with them by sending them to Babylon for 70 years so that they could not till the land for 70 years God is very exact in his judgments and all the days of its desolation it kept Sabbath until 70 years were complete and then what happened when the 70 years were complete now verse 22 of 2nd Chronicles 36 in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth

of Jeremiah the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia and you know what happened in that 70 year period that is what we studied in the book of Daniel Daniel was the man who stood there for 70 years and turned the tide in God's favor one man is an amazing man I just want to say one thing about some of these prophets whom God raised up just an encouragement to young people Daniel was a young man when he stood for God Jeremiah you read in chapter 1 was a young man so young that he didn't even feel that God could make him a prophet another prophet who turned God's people towards building the temple in Zechariah he was a young man you read in Zechariah chapter 2 and it's very interesting significance that although it was a hundred and eighty year old man Moses who took the

Israelites out from Egypt when it came to the movement from Babylon to Jerusalem the main instruments in God's hands were people who were young of course they grew older but they started out as young people that's a challenge to every young person today on the day of Pentecost every apostle who stood there was below 33 years of age it's with such a group that God built his church that's just for our encouragement now these two verses here 2nd Chronicles 36 verse 22 and 23 are repeated word for word in verses 1 2 & 3 of Ezra chapter 1 it's a continuation as it were exactly the same words in the first year Ezra chapter 1 verse 1 of Cyrus king of Persia in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia now we are back

again right in the first verse in the first sentence to that great theme that we have been studying in the book of Daniel and that is the sovereignty of God I mentioned that in order to move out of Babylon into Jerusalem there must be a clear understanding of the new covenant I also want to say brothers and sisters that one great fact on which we need revelation in this movement from Babylon to Jerusalem is the total sovereignty of God the sovereignty of God over Kings over superpowers over super Emperors sometimes we find it difficult to have faith that God can move the mind of some petty boss of ours some petty official and here in all the books connected with the movement from Babylon to Jerusalem we see that as we study other books later on the one great theme of the sovereignty of

God over all men and over rulers comes through very clearly and in the very first words Cyrus was the king of the greatest superpower that existed in the world at that time the kingdom of media Persia that overthrew Babylon as we studied in Daniel but the Lord could move the heart of that King of the greatest of the one whom the world called the greatest Emperor on earth Lord had no problem stirring him up to do what it says in the first verse to fulfill what he had spoken more than 70 years earlier through his humble servant Jeremiah wonderful you see what God's humble servants who are despised and rejected speak here and there is far more important than all the edicts and rule and the orders passed by Kings because God speaks through his service there's a very beautiful illustration of

this in the Gospel of Luke if you turn to the Gospel of Luke chapter 3 it's a very beautiful verse there passage of scripture Luke chapter 3 verses 1 and 2 it tells us about all the great rulers right down from

Caesar down to the smallest petty governor in the land of Palestine in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar Tiberius Caesar was the greatest Emperor on earth at that particular time and Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea he was the big shot there and Herod was the big shot in Galilee and his brother Philip was the big shot in the region of Iteria and Trichonitis and Lysanias was the big shot in Abilene and the Archbishops Annas and Caiaphas were the big shots in the church and the Word of God bypassed all these big shots and came to an ordinary man out in the

wilderness called John wonderful praise God it's the same today it bypasses all the political big shots and the religious big shots and comes down to a humble man of God who is seeking God's face who has humbled himself who's walking in fear and trembling before God who fears God and therefore fears no man who lives before God's face now the reason I say that brothers and sisters is the challenge that comes to us today from that example of John the Baptist which we just read is John the Baptist was the forerunner to prepare the world for the first coming of Christ today God needs people to be forerunners to prepare the world and the church for the second coming of Christ and it will be the same story repeated all over again God's Word will bypass the political big shots religious big

shots and come to humble brothers who are living before God's face so what's the challenge the challenge that comes to us is be a man like John in these days be a man like Jeremiah like Daniel like Ezekiel and so we see back to Ezra chapter 1 we can look at a verse in Proverbs 21 before we get there Proverbs 21 verse 1 it says here is a fulfillment of this verse with in Ezra 1 Proverbs 21 verse 1 the king's heart and the reason why the Lord uses the word king is because in those days the kings were the big shots today a king has no power but in those days the kings were the big shots you can put the President of the United States or the President of Russia or the Prime Minister of some country whoever is got power that person's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord like

rivers of water he turns it turns what the king's heart wherever he wishes not where the king wishes where God wishes this is a one of the amazing verses in the Old Testament about the sovereignty of God and when we read a verse like that we must do what David says in Psalm 1 and what is that meditate on that verse how do we meditate on that verse we say well Lord let me meditate on how a river flows you see we've seen rivers at least diagrams of it in maps and have you noticed there's not a single river in the whole world that flows dead straight all rivers are curved and flowing this way that way very easy to see when you're flying in the air but you see that even on a map now the point is this this river that is flowing down eastwards for a few miles after a while suddenly it turns

course and flows westwards exactly the opposite direction and Proverbs 21 one says that the king is determined to do this particular thing and God can turn his mind in such a way because he's got to fulfill the Word of the Lord by his servant Jeremiah or John or XY or is that anyone who has stood for God and God's going to turn him to do exactly the opposite like the rivers of water wonderful even the kings of media and Persia who had a phrase which we studied in Daniel which we saw in Daniel called the law of the Medes and the Persians which cannot be changed but God could change it God could change the law of the Medes and the Persians without any problem at all and so we see the Lord stirred up the heart of this King Cyrus in order to fulfill the Word of the Lord which he had given

through his humble servant Jeremiah and Cyrus all of a sudden made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and he in writing saying thus says Cyrus king of Persia Ezra chapter 1 and verse 2 the Lord the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth you see that was one big difference between Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar never realized that the Lord the God of heaven had given

him all the kingdoms of the earth and Cyrus just by the way uses the word Jehovah in verse 2 Jehovah he recognized that Jehovah was the true God the God of heaven has given me he's the one who's given me I didn't get it because of my cleverness or my military strategy God has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and God Jehovah has appointed me to build him a house in Jerusalem which is in

Judah now if you turn to the book of Isaiah and chapter 45 about 200 years before Cyrus lived Isaiah the Prophet made a prophecy it's one of those remarkable prophecies in the Old Testament where a person is named many Old Testament prophecies there's no name but this is one of the only Old Testament prophecies where there is a name and the name is this Isaiah chapter 44 verse 28 the Lord says it is I who says of Cyrus now Cyrus was going to be born more than 150 years later Isaiah is prophesying about someone who's going to be born 150 years later at a time when even Nebuchadnezzar had not become the ruler of Babylon before the existence of Nebuchadnezzar Isaiah prophesied he said he's my shepherd he will perform my desire and he will declare of Jerusalem she will be built and of the

temple your foundation will be laid that says the Lord to Cyrus is anointed whom I've taken by the right hand to subdue nations before him and to lose the loins of Kings to open doors so that gates will not be shut and so on for the sake of Jacob my servant was for and Israel my chosen one I have called you by name I've given you a title of honor even though you're not a Jew you have not known me but the Lord can stir up a man's heart like that now this is written brothers and sisters for our encouragement the rulers of the world today of the great countries and the small countries God knew them by name before they existed before they were born and he has decided how to move their hearts when the right time comes for what purpose to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by his humble

apostles in the New Testament and which has come down to us who are living in these last days so that Jerusalem can be built wonderful it's tremendous to belong to such a God and so what was the burden in Cyrus's heart God moved him and that's written to teach us that God can move any power today for the purpose of building his body the body of Christ on earth this is why we are an undefeatable people when we come to building the body of Christ it is impossible the gates of hell will not prevail against the church which I built Jesus said as a spirit of triumph in the hearts of those who have committed themselves to build the body of Christ nothing can discourage them because they have seen from the Old Testament that it's a sovereign God who moves kings and everyone else towards this

direction right let's turn back to Israel the Lord has appointed Cyrus to build him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah and then he says in verse 3 whoever is among you of all his people may his God be with him let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord think that a heathen king is telling the Jews go and build the temple brothers go and build the house of God in Jerusalem he is the God who is in Jerusalem and every survivor Ezra 1 4 at whatever place he may live let the men of that place support him with silver and gold with gold goods and cattle to together with the free will offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem there's no compulsion there he says whoever wants to go verse 3 let him go I just want to say there's no compulsion in

moving out of Babylon either Cyrus knew that we don't force people out of Babylon you want to stay there stay and you want to come out and build God's house in Jerusalem come out and build it but the point is this there are two categories of people here first verse 3 those who go up to Jerusalem the people exist even today verse 4 and every survivor that is those who are left who stay behind those who are not so keen on going to Jerusalem why is it there are some Jews who are not so keen on going to Jerusalem because Jerusalem is in ruins Babylon is a like New York or something like that you know it's who will

want to come from there to some ruined place and live there and they say well brother we'll support you financially well that's fine Cyrus says all right that's the second category

of people those who don't want to go to build God's house because there's too much trouble go there and it's all primitive conditions over there says all right then you give silver and gold I want to tell you something as you read through the book of Ezra it's all right there was some people who gave silver and gold we don't even know their names but God has kept an exact list as you come to chapter 2 you see that of those who actually went and built God's house but there is no list of those who gave money he who has ears to hear let him because our money has no value to God if we have not first given our bodies and our life in the New Testament there are two chapters on the subject of giving and those two chapters in the episodes are in 2nd Corinthians 8 and 2nd Corinthians 9 and you

notice here in 2nd Corinthians 8 in 2nd Corinthians 9 one very interesting thing in 2nd Corinthians chapter 8 Paul is writing about the Christians in Macedonia who gave from even though they were poor it says in 2nd Corinthians 8 too they were poor believers sometimes poor believers think that they cannot give anything to God that's why they become still poorer but these poor believers they learned how to give out of their poverty they were liberals but it says they didn't give great riches verse 3 they gave according to their ability maybe a few pices or whatever it was the widows might that was good enough but they gave and they gave beyond their ability begging us saying please receive this Paul to help the brothers and sisters in need and this verse 5 this is the verse I want you to

notice not as we expected they first notice this they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God then they gave their money and so we find these two chapters 2nd Corinthians 8 and 2nd Corinthians 9 would deal with giving teach us that first we have to give ourselves that's what we see in Ezra chapter 1 verse 3 and 4 two categories of people one those who actually go from Babylon to Jerusalem to build the house they suffer a lot of inconvenience a lot of difficulties they have to give up their comfortable homes in Babylon sell it give up their businesses during those 70 years some of those Jews you can imagine must have set up flourishing businesses in Babylon and to give up all that and to start all over again for something like Abraham leaving your localities they did

it and God took note of those who made those sacrifices for what not for themselves but to build the house of God and this has an application for us even today the house of God is built where there are those who have learned not to seek their own but who have learned to give up financial gain honor of the world honor of Christendom and many other ways who stood for the truth and that standing up has cost them something it has cost them position it cost them money financially they have suffered many other ways but they decided to go and God takes makes a careful note of all those people but then there's the other category of people who want to stay where they are and support these people financially yeah they also do that but God doesn't keep a list of their names and so we see Cyrus was a

wise man he knew that that some people wouldn't be too keen on going he says all right we might as well get them to at least give some of their money which they've earned here to build God's house then we read Ezra 1 verse 5 the same God who stirred up Cyrus's heart to make this proclamation we read the heads of the father's households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose everyone whose spirit God stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem does that mean that those people who did not go to Jerusalem God did not stir their spirits no then we'd have to put the blame on God for they're not leaving Babylon and that's what some people do they say well brother the Lord's led me to stay stay here where I am the blames on God for staying in

Babylon but I'll tell you why they stayed in Babylon because God tried to stir them and they couldn't be stirred there was solidly established they didn't want to be stirred they didn't want to be moved but there were certain people who in Babylon who were responsive and I think those are the people who had a burden like Daniel who had a burden Lord who had their windows open to Jerusalem like Daniel who wanted to see a pure testimony for God on earth and God was able to move their hearts easily and like that even today here and there God finds those who who have a burden for a pure testimony who are fed up of all the traditionalism and the ritualism and the corruption there is in and who are concerned who are burdened that there'll be a pure testimony for the glory of Christ on earth in

different places and those are the people whose hearts God can stir God can't stir everybody's heart because some people don't want to be stirred it's too inconvenient to be stirred and so it says some people God could stir up their spirits and once God has stirred up their spirits then he could stir their bodies pretty easily and then they bodies also moved out of Babylon and they began to move they sold their possessions they sold their businesses they did a lot of sacrifices but that's not even mentioned there it's an amazing thing you can imagine when all these people moved out of Babylon into Jerusalem what a lot of things they had to uproot their homes to sell their things sell their business and move on but not one word is mentioned about all that sacrifice which teaches us one

thing that when it comes to building the of Christ brothers and sisters whatever sacrifice we may make it's not even worth mentioning it's not worth being put on record anywhere because if God has chosen you to build the body of Christ that is such a tremendous privilege and honor that it's a shame and a disgrace for us even to think that we've made some sacrifice for that oh dear no no mention of all that they had to give up they just got up and went it says but all that is involved in that one sentence they got up and went we can imagine all the sacrifices hidden behind but they had the honor and the privilege of building the house of God then all those about them encouraged them here were the second category of people who supported them financially tried to relieve their consciences

thereby by giving a little money out of the millions they had earned gold and goods and cattle aside from all that was given up as a free will offering and verse 7 Cyrus here's another thing that God moved Cyrus to do Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem all the costly articles that were used in the temple and you remember in Belshazzar's feast he was drinking in those vessels now King Cyrus he brought out all these vessels and gave it to Shezbazar the Prince of Judah Shezbazar's Shezbazar was the heathen name which the Babylonians gave him his Jewish name was Zerubbabel and he was the leader of the tribe of David you read of him in Matthew chapter 1 if there was a king in Judah it would have been Zerubbabel he's called the Prince of Judah but he was the man now this was their

number he was the man who collected these vessels 30 gold dishes thousand silver dishes 29 duplicates 30 gold bowls 410 silver bowls of a second kind thousand other articles and all the articles of gold and silver numbered 5400 and Shezbazar brought them all up with the exiles and went up from Babylon to Jerusalem a beautiful phrase at the end of chapter 1 from Babylon to Jerusalem that was this movements and we see here that the leader of this group he did not have to beg for money Babylon is built with money you read that in Revelation chapter 18 money is the big thing you're always begging for money and all these Christian organizations that are always running short of money there's something wrong there Zerubbabel had no problem at all the silver and the gold belongs to the Lord and

he can provide us everything that we need if we are dedicated to build God's house that's the second thing we learned from chapter 1 not only that the great powers in the world God can move them to fulfill his

purpose but also that God can move people to give money for the building of God's house without begging without prayer letters without borrowing without doing anything that's dishonoring to Christ if we are committed to the building of the body of Christ the silver and the gold and the whole world belongs to the Lord the earth is the Lord's and everything that is in it let me turn you to Psalm 50 Psalm 50 a beautiful verse Psalm 50 verse 5 it refers to us in the New Covenant today gather my godly ones to me says the Lord gather my saints the godly ones those who have an interest in

a godly life gather them together those who have made a covenant with me those who have entered into the New Covenant with me by sacrifice that is by taking up the cross those who have presented their bodies as a living sacrifice to me gather them together to me and then to them he says verse 7 here all my people verse 10 every beast of the forest is mine and the cattle on a thousand hills the cattle on a thousand hills belongs to the Lord verse 12 if I were every bird that moves in the field is mine verse 12 if I were hungry I would not tell you we know God can say that what about a servant of God can he say that too well what about these people who drop in at lunchtime full-time workers well they're not servants of this God anyway if I were hungry I would not tell you because the world

is mine and everything it contains wonderful if you make a covenant with God by sacrifice the world is yours brother everything it contains everything that you need my God will supply all your need not all that we want thank God he doesn't give us all that we want we'd ruin our lives if we got all that we wanted just like little children good wise fathers don't give them everything they asked for but all that they need sure all that we need God will give us what is good for us if we make a covenant with him by sacrifice and that's what we see in Ezra chapter 1 God could move kings and people to provide all that was needed financially of course these people who went to Jerusalem needed financial help to build a house we don't pretend that we don't need money to serve the Lord we need it

but we don't beg for it we don't have to ask for it we don't have to hint for it in so-called prayer letters we trust in God who owns the world and everything in it and he moves people without our having to tell them our needs wonderful Zerubbabel didn't go up to Cyrus and remind him about those vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away God told Cyrus and Cyrus just took it out and gave it to Zerubbabel and a true servant of God knows that he can move men through God that God can move people turn back to Ezra chapter 2 now one wonders what spiritual benefit we can get through reading a chapter like this which is just full of a whole lot of names and figures of a number of people shall I tell you something it's one of those chapters in the Old Testament which is repeated twice if you

read the Old Testament you've got to read this twice once in Ezra chapter 2 and exactly the same list in Nehemiah chapter 7 verse 6 onwards word for word and if God you know God's ways are not our ways his thoughts are not our thoughts and if God has seen fit to put down a huge list of nearly 70 verses twice in his inspired word there must be a very good reason for it and this is why I'm not saying that we're going to go like some good brethren people go into all the meanings of all these names and try to get a whole lot of truths out of those names and become super spiritual like that I'm not talking about that type of stuff I'm saying that there is a message that comes through from this list but what is it a list of let's read verse 1 these are the people of the province who came up out

of the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon and who returned to Jerusalem we can say a list of the people who left Babylon and came to Jerusalem it's a very important list that's why it's mentioned twice in the Old Testament and that's the main message that comes through to us God doesn't just say so many people no he says from this particular family so many

and from that particular family so many and from this other particular family so many it's very exact and we can't keep a list like that on earth because we don't know who has left Babylon really inwardly and in a spirit but I tell you God's who sees the hearts of all people knows pretty well and he's got a corresponding list to this even today in the New Covenant this was the Old

Covenant was a physical Babylon a physical Jerusalem it is a physical movement in the New Covenant as a spiritual Babylon and a spiritual Jerusalem and a spiritual movement the difference is the physical movement you can list it any man can list it the spiritual movement God keeps the list I'm sure he's got a list there and the fact that it's listed twice in the Old Testament shows that God gives pretty much importance to the people who left Babylon and came to Jerusalem these came with Zerubbabel now I'm not saying that those believers who don't leave Babylon will be forsaken by God there is one book in the Old Testament which is for the people who stay behind in Babylon did you know that and that's the book of Esther those are the people who did not leave Babylon who stayed there God

didn't forsake them God protected them and blessed them but shall I tell you one thing about the book of Esther it's the only book in the entire Bible where the name of God is not even mentioned once it's a pretty sad thing you belong in that category that God cares for us and blesses us but he can't identify his name with us because we want to stay where we seek our own but doesn't mean he forsakes us no no no God cares and God's a good God he cares and blesses even those whose sins are forgiven but to seek a little convenience their prayers answered their sicknesses are healed but the name of God is not there in the book that's all he protected the people there from being slaughtered so if I'm only interested in being blessed and being healed and being taken care of by God in many ways

I don't have to leave Babylon at all the book of Esther will teach me that but if my concern is Lord have you placed me on earth just to be healed of my sicknesses just to get my daily food am I gonna live on earth like the animals no you've got a spiritual purpose for me to be your representative to be part of the body of Christ to be a testimony for Jesus Christ in this earth in the few years that God gives me well then there's a message for us in the book of Ezra Nehemiah Haggai Zechariah and these came with Zerubbabel it says in verse 2 Zerubbabel means a stranger in Babel that was his name the people there didn't like that name a stranger in Babylon and that's why they changed it to Shezbasar but he came back and he said my name is Zerubbabel was a stranger in Babylon I was never

comfortable there I stayed there till the right time came the right time came and I came out and that's the mark of those who come out of Babylon they are Zerubbabel's they were stayed there there were strangers there the comforts and conveniences didn't attract them they left Zerubbabel came out along with Joshua Nehemiah Zerubbabel and many others now these are all Jewish names and they are not necessarily the same people who have similar names in other places in the Old Testament many of the Jewish names are similar and the number of the men of the people of Israel this is what I said from this family so many verse 4 from this family so many from this family so in so many and it goes on down the list of many many families all the way through in the Old Testament in the book of Numbers

we read of a big list of the people who left Egypt yeah God keeps a list of that also that's listed in the book of Numbers so many people left Egypt but there is also a list of those who left Babylon the only difference being there's one list of the people who left Egypt and there are two lists of the people who left Babylon it's just a little more important that's all but we see that this list is repeated in the list in the book of Numbers of those who left Egypt we read there were over 600,000 people who left Egypt but in this list we read here in verse 64 it's a much smaller number only 42,000 that's just about 6% 6 or 7% of the number we find in the

book of Numbers and that's usually about the proportion that we find today that among those whose sins are forgiven it's only about 6 or

7% who are really interested in moving out of Babylon and being built in Jerusalem it's amazing and all these things there's spiritual reality all these things are written for our instruction and blessed are those who find themselves in this number I just want to say one or two things here one is it says here in verse 23 about a group of people from Anathot 128 people of the men of Anathot I just want to say one word about them we don't want to go into all the other details of all the other families if you turn to the book of Jeremiah there's something very interesting in the book of Jeremiah chapter 32 I say this because Jeremiah was from the town of Anathot and Jeremiah was the man who prophesied that the children of Israel will be taken into Babylon and after 70 years they'll come back

and in Jeremiah 32 it says in the 10th year of Zedekiah which is the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar verse 2 when the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem now when a country is being besieged and you know that a foreign nation is going to come and occupy this country they are at the gates of the city you've got to be a real idiot to buy land in that country at that time but you read Jeremiah chapter 32 that's exactly what Jeremiah did he bought and of course when an army is besieging a country and they're going to take over the country land goes cheap and we read in this chapter that Jeremiah bought a parcel of land for 100 rupees and he got the sale deed signed and registered you read about it all in verse 8 9 10 his uncle's son came to him and saved redeemed this land for me and he says

in verse 9 Jeremiah says I bought the field for 17 shekels of silver which is about a hundred rupees and he signed and sealed the deed and he put it into an earthen vessel verse 14 and he said verse 15 you all may think I'm an idiot but I believe what I'm preaching that 70 years later my descendants will get this land it was a living testimony that's what Jeremiah was doing verse 15 that says the Lord houses and fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land and Jeremiah looks up to the Lord and says Lord verse 17 there is nothing too hard for thee and the Lord said to Jeremiah verse 27 is there anything too hard for me for me says the Lord you know that chorus we sing is there anything too hard for the Lord no there's nothing too hard for the Lord it comes from this chapter where

it's good to understand the background of the choruses we sing Jeremiah saying Lord I want to make a public testimony of the fact that I believe what I prophesy I'm going to buy land here it's going cheap I'm not a fool to waste my hundred rupees I'm going to invest my money here because I know this place is going to come back to God's people what's the lesson for us what is the best investment we can make today not in Babylon in Jerusalem but how many of God's people believe that the best investment they can make their money is by buying shares in the body of Christ and not in some earthly company that's going to collapse with all right having shares in those earthly companies to earn our living but ultimately it must be with an aim to invest our life and everything we have like Jeremiah

in that which it looks today as if it's a loss looked as if Jeremiah lost is a hundred rupees but the day came as we read in Ezra chapter 2 the men of Anathot came back and Jeremiah's relatives were there among them and they got back their investment a hundred fold just like Jesus tells us today if you give it'll come back to you 100 fold like Paul says to Timothy 1 Timothy 6 19 tell the rich people in the world that the best investment they can make for eternity is to use their money to do good to build the body of Christ those who selfishly keep it all for themselves they're fools they don't really believe what God's Word says praise God that there are men like Jeremiah who invested by wisely turning back to Ezra chapter 2 I just want to say one more thing there verse 40 it says about

the Levites that there were only 74 Levites you see the Levites for the full-time workers it's very interesting they're only 74 because they were concerned as to where their support would come from these people are going back are all poor and most of the Levites decided to stay in Babylon to minister to the rich that sounds familiar well just there and even there it's almost the smallest number of all that list is the Levites where were the rest of the Levites brother there's a need in Babylon there are brothers and sisters here we have to minister to and so but there were a few who said Lord we trust you we're going to trust you even if it's poor people out there but they're building the body of Christ we want to commit our lives with them God made a list of those 74 there's no list of

how many Levites were left in Babylon even among the full-time workers there is a distinction God makes a distinction between those who trust him and commit themselves to the poor the wholehearted and the God-fearing and to those who want to minister to the rich in comfort quoting the Word of God maybe the Levites in Babylon didn't preach heresy but their hearts they sought their own it's very interesting this study from what we thought might be an unprofitable chapter it's amazing how much of hidden treasures are hidden in God's Word

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