

The Stirring of the Heart

The return from Babylon was like the second exodus. The first was from Egypt, where they had been for 400 years, but in Babylon they had been there 70 years. In Neh 7:5 it says, “Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people, that they might be registered by genealogy, and found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first return...” Of course, we know that all didn’t return, and we’ll try to find out why.

In Ezra 1:5 it says, “Then the heads of the fathers’ houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, and all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of Yahweh, which is in Jerusalem.” So you can see that there was a stirring in the heart. They were moved. That word is #5782 and means to rouse, awaken, incite, to stir up. It was amazing how those people set their face to return and rebuild. They had been in Babylon for 70 years, and those who set their face toward their homeland were like a mass exodus from Babylon.

Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 put the number at about 50,000 that returned. That should be the number of those whose spirit our Father had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of Yahweh in Jerusalem, as it says in Ezra 1:5. There was an emigration that took place over a period of several generations, but so many of the Jews were content to stay in Babylon. The Book of Esther was written about them.

Now we know what happened in the Book of Esther. Not one word is ever mentioned about God or Yahweh, our Father. There is not one hint of divinity in the whole account. So it’s probably an apocryphal¹ writing. It wasn’t commanded by Yahweh or Moses to keep *Purim*, which the Jews keep today, but it’s not a legitimate festival. It’s actually a celebration of mass murder.

¹ *Apocryphal* — of doubtful authenticity, although widely circulated as being true.

So the Jews were there, comfortably settled in the land, in Babylon. They were doing fine — “fine and dandy” — in business matters. Josephus, a famous Jewish historian, was correct in saying that many were loath to leave their possessions behind (that means they hated the idea) and go back to Jerusalem. They weren’t being stirred up in their heart to go back. They didn’t have faith to go.

I’m sure a lot of the people who went were stirred up in their heart, but some were stirred up in their flesh by a spirit of adventure, and it didn’t go well with them when they got back. But as for the people who stayed in Babylon, going back to Jerusalem was a horrible idea — having to rebuild everything, and no telling what would happen on the way, because it was quite a journey. So the thought was repulsive to them to leave behind all they had gained. Josephus’ book, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, gives the history of it. It’s not even all recorded in the Bible, but we can almost guess because of what happened in the time of Esther. You can imagine the apostasy in Esther’s day.

Apostasy means you fall away from the original drive you had, the faith you had. It means not obeying and doing what the apostles originally did, but going away from what the apostles have taught. Christianity is all in apostasy, since they’re not following the Judean pattern that the apostles established in Jerusalem.

So many Jews decided to stay in Babylon. It was just like hearing the “unreasonable gospel” of giving up everything — what it takes to restore what has gone to ruin. So many Jews must have seen the sheer unreasonableness or recklessness of starting out on a long, hazardous, and costly journey. No telling what would happen on the way. It was a hazardous journey that could only end in insecurity after they got there, going back to the rubble in Jerusalem. So it was a long time before they restored Jerusalem and the temple.

So it was the unreasonable gospel. People are set in their own ways, and they have their own little family. The people who went back to Jerusalem had to leave behind

those who weren't stirred up in their heart. They had to leave behind parents, wives, husbands, children — whoever was not stirred up. Certainly they had to leave their home and their business and whatever they were doing in Babylon. Josephus said that they were really doing well in Babylon. So they had to leave all they had, just as Abraham did, but most didn't want to do that.

What happened in that day is the same thing as the gospel, exactly the same thing as the gospel. Those who were stirred up, those who were moved in their hearts, those who were willing to do our Father's will received the gospel. When they heard it, they received it, because they were willing to do our Father's will, and they were moved by the Spirit. The Spirit moved on their spirit. Our spirit is what the Spirit moves upon. The Spirit doesn't come to our soul or our brain, but it goes to our spirit first. But our human spirit can be moved upon by evil spirits, too. That's the thing with the spirit. We have to discern spirits and decline whatever is of evil.

So that word in Ezra 1:5 is to stir up, to rouse, which actually means that faith (persuasion) comes to you. There are not too many places in the Old Testament where it actually says *faith*. I think it's only twice that it mentions the word *faith*, and the Hebrew word actually means faithfulness, fidelity. But that's what it was — something engendered in their heart, in their spirit, by our Father to move upon the people who were willing to do His will to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild it. It had been promised that after 70 years, Cyrus would let them go.

In the Vine House days, one of the first teachings we taught was Nehemiah, about how they set their NECK to the work. In so many places in Nehemiah it talks about how they had a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. So all who were truly Abraham's seed went back to their homeland. Abraham's seed is those who do what Abraham did. Abraham had to leave Ur, so therefore, they had to go back to Jerusalem, just like a second exodus.

When they came out of Egypt, there was a mixed multitude — there were the rabble mixed among them. There are good figs and bad figs. But then the bad figs start making the good figs bad, if they're not dealt with.

Isa 45:13; Hag 1:14; Zec 4:6-7; Isa 48:20 — The day will come when we'll call them out of Babylon. Jer 51:45-46 is the great call out of Babylon — “Come out of her, My people!” We have to call His people out of Babylon also, and those who are stirred up, they'll come out, and come with us. That rousing or stirring up, the move of the Spirit as it says in Ezra 1:5, is the work of our Father's Spirit on the human spirit. Understand that. If you've never experienced the work of His Spirit on your spirit, then you've not known Him.

A lot of people become Christians, of course, in the flesh, and a lot of people went back to Jerusalem from Babylon in the flesh. A lot of people left Egypt in the flesh, and you can see what happened on the way, when the times got rough. Dt 8:2 says our Father wanted to show them what was in them. So they went through certain predicaments and suffering and circumstances to show them what was in them, so that they wouldn't go into the land with that in them, because if they did it would destroy the land, it would destroy the people.

I just want us to see that it's the work of our Father's Spirit on the human spirit, of His leaders and His people, to accomplish His purpose. That's why He chooses people. But His Spirit must come to work and stir up a person in his spirit in order to do our Father's will. If He can find people who are willing, if He can find people who have a heart to obey, He can speak to them. Otherwise He can't. A lot of people did it in the flesh, but it didn't last long. They started causing all kinds of trouble, and after they got there, they were building their own houses while the house of God was in ruin. They married foreign wives and did everything else under the sun. They weren't keeping the Sabbath, and it was just continual turmoil.

But there were people who were stirred up in their hearts. Certainly Nehemiah was stirred up when he went before the king (Neh 1 and 2). So you can see that our Father seeks people who will do His will, do His good pleasure. Isa 53:10 says that His offspring will carry out His good pleasure. They will do His will, what He wants to do. They will be the fruit of the suffering of His soul in death, as it says in Isa 53:11. And we're His offspring who will do His good pleasure. We are the fruit of His suffering in death. His soul went into death, it says, as an offering for sin.

You see it also in Ex 35:29 and 36:2, people whose hearts were stirred up to do our Father's will. Always, there's a remnant — those who were able to be stirred up in their spirit, or moved in their spirit, by our Father. That's what faith is. You can see that there will be a remnant (Rom 11:2,4; 1 Kng 19:18). There will be 7,000, it says, that are left. Now whoever that 7,000 is, I don't know. But in 1 Kng 19:18, it's talking about that remnant of 7,000 who haven't bowed their knee to Ba'al. Most people have bowed their knee to Ba'al. Many in the Community have bowed their knee to Ba'al, believe me. But we have to understand what bowing our knee to Ba'al means.

But there will be 7,000 left, whoever that means. I would say probably it is Zec 12:10, those people who look upon Him whom they pierced and mourn for Him as for an only child. And they are the ones who will start Israel again in the Promised Land, the enemy-free land, in the next age. Mt 19:28 — They sat on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Zec 12:10 and 13:8 says there are two thirds that will be cut off, and one third will be left. Probably by that time, in the area of Jerusalem, 7,000 will be the one third who are left, because there will be so much devastation at that time. It's the only time I can imagine in history when it would be talking about only 7,000 being one third of the Jews. And these are the Jews who have grasped on to something that we've been talking about, and it's in them, and they are pulled in two ways, and they don't know what to do about it.

It's like my old friend Joseph, who was raised a Catholic. He knows us, that we've got the truth, but he just can't let go of that fear, "WHAT IF WE ARE WRONG, AND WHAT IF...???" He's going through that kind of turmoil. And that's how the Jews are. But still, when they see our Master, they'll look upon Him whom they pierced, it says. They will mourn for Him as for an only child. And two thirds will be cut off, destroyed, and one third will be left. And that's probably only 7,000 who will start again the Israel of the next age, the true natural seed of Abraham who will inherit the promise.

So we have to consider Rom 11:2-4 and 1 Kng 19:18 and Zec 12:10 and 13:8.

Jeremiah prophesied that they would be in Babylon, Babylonian captivity, for 70 years (Jer 25:11; 29:10), and then he said Babylon would be judged after they left. So we have Cyrus, the king of Persia, who was a savior, in a sense, to Israel (Isa 44:28; 45:1). They multiplied tremendously in Babylon, and they liked it, because they had workers. It was good for the economy. But Cyrus somehow was stirred in his heart to release them and even give them the things they got from the temple to take it back with them.

There's so much to those stories, it's just amazing. But the main thing we want to see is that it's the same as the gospel: "No one can come after Me, no one can follow Me, no one can be My disciple, no one can have eternal life, unless he gives up everything he has and goes back to Jerusalem." You can't just hang on to your own life, hang on to your nice little apartment, or your nice little house, your nice little family, your nice little career... That's not being stirred up in your heart to follow our Master. If your wife is stirred up, WONDERFUL!!! But if she's not, what are you going to do? Stay with your wife? She can't give you eternal life.

They had to leave their family behind, they had to leave their houses and their businesses and their nice little life, and go back to that HORRIBLE LIFE back in Jerusalem for the next 100 years. I mean, it was terrible, terrible what they had to face. They had to be ready.

David Zerubbabel – It’s so clear, so clear about what we’re doing — what we did, and what we’re doing. I was reading Isa 48:20 where it says, “Go forth from Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans!” And then it says, “With a voice of singing, declare, proclaim this, utter it to the end of the earth; say, ‘Yahweh has redeemed His servant Jacob.’”

It just rang in my mind what our Master said in Mt 13:44, that it was for *joy* over what they saw that they left everything. It wasn’t, “Oh, no, how can I tear myself away from my life in Babylon?” The ones that were stirred up, it was with *joy* that they went back to that place, and cleared out the rubble, and endured all the shame and the mockery and everything else that they had to go through. I mean it’s amazing.

I went back from there in my mind as you were speaking, “Well, how did they end up there?” In the last days of the early church, the ones who stained their garment, who bowed their knee to Ba’al, they were driven from the “land” (in a type). They were driven from the land that we are being brought back into, from that exile. There they were in Babylon, smug in thinking they were His people, yet unable to be stirred in their hearts by His spirit, just going through the motions, and becoming rich in that foreign land.

Oh, they were Jews alright, they were God’s holy people, chosen people. Just like Sholom said, “We’re Jews. We are God’s holy people. We are going to heaven no matter what we’re doing.”

David Zerubbabel – And then all they amounted to was what you read in Esther, the ones who stayed back, and they don’t even remember why they’re Jews, or what it means to be a Jew, or in the analogy with Christianity, what it means to be a disciple.

They weren’t stirred up in their heart, and then they kept on having babies, of course. And then they grew and grew and grew. But what would they pass on to their children? If they had been stirred up, they would have gone back to Jerusalem.