

MOVED UPON BY THE LORD

SCRIPTURE LESSON: (Ezra 1:1-5, NIV)

¹ In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing: ² “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “ ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³ Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. ⁴ And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.’ ”

⁵ Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: ‘Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years’ (Jeremiah 25:8-10, NIV).
2. “This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years” (Jeremiah 25:11, NIV).
3. "This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place" (Jeremiah 29:10, NIV).

A. Moved Upon by the LORD

1. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (II Peter 1:21, KJV).
2. “The LORD Almighty says this: ‘Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants’ (Jeremiah 29:8-9, NIV).
3. “In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing” (Ezra 1:1, NIV).
4. “Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:5, NIV).

I. RELEASE FROM PRISON

1. “Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will

do all that I please.’ From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do” (Isaiah 46:11, NIV).

A. Foreknowledge

1. “As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the LORD said to him, ‘Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions” (Genesis 15:12-14, NIV).
2. “I am the LORD,... who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, ““Let it be rebuilt,”” and of the temple, ““Let its foundations be laid””” (Isaiah 44:24, 28, NIV).
4. “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah” (Ezra 1:2-3, NIV).

B. Only Those Willing Were Invited to Return

1. “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’
Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’
Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come”” (Luke 14:18-21, NIV).
2. “I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet” (Luke 14:24, NIV).

C. Moved Upon by the LORD

1. “Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:5, NIV).
2. “By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion!’
How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land? If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy” (Psalm 137:1-6, NIV).

II. RETURN AND RESTORE

A. We Must Keep the Flame Burning

1. “I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (II Timothy 1:6, NIV).

B. Assumption—You Really Want the Fire

1. “Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason I remind

you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (I Timothy 1:4-6, NIV).

C. The Purpose of the Jews' Return Was Worship

1. "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (Psalm 51:12, NIV).
2. "Bring me back from gray exile, put a fresh wind in my sails!" (Psalm 51:12, MSG).

III. WORSHIP RESTORED

A. They Began with an Altar

1. "Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God" (Ezra 3:2, NIV).
2. (Genesis 13:4).
3. (I Kings 18:30).
4. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33, KJV).

B. Offerings Restored

1. "On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD'S temple had not yet been laid" (Ezra 3:4-6, NIV).
2. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2, KJV).

CONCLUSION:

A. The Fountain of Our Beginning

1. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14, NIV).
2. "This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace" (Colossians 1:6, NLT).

Questions:

1. Read Ezra 1:5 — Discuss how that verse has application to you today.
2. Read Luke 14:15-24 — Again, Discuss the application of those verses to your life today.
3. What is the difference between being moved upon by God and your heart being moved by God?
4. Which is more important, success in your career in this life, which lasts one generation, or transmission of the wonderful truths of God to the next generation, which lives beyond your lifetime?
5. Read and Discuss II Timothy 1:6.