

**Ezra 1:1** Now in the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia, so that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus the king of Persia; and he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it also in writing, saying,

**Ezra 1:2** Thus says Cyrus the king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has Jehovah the God of heaven given to me; and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

## THE FIVE “UPS” IN EZRA

### THE TYPE OF THE CAPTIVITY

In order to understand the recovery of God’s house and God’s city, we must look back into the history of the people of Israel. We all know that the Old Testament is a book of types, and the greatest, all-inclusive type is the history of the people of Israel. In Christianity today, many teachers and Christians apply the things that happened in the beginning of the history of the people of Israel to their Christian experiences. I believe we all know this. We know how to apply the passover to our experience of redemption, and we know how to apply the crossing of the Red Sea to our experience of baptism. We know how to apply the enjoyment of the daily manna and even the water from the cleft rock to our experiences, for this is taking Christ as our daily supply and as our living water. We even know how to apply the temple built by King Solomon to our experience.

But very few Christians know how to apply the last part of the history of the people of Israel. What does the captivity mean to us? How can we apply the captivity to our experiences? What does the recovery, the return from captivity, mean? How can we apply their recovery to our experiences? Most Christians know how to apply the beginning, but they simply neglect to apply the ending.

What stage are we in according to the spiritual situation of today’s Christians? There is no doubt that we are in the stage of captivity. Captivity indicates that the people of God have been scattered; it means that there is no more oneness. God’s people have been carried away from the proper ground of oneness to a wrong ground. First, they were in Jerusalem, gathered and centralized, but later they were scattered and carried away to many places. This is the captivity. Let us apply this to today’s situation. Are Christians today gathered, or are they scattered? In a sense, they are more scattered than the people of Israel were. They are very divided and very scattered. This means Christianity is in captivity. We do need to return, and we need to be recovered. We need not only revival but also recovery.

### THE MEANING OF RECOVERY

What do we mean when we say that we need to be recovered? Do we mean that our health needs to be recovered or that our job needs to be recovered? No, to be recovered means to be brought back to Jerusalem. It means to come back from Babylon to Jerusalem. This is the right meaning of recovery. Negatively, to be recovered means to be brought out of Babylon, and positively, it means to be brought up to Jerusalem. Have you been recovered out of Babylon, and have you been recovered back to Jerusalem? Perhaps some would ask, “What is today’s Babylon, and what is today’s Jerusalem? How do we apply Babylon and Jerusalem to our experience?” We know that Jerusalem was the center in the land of Canaan for the people of Israel to be gathered. Jerusalem was the ground of oneness.

**Ezra 1:3** Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him; and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and let him build the house of Jehovah the God of Israel — He is God — who is in Jerusalem.

**Ezra 1:4** And everyone who is left, in whatever place he sojourns, let the men of his place support him with silver and with gold and with goods and with cattle, besides the freewill offering for the house of God, which is in Jerusalem.

We are told by the Scriptures that some of the people of Israel were taken captive to Syria and some to Egypt, but the majority of them were taken captive to Babylon. Babylon was the main place of their captivity. So, in type, Jerusalem is the ground of oneness. This is the ground for the gathering of the Lord's people. The significance of Babylon is division, scattering, and captivity. To be recovered out of Babylon is to be recovered out of division, and to be recovered to Jerusalem means to be recovered back to the original ground of oneness.

#### THE PLACE GOD CHOOSES

When the people of God were brought into the good land, according to Deuteronomy 12 and 14 through 16, the Lord told them many times that when they entered into the land of Canaan, they had no right to choose a worship center. God told them again and again that He would choose the place, the unique place, the only place where He would set His name and build His habitation. Eventually, that place was Jerusalem. Therefore, Jerusalem became the center for God's people to worship Him, and this unique center kept the oneness of the people of God. Without such a center, after they entered the good land, the people would have been divided.

For instance, the tribe of Dan lived in the north, quite a distance from Jerusalem. Suppose they said that they lived too far away, and transportation to Jerusalem was not convenient for them. After all, God is not limited by geography. If God could be in Jerusalem, why could He not also be in Dan? If the tribe of Dan were to speak in this way, immediately the people of God would be divided. Then another tribe would say that if Dan could set up a second center, they could set up a third one. Then a third center would be established. Others then would follow and set up a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth until there would be endless division.

God is wise. He foresaw this problem, so He repeated His commandment again and again. The people of Israel had no right to choose their own place to worship. This right was in God's hands. He was the only One who had the choice. Israel had no choice; they were to take God's choice, the divine choice. The choice of God should be the choice for us. God's choice became the center of the gathering of His people, and this is the unique ground of oneness.

#### ONENESS OF DIVISION

After a time, the people of Israel were taken captive and scattered into at least three divisions. After seventy years some of the people of Israel in Babylon were revived and rose up. But was that enough? No. They had revival, but they still did not have the genuine oneness, because the oneness in Babylon was still the oneness of division. Even though they were one there, they were one in a way of a division. They did rise up, and they did love one another, but they loved one another in a division. This may be a revival, but this could never be a recovery.

**Ezra 1:5** Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites rose up, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred up to go up to build the house of Jehovah, which is in Jerusalem.

**Ezra 1:6** And all those around them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with cattle and with precious things, besides all that was offered willingly.

Why did the people of Israel have to go back to Jerusalem? Could they not worship God in Babylon? Yes, they could worship God in Babylon, and they could worship God in Syria and Egypt. They could worship God in those places, but His house was not in those places. If they were going to worship God in His house, they had to go back to Jerusalem. God is not narrow; He can be worshipped anywhere. But to worship God in this way can never satisfy Him. They could worship God, but they would always have the sense that they were in captivity. They could worship God but with a sense that they were not satisfied. This is because they would not be worshipping God in His house.

How can we apply this to us today? Unless we return to the ground of oneness, we can never be satisfied, regardless of how spiritual we are. It is true that God is not narrow. Wherever we are, He is with us. But that kind of worship can never satisfy God, and it cannot satisfy us. This is because we are short of God's desire. God's desire is to have a house, a habitation, on this earth.

#### STIRRED UP, RISE UP, GO UP

In Ezra 1 there are many "ups." Here in this chapter there are at least five "ups." First, God stirred up their spirit (vv. 1, 5). Our spirit needs to be stirred up. We should not be emotional, thoughtful, or determined, but we must be stirred up in our spirit. This is the first "up." Then we must rise up (v. 5). After being stirred up in the spirit, we must rise up. This is the second "up." Then after rising up, we must go up (vv. 3, 5). Everyone who is being recovered is going up, not down. When we are being recovered, we simply have the feeling that we are up. To go back to the house means to go up.

#### BRING UP, BUILD UP

Then there is another "up." Do not simply go up by yourself. You must bring up something of gold and something of silver (v. 11). These are the experiences of Christ. All the vessels in the temple are the experiences of the various aspects of Christ. The people of God were scattered, and all the spiritual experiences were carried away. That was a shame to them and to God. Nebuchadnezzar put all the vessels in the temple of his idols. What a shame to God! Even today some dear Christians have real experiences of Christ, but they are in Babylon. They have the experiences of Christ in the place of captivity and in the place of idols. The experiences are right, but the place is wrong. The vessels are right, but they are the vessels of the temple of God in the temple of idols. So we must bring them up.

**Ezra 1:7** Also King Cyrus brought out the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought out from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his gods;

**Ezra 1:8** And Cyrus the king of Persia had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer and had them enumerated to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

Ezra is not a long book. But it takes time to tell us all the numbers of the vessels. There were five thousand four hundred vessels. When we are recovered, we must bring up some of the experiences of Christ. There are the vessels of gold and the vessels of silver. In typology silver refers to Christ's redemption, and gold refers to God's divine nature. Our experiences while we are going up must be the experiences of Christ and His redemption and of God and His divine nature. We must go up to bring up something of Christ and of God. We should not go up with our hands empty. At least we should have one vessel of gold and one vessel of silver.

It is so interesting that this part of the Word only gives us the names of two kinds of vessels: dishes and bowls (vv. 9-10). The dishes are large plates, and the bowls are for eating and drinking. Both are for serving food.

What experiences do you have of Christ? Those experiences must be the dishes and the bowls to supply and to serve food to others. When we are going up to the church life, are we going up with anything in our hands? We must go up to the church life with dishes and with bowls to serve others with food so that they may be nourished and supplied. I believe that many dear ones who are in the Lord's recovery today can give testimony of how they have gone up to the church life with something in their hands as dishes and bowls to supply others. They can testify that when they came into the church life, they were simply nourished. They have something in their hands to nourish others, and others have something in their hands to nourish them; so they just nourish one another. This is the church life. You have some dishes, and I have some dishes. You have some bowls, and I have some bowls. You serve me, and I serve you. We all must serve one another.

Eventually, we must be built up (vv. 2-3, 5). So we must be stirred up, rise up, go up, bring up, and build up. We must be stirred up in our spirit, rise up with our body, go up to Jerusalem, and bring up the experiences of Christ so that we may build up the church.

#### IN SPIRIT

Even the Old Testament tells us to be stirred up in our human spirit. The church is not a human society but a divine economy. This is not a human movement but a divine movement, a divine moving. Therefore, God needs our spirit. God stirs up our spirit. Do not consider and analyze too much with your mind, and do not be so emotional or so determined. We all must be stirred up in our spirit. To understand in the mind is one thing, but to be stirred up in the spirit is another. I am afraid that some of us may be clear in our mind about the Lord's recovery but so poor in our spirit. May God be merciful to us and speak to our spirit. God must touch our spirit. He must deliver us out of our mind and turn us to the spirit. Then we will not care so much for our mind, and we will not care so much for our emotions or our will. We will go on with the Lord in His recovery because we have been stirred up in spirit.

**Ezra 1:9** And this was their number: thirty gold dishes, one thousand silver dishes, twenty-nine knives,

**Ezra 1:10** Thirty gold bowls, four hundred ten silver bowls of a different kind, and one thousand other vessels.

**Ezra 1:11** There were five thousand four hundred vessels of gold and silver in all. Sheshbazzar brought up all of them with those of the captivity who were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

#### A NEW BEGINNING

Ezra 1 begins with, “Now in the first year of Cyrus.” Why was it not the second year or the third year? Why was it the first year? Because the recovery is a real new beginning. If today we are stirred up in the spirit for the Lord’s recovery, this will be the first year to us. This will be a new beginning. The first year of King Cyrus was the beginning of a new reign. I hope that among those who read this, many will say, “Hallelujah, this year is the first year of my church life! Now I know that I must go up to Jerusalem.”

Some may ask, “If I go up to Jerusalem, what about all the rest who will not go up?” Do not consider that much—just go up! Why do you have to consider so much regarding others? If God has stirred up your spirit, you must go up, regardless of what others do. History tells us that only a small number of the captivity went back to Jerusalem; the majority remained in captivity.

We know that besides the temple in Jerusalem, there has never been another temple built up by the Jewish people in the entire earth. Instead, they have built up many synagogues. They have not dared to build up a temple, because they know too well God’s commandment in Deuteronomy 12 and 14 through 16. If we only rise up, yet we do not go up to the church life, we may serve God, but we will only serve God in a synagogue. We can never serve God in the temple simply because we have only been raised up. We need not only to be raised up but also to go up. We should not serve God on a lower level; we must go up. Some may say that they can preach the gospel where they are. Yes, they can preach the gospel on a low level. Some may say that they have the presence of God. In a sense I agree with them, but they have the presence of God on a low level. We all need to go up to Jerusalem, the unique ground of the oneness of the church.

I am so happy that in these past years we have seen many dear ones who have been stirred up, have risen up, and have gone up to bring up and build up. Now today, in so many places, they are building up. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! They have been stirred up to rise up to go up to bring up to build up. We build up what we bring up. This is a summary of God’s recovery.