

READ - EZRA 1:1-7

History was made this past week as the first black president was elected in the United States.

Remember, considering President Obama or any president, GOD IS STILL IN CONTROL
① GOD IS STILL IN CONTROL OF THE NATIONS.

God said to Abram - Genesis 17:4 “- - - this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.”

Genesis 17:6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you.

Genesis 22:18 “through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

Psalms 22:28 “dominion belongs to the LORD, he rules over the nations.”

Following King Solomon’s reign, Israel became 2 nations, Israel in the North, and Judah in the South.

* Around 700 BC Israel was destroyed by Assyria –the world power of their day.

* Around 600 BC Judah was attacked by Babylon and carried away.

* God had said to His people through Moses in Deuteronomy 28:1, “If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.”

Other Scriptures record -

Deuteronomy 28:10 “all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD - Deuteronomy 28:11 “The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity” -

Deuteronomy 28:12 “The LORD will open the heavens, to send rain on your land” -

Deuteronomy 28:13 “The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.” In other words, “You will be a winner if you follow me” God said.

Deuteronomy 28:15 continues, “However, - if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands – Deuteronomy 28:49 says, “The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand,”

Deuteronomy 4:27 warns, “*The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you.*”

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried them away but - Now - 70 years later, we read of king Cyrus. Persia was the world power.

Ezra 1:1 “The Lord moved the heart of Cyrus V2 “ ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.

* God of heaven moved King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to attack Jerusalem. *Now, He moves the heart of King Cyrus to rebuild the temple.

TODAY, God is still in control of the nations. He works through kings – queens – Pharaohs - presidents & czars –

God is not only in control of the nations -

② GOD IS STILL IN CONTROL OF HIS CHURCH.

Some say, the Church first began in the upper room at Pentecost. We know Jesus said, "*I will build my Church.*"

Others say, the Church began in the wilderness with Moses and the Hebrew people. God said to Moses and the Hebrew people in *Exodus 19:4*, '*You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings* –“

> Regardless, as Jehovah God delivered His people from captivity, So Jesus has delivered His Church from the bondage of sin.

Sometimes His people have sinned and He had to punish them. But by His compassion He would always bring them back to Himself.

This was not only a nation in captivity – it was God's Church in captivity in Persia.

My friend, it was never intended that Christ's church be in captivity. Even today, God wants His people to enjoy freedom from any bondage. A good question at this time is, "Are you a slave to any habit or addiction? Are you held captive by anyone or anything? God wants you to be totally free. Jesus said, "He who the Son sets free is free indeed."

* It was now time for His people to go home and rebuild. So God spoke to Cyrus, King of Persia. "*The LORD, the God of heaven, has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem.*"

As we consider rebuilding a church facility here at West Broad Nazarene – we can see some lessons from Ezra.

A- Our hearts must be in it,

Ezra 1:5 reads, "*everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD*"

Today, As we plan to move to the future in building – God must touch our hearts. Our hearts must be in it – all of our hearts.

B- We must work together as one - one heart and one mind

Ezra 3:1 tells us, "the people assembled as one man in Jerusalem." There was a perfect unity among the people as there was at Pentecost where we read in Acts 2:1 KJV, "They were all with one accord in one place."

It can't be your work and my work. It can't be – your way and my way. It must be "US" together.

C- Give Freely

Ezra 3:5 says, "*After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred feasts of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD.*"

D- Opposition; Ezra 4:1 reads, *"The enemies of Judah"*. "These were people who lived in Jerusalem. They acted like they wanted to help but –in reality they were enemies. Ezra 4:4 *"They set out to discourage the people and make them afraid."*

* There is a long list of harassments against God's people rebuilding – from Zerubbabel through Nehemiah to the end.

* Discouragements come, but let's make sure they are not from within the church.

Prayer,

Prayer and fasting was always an important ingredient in Old Testament worship. *Ezra 3:3 explains, "Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices."* In their worship there were always prayers and fastings.

E- Worship, In rebuilding the temple, the first project was-

Rebuilding of the Altar –

Years earlier upon reaching Canaan, Abraham's first act was to build an altar.

Now – the captives returning from Persia would first rebuild the altar – a place of worship.

TODAY – we are the temple of God. As the altar in the temple was most important then, so our altar of worship within each of us is vital to our relationship with our God.

This is true concerning - Our personal altar in worship - and our corporate altar of worship as a church.

Worship has always involved - giving & sacrificing.

* * * Ezra 3:10 reads, *"When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests - with trumpets, and the Levites - with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD -.With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD? "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid."*

Ezra 3:12 But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy.

Ezra 3:13 No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away"

In any endeavor to build a worship center, or to build a church group, there must be some of each of the above. Today, in 2009, God is still in control. And He desires to prove Himself true to His promises.

May God bless you as you seek to walk with Him in the days to come!