

2 CHRONICLES 36-EZRA 5

WEEK IN REVIEW + FAMILY GUIDE

WEEK IN REVIEW

At the close of 2 Chronicles, we see the last accounts of the kings of Judah before Nebuchadnezzar overtakes Judah. The last remaining nobles and officials are exiled to Babylon, and the Israelites are left without a true leader. This opens the door for God to fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah to redeem Israel through a **pagan** king. Pagan means that they did not know or follow the God of Israel. The last passage in 2 Chronicles 36 declares the proclamation of King Cyrus that released the exiled Israelites out of captivity and with the freedom to return home. Cyrus was the king of Persia from 559-530 BC. In Isaiah 45, it is promised that he would do this 150 years before He ever lived. The Lord says about King Cyrus, "I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me" (Isaiah 45:4). God used him to free the Jewish people from captivity.

We finish the book of 2 Chronicles and head to the book of Ezra! The key word for the book of Ezra is **return**, as we see the Israelites come back home. It is like the greatest homecoming of all time! Once they return, they rebuild the temple in chapters 1-6, and remember the Law in chapters 7-10. When the Israelites saw the foundation of the new temple laid, there was a mix of shouts of joy and sorrow as those who returned were also the ones that had seen it in its former glory. This is echoed by the Levites giving praise to God while the foundation was being built saying, "For He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever toward Israel!"

King Cyrus, had no business being used by God, yet God used him. In Proverbs 21:1 it says, "In the Lord's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him." Additionally, in Romans 9, Paul talks about how God is the one who declares our purpose as clay in the hands of a potter. God's **sovereignty** is revealed by the prophecies of Isaiah and using unlikely people to do great things for God's kingdom. Sovereignty means that God is in charge of all things. Not everyone wanted the Israelites to rebuild God's temple, which led to opposition to the work and the stoppage of the work. We see through the book of Ezra that God's purposes will prevail and the work will continue. God is powerful and in control of all things. He is not stopped by the unbelief of people and moves the hearts of kings and rulers to ensure His will is accomplished!

FAMILY GUIDE

BIG IDEA:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God's work is not stopped by unbelief
KEY STORIES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyrus' Proclamation • Exiles Return • Building the Temple is paused • Construction Resumes
KEY VERSES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezra 1:2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ "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 5:11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, one that a great king of Israel built and finished."
WORDS TO KNOW:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pagan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ People who do not know or follow the God of Israel • Return <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Coming back home • Sovereignty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ God is in charge of all things

Reflection Questions

1.	When you have faced opposition in following God's commands?
2.	What is something that feels impossible for God to do?
3.	Choose one country or ruler that does not believe in God and pray for them today!