

The Return Home

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:

“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. 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. 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.”

**I am the LORD, and there is no other;
apart from me there is no God.**

**I will strengthen you,
though you have not acknowledged me,
so that from the rising of the sun
to the place of its setting
people may know there is none besides me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other.**



“..there are seasons of life that are so difficult, so challenging – one difficulty stacked on top of another for an extended period of time – that it just may be that God is trying to get our attention. There are seasons of God-ordained struggle – times of exhausted emptiness when nothing seems to work, nothing quenches our deepest thirsts, no achievements abates our restless hunger; times when we plant but never really harvest, when draughts turn our fields into dust and our retirements into pocket change; times when we are literally forced to our knees because nothing else seems to work. God allows times of difficulty to come so we will be sure to give careful thought to our ways.”

“Put first things first and we get second things thrown in: put second things first and we lose both first and second things.”

“As God’s plan continues to unfold to bring his ultimate solution through Israel, let us heed the challenge in our own lives to make God’s big thing our big thing.”

Questions and actions for the start of 2016

- **Are my priorities in the right order at the beginning of 2016?**
- **What can I do to make sure God is first in my heart, life and actions?**
- **Remembering the opposition that the Israelites faced, when we seek to follow God's will with a passionate heart, what resistance might we face?**
- **God through his prophet called his people to action who told them to go "gather wood" and begin building. Very practical stuff. What is your next step to "gather wood" and start building into God's plan for your life?**

Pray for strength to do what it takes to follow God's will for your life. Ask God to dwell right in the middle of your life and be so present that the world will see him alive in you.