

Devotion 18:

**Our Father Moves Hearts To Fulfill His Word**

Ezra 1—10

In reading straight through from Genesis to Ezra, one thing has been abundantly clear: our Father can control history. His plan is preeminent. And the book of Ezra begins with this very thought:

*“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 to put it in writing: 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. Anyone of his people among you—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem.” 1:1-3*

Incredibly, just 50 years after the Babylonians had carried off the southern kingdom and king Nebuchadnezzar had ransacked the temple that Solomon had built, our Father orchestrated a remnant to return and to rebuild the temple, and it was prompted by a foreign king!

Furthermore, after Cyrus dies, some enemies complain that the Jews are being allowed to rebuild a temple in a city that had been rebellious and troublesome. In a deft political move, some temple workers ask the new king, Darius, to research the archives and find Cyrus’ decree. Not only is the decree to rebuild found, but also *“the expenses of these men are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury...whatever is needed...must be given them daily without fail, so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.” (6:8b-10)*

The Israelites dedicate the rebuilt temple and celebrate the Passover. And *“the Lord filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria, so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.” (6:22)*

Yet another subsequent king allows Ezra and *“any of the Israelites in my kingdom, including priests and Levites, who wish to go to Jerusalem with you, may go.” (7:13)* Consequently, Ezra praises God: *“Praise be to the Lord, the God of our fathers, who has put it into the king’s heart to bring honor to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem in this way.” (7:27)*

In a final eloquent prayer in the book, Ezra says:

*“Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has*

*granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.” (9:9)*

Later in the Gospels we will read that our Father moved hearts in such a way so that His Word was fulfilled. A quick recall from Sunday school lessons might bring to mind names for us in which He did just that: Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas, and Judas. And finally when we come to Revelation, we will see that our Father is still moving hearts, orchestrating history today, so that His Word will be fulfilled in the final climax of the return of Jesus triumphantly to earth.

There is no heart, believer or unbeliever, which our Father cannot use for His purposes. We have already seen it in the memorable person of Pharaoh and now in Ezra we see it in kings of Persia. Proverbs 16:4 will state the point quite succinctly and poignantly:

*“The Lord works out everything for his own ends—even the wicked for a day of disaster.”*

All of our Father’s children are left to declare with Job:

*“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.”*  
Job 42:2