



Sermon Notes: An Epic Homecoming

1. The catalyst for the king's decree. (1:1-2)

2. The content of the king's decree. (1:3-4)

3. The consummation of the king's decree. (1:5-11)

4. The citizens of the king's decree. (2:1-70)

5. The conclusions from the king's decree.

Theme: Redemptive history is centered upon getting God's people home to worship Jesus Christ.

- a. He stirs the hearts of kings and commoners to accomplish that purpose.

- b. Even when human goals do not align with God's goals, they will still accomplish that purpose.

- c. Every past "homecoming" is designed to point us to this ultimate, future hope.



Gospel Applications: An Epic Homecoming

Discuss.

1. What ultimately motivated king Cyrus to let the Jews return to their homeland and rebuild their temple? What motives of his own do you think played into this decision?
2. What does it mean to have your spirit stirred by God? What does it not mean? How would you know if a stirring was God or something else?
3. How would you react if you were in exile and your pagan king issued this decree found in Ezra 1:2-5? What would you think? What would you feel? Would you have stayed in exile or returned home? Explain.
4. What does the list of names represent in Ezra 2? Who are these people? How would you react to finding your name on this list? What would be a modern parallel?
5. This story is a positive illustration of Proverbs 21:1. But does God direct the heart (and thus the decisions) of *every* king/leader *all* of the time? Explain.
6. What underlying storylines and themes give you hope and perspective when leaders are using their power to harm you (or the people of God)?
7. In what sense are you "in exile" right now (see 1 Peter 2:9-12), awaiting the summons of a king to go home? What does this mean for the way you're meant to live out your life on Planet Earth?
8. What one thing will you do with what you've learned this week?

Pray.

1. Confess whatever this message has surfaced in your life that's out of step with God's purposes for you.
2. Praise the Lord for His sovereign goodness that ultimately moves everything toward His redemptive goals. Ask Him for eyes of faith to see where He is working this way right now.