

Rebuild Don't Relax, Part 1

Steve Berger January 22, 2017

Introduction

by way of an overview, of our new study — **Rebuild Don't Relax**

My Concern — in some circles seems to be a “general” sense of relief for many evangelicals, not all — because of the possibilities of Supreme Court, Republican President, Senate, House, historic Republican gains, historic Democratic national loses; talk of borders, ISIS, economy, abortion, supporting Israel etc.... Concerned that many are relieved and subconsciously thinking, "Whew, now I can relax."

- it's not time to relax, it's time to rebuild; it's time to be on the offensive and take ground that has been made possible to take
- things the body of Christ has been praying for, fasting for, weeping for, for decades is within reach and real hope of happening
- from the stopping of the slaughtering of the **unborn**, infanticide, and abortion — to the **rebuilding our inner-cities, education, and civil rights** issues — to defeating radical **Islamic terrorism**. There is surprisingly amazing potential right now. It's time to rebuild not relax! Our own lives personally, spiritually — and our country's life nationally

Historical chances

...this type of opportunity has happened for Gods people before

- the choice to rebuild or relax was theirs... SADLY too few rebuilt, too many relaxed!

Jewish captivity

...Leviticus 25:1-7; no rest for 490 years; from Saul to Babylonian captivity
biblical command to let land rest every seventh year; Israel had not done that for 490 years = 70 years of captivity for disobedience

- **2 Chronicles 36:17-21**

Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave *them* all into his hand. And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all *these* he took to Babylon. Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

Babylonian Captivity

...under King Nebuchadnezzar, God's servant for that purpose

• **Jeremiah 25:8-12**

"Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Because you have not heard My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.

Time frame — just for clarity — there is an academic discussion about the actual time frame. The captivity could simply refer to Babylonian domination, lasting from 606 BC to 536 BC. Others might claim that the reference to the 70 years was from when the Temple was destroyed in 586BC to when it was rebuilt and dedicated in 516BC.

Deliverer — **Cyrus**, ruler of the Medo-Persian Empire, took Babylon from **King Belshazzar**. His story is in Daniel 5, where he is partying with Temple vessels, praising gods of gold and silver, God's handwriting is on the wall; his hips loosed, knees knocked, and Daniel interprets- "God has numbered your kingdom, its finished, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting, your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians." That night, Cyrus invades, Belshazzar dies!

- **Cyrus** — first ruler to be called "The Great" due to Kingdom size — ruled Medo-Persian empire.
- **No saint** — but is recognized as a father of human and religious rights. Allowed people he ruled the freedom of worship; allowed captives in a country he conquered to return home.
- **Herodotus** — read more about Cyrus by this historian, philosopher born 50 years after Cyrus' death
- **Xenophon** — military general born 80 years after Cyrus' death, author of Cyropaedia
- **Cyrus Cylinder** — unearthed 1879 in Iraq, Babylon, is considered charter on human rights
- **American Founding Fathers** — inspired by his ideas
- **So** — *Cyrus is the man God uses, in his strengths and faults to set the Jewish people free from Babylonian captivity*
- **He's foretold by name** — along with the work he'll do...

- **Isaiah 45:1-6, 13**

"Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—To subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: 'I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; He shall build My city and let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward," Says the LORD of hosts.

Cyrus' response — decades later to Jewish people in Babylon...

- **Ezra 1:1-3**

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.

- **Miraculous** — pagan King freed them from captivity, allowed to go home, to rebuild the Temple and the city, given permission and provision... surely everyone left to rebuild, surely no one stayed behind in pagan Babylon to relax, surely no one missed such a miraculous opportunity...
- **Jewish response** — 50 thousand of 150 thousand rebuilt, 100 thousand relaxed; the economy was good; they were comfortable, and secure — missed seizing the moment. What could of happened quickly, efficiently, and effectively was dragged out over 90 years of opposition — because God's people didn't respond when the opportunity arose. TRAGIC!
- **Beloved** — **there are times in human history when God does unusual things with unusual people for the benefit of His people**, *there are times when spiritual winds and political winds converge so that epic, historic, miraculous things can happen... but God's people must seize the day with courage, rebuild their own lives, strive to rebuild the lives of others, work to make the entire spiritual, biological and national family better. That time is now, let's rebuild, let's not relax!*
- **Closing** — after years of Jewish apathy and slow moving, Ezra says...
 - **Ezra 9:8-9**
And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.

Application — *We've got a window of opportunity for a measure of revival in our bondage, to repair God's house, to rebuild the ruins, to build a wall!*

IT'S TIME TO REBUILD NOT RELAX!

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think God punished the Israelites not keeping his commandment about letting the land rest every seventh year?
2. To our “modern” way of thinking, does that punishment seem too harsh? What does that tell us about how we need to adjust our way of looking at the things that are important to God?
3. Do you ever “judge” God for using unlikely people (instead of “righteous” people) to fulfill His purposes? Read Isaiah 55:8-9.
4. In Ezra 1:1-3, realistically, do you think you would have been one of the 1/3 who would have left the economic comfort of your present homeland (now Persia), to go back to struggle and rebuild in Jerusalem? Why or why not?
5. What are some of the specific issues of concern that you have had, that now may have the opportunity for repair?
6. What specific actions will you take to help repair/rebuild that ruin/wall?