

The Books of Chronicles is an historical record. Unlike today's historians who focus on factual accuracy and impartial judgments, biblical history tries to draw meaning by understanding God's presence in human affairs (Intro to Chron).

God favored the nation of Israel freeing them from slavery in Egypt and leading them to the Promised Land. God handpicked their leaders and helped them in so many ways. Our first reading today from Second Chronicles covers the period before Exile through the restoration of Jerusalem. "In those days, all the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the LORD's temple which he had consecrated in Jerusalem" (36:14).

God sent many prophets over the course of time to call the chosen people back into right relationship. Prophets were not well received. "They mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings" (36:16). There are always consequences to our actions and the unfaithful nation suffered for its lack of faith. Israel lost its favored status. Foreign powers desecrated the temple, and many were taken captive. The Babylonian Exile lasted some 70 years. After more than three generations, the Lord fulfilled his promises to restore order through a most unlikely source.

Cyrus, the foreign King of Persia did what the Israelites had failed to do. He listened to God. "Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem" (36:23). The house was a new Temple, a place for thankful exiles to come and give thanks and praise to God.

Today we live in favored times. 2000 years ago, the Father Almighty sent his Son, the Prince of Peace to build a new Temple in Jerusalem. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). We know that Jesus was treated like the prophets of old. "They mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings" (36:16). They were just as intolerant of Jesus. Amidst rejection, Jesus responded with a self-sacrificial love. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19).

God wants us to respond in faith. Over the last 12 months we have seen heroic efforts to preserve life. Nurses and doctors and emergency responders in cities and nations around the world have mirrored the self-sacrificial love of Christ in reaching out to those hospitalized by the virus. The Babylonian Exile lasted for 70 years ... how difficult that must have been. We have only experienced a year of exile and we know how painful that is.

A year apart has been most difficult on the heart.

Let us continue to support one another in prayer.

Reach out to the homebound and let them know you care.

As the days get longer, may you grow ever stronger.

Listen to Jesus and believe in the power of light.

Live the truth with all your might.

Be generous to those in need as you share.

Thank others for being there.

Look within for any unreconciled sin.

Seek forgiveness with a good confession.

Fight for justice to banish oppression.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,

Victory over death is already won.

Share your faith, your struggles, your strife.

Help others to believe that they too may enjoy eternal life.

