

“GOD’S DIVINE DECREE!”

Ezra 1:1-6

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Introduction

At the close of each of the four gospels and at the beginning of the Book of Acts, Jesus gave His church a Divine Decree:

- This is a Divine Decree because it was given by God, yes, by the Divine Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- This is a decree, which is a command, a mandate.
- It was not an option but an order.
- He who said, *“I will build me church,”* also said, *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”* Let us consider an Old Testament illustration of this Divine Decree. The Scripture is found in Ezra chapter one, verses 1-6.
- The greatest and most important activity in all the world at that time was the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.
- It was to be built because God so willed, so moved on the hearts of people. They were to build the house of God. **Anything God is doing is of paramount importance!**
- The greatest and most important activity in all the world at this present time - is God’s missionary program. -- God’s heart-beat! God’s will -- the *Evangelization of the World!* is what is of supreme importance -- **Nothing compares!!**
- In the Old Testament illustration of how we are to obey God’s Divine Decree, I want you to note three things!

I. The Sovereignty of the Savior! (1:1-2)

If I were to choose one word for this first point it would be the word, **Command!**

A. This is pictured in the person of Cyrus, the King of Persia, the only Gentile type or picture of Christ (Isr. 45:1). Cyrus gave his decree!

1. As a king, Cyrus was a sovereign and the subjects knew they were to obey the commands of the sovereign.
2. In the very first year of his reign, Cyrus obeyed the Word of the Lord, just as Jesus obeyed the will of His Father.
 - a. John 5:30; 4:34; 6:38-40; 8:29; 9:4; 17:4
 - b. Acts 1:1-8

B. In Similar manner Christ has decreed!

1. We are to recognize the sovereignty of our Savior and likewise obey His commands. In Jh 20:21, Jesus said, *“.. . as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”*
2. Christ often prefaced His commands by declaring His sovereignty... (Matt. 28:18-20) *“All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore....”*
3. Cyrus put the proclamation he had made in writing -- or we would not have the record of it. Thank God, the Lord has preserved His proclamations in

writing.

4. The Holy Spirit who inspired and superintended the writing of the Scriptures has also preserved these commands for the church to obey.

C. The Lord Stirred the Hearts!

1. The Lord was the one who stirred up the spirit of Cyrus and caused him to obey the *“word of the Lord.”*
2. The only people who have the desire to obey the *“Word of the Lord “* are those who are stirred by the Spirit of God.
3. We see in verse 4 and 5 that the people who did what Cyrus commanded were those whose *“spirit God had raised.”*

D. God gave His Decree!

1. God told Cyrus that all the kingdoms of the earth were his and that he was to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.
2. Christ Jesus gave us a command to take the gospel to all the kingdoms of the earth. God is concerned about all the people of the World.
3. According to Acts 1:8 We are to be witnesses in all the world. In essence we are to build the house of God in every kingdom and country of the world.
 - a. Not only because Jesus is our Savior
 - b. But because we love Him
 - c. and want to please Him.
 - d. Also because He is our Sovereign
 - e. and we must obey Him. **It is imperative!**

II. The Sending of the Servants! (verse 3, 5)

If we were to use one word that describes this we would use the word ***Commitment!***

A. The question is raised, “Who is there among you of all his people?”

Israel was known as the people of God in the Old Testament, but these particular people were those who had been in captivity, those who were the slaves of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

B. Who are the people of God during this age,

1. those of us who have been purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Those who were in bondage, who were the slaves of sin and Satan.
3. God sent his people to build the house of God in Jerusalem. AND

C. God commanded us to evangelize the world. We must commit ourselves in obedience to this command.

1. A genuine commitment must be made because Satan is in opposition to world-wide missions just as he was in opposition to building the Temple.

- a. 2:64,65 -- total number of people involved were about 15,000.
 - b. 3:1; we see that they worked as one man.
 - c. With this type of commitment - Satan begins to do his deceptive work.
 - d. Chapter 4 -- people of the land sought to hinder the work in the same manner that church and mission work is hindered today.
 - e. The adversary tried to draw the Jews into an unholy alliance as is seen in the efforts of ecumenicalism today. Ezra 4:2; (note vs 3)
2. They had an answer for the enemy.
- a. *"Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God. ..."*
 - b. However, the adversary did not stop, they made their work difficult by withholding supplies and even hiring counselors to frustrate their purpose.
3. Today our missionaries are not permitted to get a proper visa or there are restrictions on what type of work can be done.
4. Next, we read they began to write accusations against Judah's leaders.
- a. Some missionaries are today accused of being a part of the C.I.A or a foreign enemy of the country that he is trying to reach with the gospel
 - b. Satan has continued these same tactics in his efforts to stop the work of world evangelism.
5. There has never been a time when a great commitment was needed than today. We need missionaries who are totally committed to the task of worldwide missions, who are willing to go where ever God leads in His vast harvest field. **Yes, just as there is a command to be obeyed there is a commitment to be made.**

III. The Sacrifice of the Saints! (vs 4-6)

Again, I would choose one word for this third thought -- it would be the word **COST!** It costs something to be used of God. It costs something if we are to obey the command, decree of the Lord.

A. There was a Call to Help! (vs 4)

- 1. They were to help with silver, gold and goods and with beasts beside the freewill offering for the house of God.
- 2. We are told that they **strengthened** their hands by giving silver, gold, beasts and added **precious** things!
- 3. There is **no sacrifice too great** or anything too **precious** when it comes to giving to God's work; to the building of God's house.
- 4. There is a great cost involved in helping our missionaries get to the field.

B. We see cost involved in strengthening their hands in building God's church after they get to the field.

- 1. Many people are giving freewill offerings, but very few are willing to sacrifice their silver and gold, their goods, and their beasts.

2. And how many are willing to give their **precious** things!?
3. If we are going to send out all the missionaries whom God has called and our churches have commissioned it will require more than freewill offerings. **It means that we must sacrifice those precious things as well as our silver and gold.**
4. God gave heaven's best for us -- we cannot afford to give anything less than our best to Him.
5. It will take the sacrificial giving of our money, time, and possessions, but it will also require the **sacrifice of our children** who are the most "*precious things*" that God has entrusted to our care.

Yes, there is a command to be **obeyed**, a **commitment** to be made and also a **cost** to be paid. This Divine Decree has been given to you and me and to the churches. Let us begin today as never before to do all that is required of us to build His church.

We must become Command and Commission driven. . . to do His will!