

**PARTICK FREE CHURCH
(CONTINUING)
1 Norby Road Glasgow**

**CONGREGATIONAL NEWSLETTER
February 2013**

**Services
Lord's Day 1.00 pm and 6.30 pm
Wednesday 7.30 pm**

MAY GOD GIVE US A LITTLE REVIVING

BACK FROM BABYLON

The Book of Ezra is recounting the return from the Captivity in Babylon. God's people had suffered exile because of their idolatry and apostasy. It was the fulfilment of the Word of God in promising blessings for obedience and threatening curses for disobedience. The holy seed had mingled with the heathen nations, inter-married and worshipped their so-called gods.

The return from Babylon took place in three stages. The first group of exiles returned under the favour of Cyrus King of Persia (a pagan king but God's 'anointed one') who decreed for the restoration of the temple and of the worship of God. The second group enjoyed the favour of King Artaxerxes and were sent with silver and gold for the temple. They were lead by Ezra the priest. When Ezra came to Jerusalem he confronted a problem which sent him to his knees in a memorable prayer (chapter 9)

EZRA'S PRAYER

1 The problem he confronted (v 1-2) He finds the that the people who have come back to Jerusalem are returning to old practices. They are inter-marrying with the pagans around them: 'the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands'. The danger with mixed marriages was the threat to the true faith and to the very distinctiveness of the covenant people..

2 The indignation he expressed (v 3-5) He could not be reconciled to what the people of God had become. Here we see was the reaction of one who had made God's cause his own and who saw that cause scorned by the people. 'There were assembled unto me everyone that trembled at the words of the God of Israel.'

3 The solidarity he manifested (v 6-7) He identifies himself with the people. He speaks of *our* iniquities and *our* trespasses. He confesses not only the sins of his contemporaries but of the rebellious ways of preceding generations in 'the days of

our fathers'.

4 The grace he acknowledged (v 8-9) 'Now for little space grace has been shown from the Lord our God'. The captives have begun to return. Cyrus was God's instrument to send them back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The worship of the true God was set up again. Artaxerxes had given impetus to the second return. The people of God were back with the opportunity for a fresh start in their own city.

5 The warnings he gave (v 10-15) It was evident that they had not learned thoroughly the lessons of the Captivity. The threats of Deuteronomy 7.1-3 had not been heeded. They were in danger of repeating the mistakes. 'Should we again break the commandments' there was a danger that God would consume them.

APPLICATION FOR TODAY

Martin Luther spoke of the Babylonian Captivity of the Church in his day. The Church today is in a captivity. Her glory has departed. Her walls have been broken down. The wild beasts of liberal theology, evolution, humanism, relativism, man-centredness, worldliness and Arminianism have devoured her. God is angry with his people. Our enemies laugh among themselves. Yet how little grief do we find among God's people today. How little repentance, confession and earnest prayer. How we need to go back to the point where our forefathers departed from the doctrine, worship and discipline as enshrined in our Reformed Confessions. We know what had gone wrong. We are told what to do. May this give us 'a nail in his holy place' and 'a little reviving in our bondage'.

JOHN J MURRAY

NEWS

LEGAL SETTLEMENT The 20th January 2013 marked the thirteenth anniversary of the Division in the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) that necessitated the formation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC). The change did not affect Partick Free Church until the beginning of February 2000 when the Rev Iain Smith was suspended by the Presbytery in violation of accepted procedures. Services under the FCC continued as from 6th February 2000. Legal action to recover the property was initiated by the FCS in 2008 and after years of defence it was decided by our Deacons' Court in conjunction with the Legal Committee to fall from the defence in Court and to hand over the property. The manse was handed over on 30 November 2012 and the church and halls on 31 January 2013. A small proportion of the frozen funds was offered to us but the congregation agreed not to accept it. An *ex gratia* payment of £50,000 was accepted for the use of the denomination to defray legal costs. Fuller statements on this are available with the Newsletter. We are thankful for the patience and co-operation of our people over the period and particularly during the last year.

NEW PLACE OF WORSHIP After a search for an alternative place of worship we are thankful to say that we have been given the shared use of the Community Church, 1 Norby Road, Broomhill G11 7BL. Due to the resident congregation there having a service at 11.00 am we are not able to have our 'morning' service until 1.00 pm. The change of time was put to the Congregational Meeting on 16 January 2013 and was agreed. We are deeply grateful to Pastor Robert White and his trustees for helping us in a time of need.

OFFICE-BEARERS The office-bearers of our congregation have carried a particularly heavy load in the last year and more. We are deeply indebted to every one of them for the work they have undertaken under distressing circumstances and especially to our Clerks and Treasurer.

SUPPLY February 17: am Rev J J Murray, pm Mr J Haram; February 24 : Rev A Macleod; March 3: am Mr J Macpherson, pm Rev J J Murray; March: 10 Rev W B Scott; March 1: am Mr J Haram, pm J J Murray; March 24: Rev Dr J Millar; March 31 Rev J J Murray.

PRESBYTERY The next meeting of the Southern Presbytery is due to be held in Shettleston FCC on Monday 25 February at 5.00 pm for the examination of the records and at 7.00 pm for ordinary business.

CONFERENCES The interim-Moderator is due to speak at the Edinburgh Conference in Charlotte Chapel on Saturday 23 February commencing at 1.30 pm. His subject is 'The Cambusland Revival'. He is also due to speak at the Birmingham Conference on 22-23 March on the subjects of the 'Fear of God' and 'Providence' and then to preach at the Ebenezer Chapel on the Lord's Day.