



**REFLECTIONS FROM
EZRA, NEHEMIAH, &
ESTHER**

**The Centrality of
God's Word for
Worship**

**The Costliness of
Worship**

**The Providence of
God Through A
Pagan Ruler**

By Sergio R. Tangari
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REFLECTIONS FROM THE BOOK OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, & ESTHER

My goal in writing reflections from these books are the following: First, to encourage you the reader that if you will pay attention to the words on the page and listen carefully you will mine a lot of truth for life without the need of a commentary or any secondary source (periodically I will use secondary sources here). That is, “take up and read” to enrich your soul Christian.

Second, I write to give you a model of how observations can be done in scripture that do not read into the text something foreign to the author’s intent. This will help you experience the joy of discovery and increase your confidence in your ability to comprehend God’s word.

Third, by doing the above my hope is that you will be able to hear God’s voice all the more clearly and follow Him all the more closer. For, it is the word of God that is forever settled in heaven, and not our subjective impressions however valid they may be. That is, we have a more sure word of prophecy according to Peter—meaning the inscripturated word of God—then a glorious experience we may claim to have (2 Peter 1:16-21). Too often we Christians have bizarre ideas of what “God” is supposedly speaking to us and when it contradicts the Bible, be assured we are not hearing his voice.

EZRA 1: GOD ASSURES HIS PROMISE IS SECURE

When it comes to trusting the word of a friend, relative or loved one, everyone has a criterion used to whether or not that particular word will be heeded, it’s called trust. Here we decide if the person is trustworthy based on the track record already established in the relationship.

To be able to trust a person’s word, as sure as the heavens are above and the ground is beneath our feet, is tough to find. I can’t think of one person who always keeps their word. That is, when they say they will do this or that, they perform it 100% of the time, no fail. Why is this? Because of our finite nature which by definition is needy and lacking. Moreover, we, the circumstances, and a lack of resources are always in a state of flux which often makes it impossible to keep our word. God is not like us.

When God speaks the whole created order listens and eventually will obey. When He says He will do something, it is the surest word in existence. When He says He will do something it is always in His good time and for His good pleasure.

As the self-existent, eternally happy triune God, when He wills and acts, the embodiment of what is ultimately true, good, and beautiful are revealed.

In the book of Ezra, God through the Persian king Cyrus, will make a way for Israel to return back to Jerusalem from their Babylonian captivity which lasted 70 years. The text reads:

*“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying:
2 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. 4 Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.”*”

Note how the *LORD* did something to fulfill His promise—He stirred the spirit of Cyrus the king. God moved upon this creature in order to fulfill His purposes. Not a man, woman or child, but God the creator did this. This demonstrates among other things that He is ultimate, not the creature, that His (decreed) will cannot be thwarted, and that His promise is rock solid. He alone can always be trusted to fulfill His word.

This is instructive among other reasons because voices are always clamoring for our allegiance with truth claims and promises that are too often false and not grounded in reality. Lamentably, most of us at some time in our lives trust more the word of a sinful, flawed, needy creature, instead of trusting the word of the Holy One of Israel, the one true God as revealed in the Law, Prophets, Writings, and Apostolic teaching.

May we always heed the word of the God who always keeps covenant!
(SDG)

EZRA 2-6: THE RETURN HOME TO JERUSALEM

God's promise of Exile and return of Israel to the land of their fathers was complete Ez.2:1-2:

Now these are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city. ² These came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah.

The names recorded of the sons of Israel who returned to the land is worthy of note. It first reminds us of individuals who actually experienced this discipline from the LORD and consequent return by His mercies. These individuals did not go unnoticed by God (as we so often think when hard times befall us), but were personally accounted for (2:2-64). Still yet, something amazing took place—the LORD God remembered the promise given to His people that they would be in captivity for 70 years.

When scripture talks about God remembering it does not mean that He had an actual moment of “forgetfulness”, He’s the all-knowing, all-wise, self-existent God. Instead it considers how God in time works out the wise counsel of His will toward his covenant children that have been given His assured promise. In a cold and ruthless world, the tender mercies of God bring here great solace and fortitude to the lonely, broken and wearied heart. You have not been forgotten.

Possessing the land God had given to Israel was not going to be realized without opposition. The rebuilding of the temple is instructive for it points to the way a city and its inhabitants come to flourish—by worshipping the Creator and not the creature as ultimate. And yet, obstacles had to be overcome the ground of which was a lie. This lie fabricated came to king Artaxerxes ears by those who surrounded the land of Israel.

Through lies and intimidation (which is the field where spiritual warfare is fought) the work God commanded the people to engage was delayed. Often lies and fear for our personal welfare go hand in glove. These keep believers from trusting God’s purposes and plans, and that because the word of the creature seems more ominous (4:1-5; 6-24):

The delay refers to the decree of Cyrus that allowed the temple to be rebuilt (5:6-6:14), but ultimately it was God's protection that emboldened Israel to continue the labor (5:5). In fact, through the words of the prophets Haggai and Zachariah, God strengthened His people in spite of the threats.

Here I notice the following principles: God always keeps His promises; obedience to God is always costly; and God often uses His enemies to accomplish His purposes. The apostle Paul notes the reason for why these accounts have been inscripturated in Romans 15:4:

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

He who began a good work in us will complete until the day of Christ Jesus. It is He who calls us to persevere to the end so that we may be ultimately delivered, saved. So may we look to You, LORD, today for our strength in the midst of difficulties, and may we Your People run with perseverance the race that is set before us looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

(SDG)

EZRA 7-10: THE ROAD BACK TO WORSHIP HAS MANY OBSTACLES

The story of God's people is an amazing drama in scripture where the faithfulness of God is placarded behind the backdrop of a rebellious and wayward people who don't know their left hand from their right. However, in spite of the dark times, God always seems to exalt a leader whose life is dedicated to the LORD in word and deed. Ezra was one such man.

A scribe skilled in the Law of Moses who not only studied it but practiced and taught it as well:

This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the LORD his God was upon him. ⁷ Some of the sons of Israel and some of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.

⁸ He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. ⁹ For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God was upon him. ¹⁰ For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel. (Ez. 7:6-10)

Ezra was called by God to restore worship back in Israel for those who returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity. God's favor was on Ezra to such an extent that all the needed resources for worship would be granted by King Artaxerxes (7:11-28). This is an example, among other things, of how there is a time and purpose for everything under heaven (even the restoration of worship after God disciplined His people), of how the income of the wicked is laid up for the righteous, of how the king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD that He turns it wherever He wishes, and of how the earth is the LORD's and everything in it.

Not everyone returned to Israel, but those who did have their names recorded in the genealogies. Those who did not return valued more their possessions, lands and established relationships over against the God of Israel. Sadly, their names are not recorded nor remembered in the annals of history, but God knows and named those who are His; and for this reason they will never be forgotten (8:1-14). Before crossing the river to go back home, Ezra has those traveling camp out for three days in front of the river. There are many reasons for this, but what's most obvious is the need for the people to trust in God, not the arm of man, for a safe journey home:

Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. ²² For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him." ²³ So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty...³¹ Then we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the

hand of our God was over us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way.³² Thus we came to Jerusalem and remained there three days. (8:21-23; 31-32)

Note that in order for Ezra to speak to the king about the God of heaven who protects His people and executes judgment on the wicked (E.g. Parting the Red Sea; Crossing the Jordan), Ezra had to trust that this was true (which he did from scripture). Yet the temptation to doubt the creator and fear the creature was very real. Nevertheless, the God of heaven heard their cry and responded to their desires. Ezra and the people had to choose in whose word they were going to ultimately place their trust—God’s or humanity’s. Nothing has changed.

Part of worship involves those with whom we are most close. The issue of mixed marriages and the named offenders is a radical account of Israel’s faithfulness to the LORD. That is, they were not to intermarry with foreign women, not because of their intrinsic value as human beings, but for a very practical reason—the foreign women would lead the households to serve the false gods of the nations (which took place in Israel and said idolatry led to the Babylonian Captivity).

Part of worship that’s acceptable to God is demonstrated by His community through not marrying those outside the faith. The reason for this again, is not because God’s people are more intrinsically valuable than those outside the faith—we all share equally the image of God which makes humanity the pinnacle of God’s creation precious. The fact remains that marrying non-believers “usually always” leads God’s people to worship “gods” that promise much and deliver nothing but death at the end of the day (Ezra 9-10). Note that while most did put away their foreign wives, some opposed including leaders (10:15) which reminds us that there will always be opposition to God’s will among His people.

May the LORD’s strength and goodness be our delight today as we seek to honor and cherish the One who is always good, beautiful and true. May we say to him as Christ did in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Father Your will be done, not mine”.

(SDG)

NEHEMIAH 1-4: RESTORING WORSHIP IS COSTLY BUSINESS

Our rebellion results in the desolation of our souls. Only after contrition and repentance before Yahweh is complete are we His people ready to rebuild that which our sin decimated.

Nehemiah loved God's people and Jerusalem, for biblically, worship and the land are always closely linked. The land prospers when the worship of Yahweh obtains but desolation is assured when idolatrous wayward people have their own way. Nonetheless, God's promise of returning back to the land from Babylonian captivity after seventy years had come to fruition.

As the king's cupbearer, Nehemiah had favor with Artaxerxes such that he was granted royal support to return to Jerusalem in order to rebuild its walls:

And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. ² So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart." Then I was very much afraid. ³ I said to the king, "Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?" ⁴ Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it." ⁶ Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time. ⁷ And I said to the king, "If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, ⁸ and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go." And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.

⁹ Then I came to the governors of the provinces beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. ¹⁰ When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the

Ammonite official heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel. (2:1-10)

And yet, Nehemiah had enemies that would linger whose sole purpose was to mock, threaten and discourage the work of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls and infrastructure:

“Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. ² He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?”³ Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, “Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!”⁴ Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. ⁵ Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders.” (4:1-5)

Nehemiah, like a recon man, did not show his hand in the land until after he examined the damage that needed reparation (2:11-18). Among those involved in repairing the broken down walls were priests, goldsmiths and perfumers yet the nobles did not support the work (chapter 3).

Opposition is often manifested through mockery fueled by anger. These two go hand in glove by those who hate righteousness and laud wickedness (4:1-3). The way to combat such spiritual warfare (and it is spiritual wrestling) is sometimes through imprecatory prayer directed to Almighty God. This type of intercession is pivotal for combating the dangers we His people confront. When our passion is the renown of God's Name, He hears our cries evidenced in Nehemiah's experience (4:7-14).

In order for the work to continue, the laborers needed protection and this through swords, spears and shields. That is, after the intercession was offered, the people still needed to arm themselves:

“When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work. ¹⁶ From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah. ¹⁷ Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon. ¹⁸ As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter stood near me. ¹⁹ I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another. ²⁰ At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.” ²¹ So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared. ²² At that time I also said to the people, “Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day.” ²³ So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each took his weapon even to the water.” (4:15-23)

I have often felt that that the walls have been torn down in the American church because the culture, not the scriptures, are what dictates to many professing Christians what they believe. Included in the range of issues are: the issue of origins (a-la Darwinism), the status of the unborn (Abortion), the meaning of marriage (a-la same-sex “marriage”), embracing a pluralistic view of salvation (a-la any religion can lead you to Jesus), etc. It’s only because of His great mercy we’re not wiped off the face of this earth.

Personally, I’m often overwhelmed and burdened with the sin of unbelief that keeps me from pursuing God in the midst of my anxieties, fears and doubts. Fortunately, God’s word here in Nehemiah reminds me that where God guides He will provide the necessary resources to accomplish the tasks put before us. So LORD we look to you to be our strength, light, and courage as we your people endeavor to be salt and light in this land. Help us be faithful stewards of the gifts given to each one of for the common good of the Church and our Neighbors. Give us a renewed vision of your Holiness!

(SDG)

NEHEMIAH 5-8: THE NEED FOR A RIGHTEOUS GOVERNOR

In a day when just (righteous) rulers are needed, our land in America is in a deep drought and famine. The truth of God is twisted, it is suppressed in unrighteousness and the prevailing “wisdom” calls “right” wrong and what’s “wrong” right. We are at the cliff’s edge and don’t realize the peril that awaits our steps. This is difficult to bear.

Israel, God’s people who rebelled, went into exile and now returned to their home land, but they needed to get their lives in order. This occurs by doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly before Almighty God. To do this, they had to secure their borders first and make sure that they treated their Jewish brothers as covenant people and not strangers of their common wealth (5:1-13)

Now there was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. ² For there were those who said, “We, our sons and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain that we may eat and live.” ³ There were others who said, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our houses that we might get grain because of the famine.” ⁴ Also there were those who said, “We have borrowed money for the king’s tax on our fields and our vineyards. ⁵ Now our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers, our children like their children. Yet behold, we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters are forced into bondage already, and we are helpless because our fields and vineyards belong to others.” ⁶ Then I was very angry when I had heard their outcry and these words. ⁷ I consulted with myself and contended with the nobles and the rulers and said to them, “You are exacting usury, each from his brother!” Therefore, I held a great assembly against them. ⁸ I said to them, “We according to our ability have redeemed our Jewish brothers who were sold to the nations; now would you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us?” Then they were silent and could not find a word to say. ⁹ Again I said, “The thing which you are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? ¹⁰ And likewise I, my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Please, let us leave off this usury. ¹¹ Please, give back to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves and their houses, also

the hundredth part of the money and of the grain, the new wine and the oil that you are exacting from them.”¹² Then they said, “We will give it back and will require nothing from them; we will do exactly as you say.” So I called the priests and took an oath from them that they would do according to this promise.¹³ I also shook out the front of my garment and said, “Thus may God shake out every man from his house and from his possessions who does not fulfill this promise; even thus may he be shaken out and emptied.” And all the assembly said, “Amen!” And they praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

There’s also the need for a governor like Nehemiah whose heart fears God (5:14-19), so that when men threaten the people’s welfare, it is God who these rulers seek for victory, not mere creatures (6:1-14). This event is not a myth, but written in space time history demonstrated in the census where the names of the sons of men are counted (7:1-73). Then there’s the need for the Law to be read, explained and understood so that the people may worship the One True God. This was a radically God centered event in the history of wayward Israel (8:1-12)

And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.² Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.³ He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.⁴ Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam on his left hand.⁵ Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.⁶ Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and

worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. ⁷ Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. ⁸ They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading. ⁹ Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. ¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." ¹¹ So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." ¹² All the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.

So, what do I perceive? I perceive that the hearts of men are hopelessly broken and in need of the Great Physician to restore them to health. I can see that Godly leadership is essential for this healing to occur and that a nation is always better off with these than with self-absorbed rulers. I also recognize that part of what it means to get our lives in order includes performing our civic and religious duties from a Word, Scripture centered point. Neglect these and the tapestry begins to come apart at the fray. God, help us your people be like Nehemiah in word and in deed. (SDG)

NEHEMIAH 10-13: THE QUALITIES OF A RIGHTEOUS GOVERNOR

As I finished reading this book several things stood out to me about Nehemiah. He was not a prophet, but a cupbearer to a foreign king. Clearly one can be a Civic servant and lead the people of God to do righteousness.

Also central to this book is the reminder of why Israel became enslaved to her enemies—she forsook the living God and His Law. Nevertheless, God kept His promise that after seventy years in captivity, Israel would again return to the homeland.

The naming of the clans, civic leaders, cities and duties administered remind us that this was not a fable like Aesop's, but real space-time-history events where blood, sweat and tears were shed.

Instructive in this context is that the restoration of the land and of worship orbbed around the proper understanding of God's Law and blessing was directly linked to obeying said God and Law. "Habits" of working on the Sabbath, marrying foreign wives, trading crops on holy days and keeping wages from those entrusted with the care of the temple and its varied duties had to stop.

Nehemiah was a tough leader who would get physical at times with transgressors by pulling their beards, or locking them out pf the city during the Sabbath. He even threatened foreign traders with force if they chose not to leave. Recall all these things and Nehemiah's refrain after doing acts of righteousness writes:

"Remember me for this oh God and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its service."

I don't know what to make of this, was he afraid God would overlook him? Was Nehemiah a self-righteous man? I don't think so because one thing is clear: it's a fierce battle to restore worship back into the land with a people who habitually went astray in their hearts. Those who know better need to understand this and when the opposition fiercely arises, there, they are to look to God for power and rescue.

(SDG)

ESTHER: THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD THROUGH A PAGAN RULER

The book of Esther is another marvelous account of the annals in the mosaic of Israel. The book reads like history, not fantasy where Jewish enemies as in the past sought to destroy them, but God in his providence rescued them through a non-Jewish king named Ahasuerus.

This is a colorful account of a young beauty named Esther who was taken into Mordecai's home after she became an orphan. She was left with no kin to care for her, nevertheless God's sovereign hand was moving behind the scenes. Today we don't talk much about God's providence in the Church and for that matter in the world at large. We prefer to use words like "chance" or "fate" or

“karma” to describe uncanny situations that seem to be going one way, but turn instantly on a dime.

God’s providence among other things concerns the attributes of His power, knowledge, wisdom and goodness that for reasons unknown to creatures He performs for His names sake. That means that at the center of all divine activity is the renown of the NAME, for unlike the creation which is finite and needy, the God of scripture is infinite and self-existent. Thus, to attach supreme value to anything other than the ultimate is ultimately irrational and absurd, it is sinful and God is perfectly holy, without any sin. That is why He does everything for teh renown of the NAME.

I’ve read this account several times and peculiar to this book is the mentioning of the Jews but never of God’s name. It’s as if Israel’s redeemer is preaching to the nations through them with a specific message that needs to be heeded but so often neglected. The truth is that Israel’s history is the story of God’s dealings in space and time with a particular people to preach a specific message.

This message is one of favor being bestowed on them through a pagan ruler, the king of the land whose heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD, for He turns it wherever He wishes. Among other things, this is a reminder to God’s people that even if rulers despise God, they are not ultimate God is. This means that God alone assures that His hidden purposes are established while simultaneously working through the creature.