

Ezra 1

'New Beginnings'

**Introduction ...**

New beginnings from an unlikely source.

That's what our Old Testament reading was about and – this reading was set for the 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity ... not chosen specially for 18<sup>th</sup> September 2022 yet it is providentially apt ...

**New beginnings from an unlikely source.**

The book of Ezra can be 'cross-referenced' with the middle of the book of Isaiah.

Both reference Cyrus – not an Israelite – a foreigner – being used by God for the people of Israel.

Most of the Israelites were in Exile – in Babylon, and Cyrus with his armies had captured Babylon.

Cyrus not only proclaimed that the Israelites could return home to Jerusalem and its surroundings – he also ensured that they were well-provided for in their quest to rebuild the Temple.

**New beginnings from an unlikely source.**

- For them as a nation and therefore, in that context – for their religion, their practice of Faith too.

**For Us ...**

As a nation, we also are at a time of new beginnings ... one perhaps from an unlikely source ... the other perhaps not so much.

We have a new Prime Minister – Liz Truss – not the favourite choice of her MP's ... and whose opening days in office were 'overtaken' by the death of Queen Elizabeth ... and so we also have not only a new Prime Minister but also a new King.

How will we respond ... we always have a choice!

In Ezra's day – the response was disappointing to some degree.

Quite a proportion of the Israelites didn't want to go back

... they'd become accustomed to living in exile

... they didn't want change

... they weren't that bothered about what God wanted

... the known was less frightening than the unknown.

But some did return

- they put their Faith into committed action
- they made a massive Faith difference for the generations who followed.

So may we listen to our leaders –

whether leaders of Government

Church

Other Faiths

Royalty

May we listen

may we discern where God's call chimes with their words

may we be open to change.

And in conclusion I'm going to quote from Queen Elizabeth 11 ...

She wrote:

**As I embark on my 91<sup>st</sup> year, I invite you to join me in reflecting on the words of a poem quoted by my Father, King George VI, in his Christmas Day broadcast in 1939, the year that this country went to war for the second time in quarter of a century:**

**"I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.'**

**And he replied:**

**'Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God.**

**That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way."**

Amen.