

## Reformation Ezra 8-10

In Pastor Jamie's study of Ch.7 last week we were finally introduced to the Author of this book – Ezra.

A) We noted there is a 57 year gap between Chapters 6 & 7

B) 57 years go by from the time the temple was finally rebuilt – celebration had taken place.

C) Ezra is in Babylon He wasn't one of the ones who initially volunteered to go back with Zerubbabel –

1) Be now he hears that things are not right back in Jerusalem

D) People are growing complacent spiritually – neglecting the Privilege of temple worship

E) He feels called to Lead a new contingency back to REVIVE the people

Ch.8 We see that Ezra the Priest has been cleared to take a new group back to Jerusalem.

A) Their goal is going to be to institute temple worship and to give instruction to the people of God.

B) Zerubbabel's group focused on the rebuilding of the temple

1) Ezra is going to focus on the rebuilding of the people and the system of temple worship in Israel.

2) He is going back with **the support and backing and resources of King Artaxerxes.**

Ch.8 is a brief Chronicle of the journey that included 5,000 exiles including women and children.

A) Last week we were introduced not just to Ezra but to a reoccurring phrase in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of this book

**B) "The good hand of our God"**

C) Whenever God is involved in a work – there will be trials – challenges – but there will also be this sense - **"The good hand of our God"**

Tonight we are going to finish the Book of Ezra – Ch. 8-10

A) Chapter 8 - Preparation  
Chapter 9 - The Problem  
Chapter 10 - The Outpouring

B) Now in V.1-14 – Another list of names – Reminds us that God is into names – KNOWS YOUR NAME!

1) Disciples: **Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.**

C) When it comes to God – you are not a number – you are **not an it** – you are not a **he or she** - **Not Bro**

1) He knows your name – He is given to details

D) The names of these people are Chronicled in the pages of Holy Scripture

E) So this group of 5,000 is setting off on a 900 mile journey across the desert thru hostile territory – But before they get started they stop at the river Ahava for 3 days – [ RETREAT ] – **PREPARATION: RD V.15**

**"Now I gathered them by the river that flows to Ahava, and we camped there three days. And I looked among the people and the priests, and found none of the sons of Levi there."**

A) No doubt when Ezra felt led to journey 900 miles on foot to go back to Jerusalem – a **General call goes out – 5,000 people respond.**

B) Again not a huge number considering there were at least 100's of thousands of Israelites spread throughout the Medo-Persian empire.

C) As Ezra and the group stop at the River Ahava – outside of Babylonian –

1) It is there that **Ezra discovers a glaring – omission** to his group of Travelers

D) **There are no Levites:** Ezra was going back to re-establish temple Worship and the Levites were crucial to that Process.

1) You can NOT have Temple worship without them.

**Where were the Levites? { Still in Babylon**

A) These Levites had never seen Jerusalem – they had never seen the temple

B) **Born in Babylon** – living comfortable in Babylon

C) **None of them answered the initial call.**

1) From a purely Physical point of view there wasn't a lot of motivation for them to go.

D) **In Israel they had no inheritance** – they were completely supported by the worshippers

1) Quite frankly there weren't very many of them to support the work

E) **They needed to see beyond the temporal to the eternal.**

**In Uganda – Pastors Conf. with Pastor Rick Brown** – CC Idaho Falls I'm reminded of something Don McClure did years ago – **Impressed and Challenged me.**

A) **Pastored in Redlands for 20 yrs** – built up a successful ministry – comfortable – nice staff-building etc.

B) **Pastor Chuck approached him about a Church in San Jose – assembly was a mess – \$15 million in debt**

1) They wanted to become a Calvary Chapel – help us get a Pastor who will teach

C) **Don left Redlands to go and do that – No staff**

1) **No Salary** – they lived in one of the rooms at the Church

D) **Different guys joined Don and Jean – Rick was one of them.**

**Willing to break out of their comfort zones – Serve God**

A) **Very rare today – Rare in Ezra's time as well.**

B) **I love what Ezra does here/ I've Done this often: when people don't respond to the general call - Ezra gets specific**

C) **We see in V.16 – Ezra sends for 11 leaders – referred to as men of understanding to Help solve the matter – V.17**

<sup>17</sup> **And I gave them a command for Iddo the chief man at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say to Iddo and his brethren the Nethinim at the place Casiphia—that they should bring us servants for the house of our**

God. <sup>18</sup> **Then, by the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and brothers, eighteen men; <sup>19</sup>and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brothers and their sons, twenty men; <sup>20</sup>also of the Nethinim, whom David and the leaders had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinim. All of them were designated by name.**

**Sometimes when the broad call is made with no results – A specific call is needed!**

A) **Result: 38 Levites and 220 servants of the Levites respond to the call.**

B) **There were guys with the right heart who just needed to be encouraged**

1) **They found one guy – full of insight / understanding who was able to affect the others**

C) **They were ready to go again! – But before they head out Ezra does something that would be a crucial part of their Preparation.**

<sup>21</sup> **Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. <sup>22</sup>For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, “The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.” <sup>23</sup>So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.**

**A fast to seek God's direction for the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.**

A) **Wow – What a great example!**

B) **Fasting is denying ourselves of something we usually do in order to use that time to seek the Lord more passionately {NEED OF DIRECTION**

C) **Food Fast / TV Fast / TECH FAST – PURPOSE OF FASTING – is to deny the flesh – heighten the Spiritual Antenna.**

D) Rid ourselves of Distractions – cloud reception

**The Christian life is a journey: We are all moving from Babylon to Jerusalem.**

A) This world to heaven – we are walking with the Lord and discovering the Lord

B) Learning how to seek the Lord – sometimes it is good to stop – slow down – fast

1) Lord I really need to hear from you.

C) **Acts 13 Elders at Antioch** were ministering to the Lord with prayer and fasting –

1) The Holy Spirit said separate .....

1) Direction for our kids

2) Direction for our lives

3) Direction for our possessions

**This was the issue: They were traveling with Large amounts of gold and silver –**

A) Ezra – because he was boasting of the greatness of His God – the power of God – when the King offered to supply an armed escort to help them get there.

B) Ezra felt – How can I accept that – when I have been boasting of the greatness of our God! – So he declined.

C) But now He realizes – We need a Plan – because we are very vulnerable to getting – Jumped and robbed.

**D) SIDE NOTE: Interesting to me – that Nehemiah when he returns – He accepts the offer of the Kings Escort.**

1) REMINDER: No formulas when it comes to things like this – not an issue of RIGHT OR WRONG - Issue is: HOW IS GOD LEADING!

**E) THEY FASTED – God gave direction:**

<sup>24</sup> And I separated twelve of the leaders of the priests—Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them—<sup>25</sup> and weighed out to them the silver, the gold, and the articles, the offering for the house of our God which the king and his counselors and his princes, and all Israel *who were* present, had offered. <sup>26</sup> I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, silver articles *weighing* one hundred talents, one hundred talents of gold, <sup>27</sup> twenty gold basins

*worth* a thousand drachmas, and two vessels of fine polished bronze, precious as gold. <sup>28</sup> And I said to them, “You *are* holy to the LORD; the articles *are* holy also; and the silver and the gold *are* a freewill offering to the LORD God of your fathers. <sup>29</sup> Watch and keep *them* until you weigh *them* before the leaders of the priests and the Levites and heads of the fathers’ *houses* of Israel in Jerusalem, *in* the chambers of the house of the LORD.” <sup>30</sup> So the priests and the Levites received the silver and the gold and the articles by weight, to bring *them* to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

**In any work of God there is going to be a Sharing of the Load.**

<sup>31</sup> Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth *day* of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. And the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road. <sup>32</sup> So we came to Jerusalem, and stayed there three days.

**Preparation: Prayer, Fasting, Recruiting, Sharing, Sacrifice**

The rest of the Chapter Chronicles how the money was counted and everything was accounted for.

**Ch.9 The Problem**

**When Ezra arrives in Jerusalem he discovers a major problem. RD V.1-2**

When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, “The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. <sup>2</sup> For they have taken some of their daughters *as wives* for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of *those* lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.”

A) This is such a sad commentary – Imagine how **disappointing this must have been to Ezra** – everyone with him.

B) They have just traveled a 3-4 month journey of 900 miles through the desert – coming back to help the people of Israel – Worship God

C) He arrives to find – the people living in major compromise.

D) Here is what is interesting: we will see later in the chapter that only about .4% of the population was guilty of this.

1) But .4% was too many – Jesus taught – a little leaven – leavens the whole lump – sin of a few can affect the ENTIRE CHURCH.

E) THE PROBLEM? - MIXTURE

Taken pagan wives and were incorporating pagan ways and worship

A) They are heading back in the direction of the very thing that was the REASON for their captivity.

B) And it is not just the people – it is some of the leaders and some of the priest.

1) Not just an issue of compromise:

C) V.2 Phrase Holy seed – implication here is because of this mixture – they were in danger of losing the Messianic line!

V.3 So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished.

Wow! – Quite a response.

A) Ezra sees this and is grieved. He is shocked – Rips clothes – pulls out his hair – Nehemiah – Pulled out their hair

B) Honest Ezra's reaction was convicting:

1) Does sin shock you anymore? –

C) Friends in law enforcement – get numb – Seen so many horrible things in Ministry.

1) People go off the deep end – NEVER DREAMED would do so

D) Sometimes I can get Numb – Pray for me.

1) I spent sometime today – Praying over this very thing.

Soften those hard areas of my heart!

A) Feel again:

B) I fear that in our decadent society that many in the Church have grown so used to sin – that it doesn't shock them anymore

C) What at one time shocked them becomes commonplace and routine.

1) We minimize it, justify it, or ignore it and go on our way unaffected by it.

D) Ezra mourns - RD V.4-6

<sup>4</sup> Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

<sup>5</sup> At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God. <sup>6</sup> And I said: "O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens.

This is amazing to me – Great example of the posture I think that Christians in this country need to take if there is any hope for us.

A) Ezra wasn't a part of this – But he owns the sins of his people.

B) Seen that same Example – in Daniel – see it as well in Nehemiah

C) Include themselves in confessing the sins of their nation.

1) Adding: "Lord I know – I have sinned – I might not of done what they are doing but I have done plenty of other things.

D) We could all say: for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens.

E) In His response Ezra doesn't come across as self-righteous.

1) Which I believe is a reason the people respond to Him



## V.7 He lays out the Historic results of their sin!

“Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day.”

### A) Insights into what sin does:

- Delivered into the hands of Kings! – Sin rules over us.
- Delivered to the sword – sin cuts, wounds, hurts
- Delivered into to captivity – Sin results in bondage.
- Plunders – You can lose everything that you hold dear to you because of sin.
- Brings Humiliation: Leave you scorned, saddened and degraded.

### B) Mathematics of sin is always the same:

- Add to your Sorrow
- Subtract your Joy
- Multiply your Problems
- Divide your Heart

8 And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage.

### A) A peg in His holy place.

B) Even to this day when the Bedouins are setting up camp – drive these large wooden tent pegs into the dirt

1) Symbolic of the fact – that they are claiming that land as their place of residence

C) This statement was an indication of the fact that God had given this remnant a holy habitation

### Ezra reminds them of God’s mercy V.9

For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.

Treated well in Persia – mercy in bondage

Revival in their hearts to come back – rebuild  
Stirring in their hearts to return

God had done so much – **But Rd v.10-15**

The Problem with what was happening was it was in direct defiance to what God had said in his word about **intermarrying in Exodus 34:11-16 / And Deuteronomy 7:1-4 Marrying the women of the land**

A) God summarizes the reason for the prohibition in this way: **Deuteronomy 7** “For they will turn their sons away from following me to serve other gods.”

B) Rather than influencing their mates God knew the tendency of our fallen hearts – **would be to gravitate in the other direction toward sin**

C) Always easier to be **PULLED DOWN – THAN PULL UP**

1) Hang out all the time with unbelievers – and Carnal people – **not pull them up they will pull you down.**

D) Come out from among them and be ye separate

1) Get built up – not so you can go back into that scene – **STAND**

E) **FIND NEUTRAL GROUND.**

Notice that Phrase V.12 never **seek their peace and their prosperity**

A) This is the problem that we so often face we think the world has something to offer us.

B) The world portrays a pseudo peace – beer commercials – everyone having a great time

1) Doesn’t show the next day – **HEAD IN THE TOILET**

C) It presents a pseudo wealth – **CAR COMMERCIAL** – if you were just driving this with her by your side

1) **Dog at the Beach – Chasing birds** – suddenly Crash - under water –

**THAT is what ends up happening to us – Pursuing the wrong things – Crash and some do it over and over – never learn**

A)The Lord says don't seek their peace / their prosperity that you may

- Be strong
- Eat the good of the land
- Leave an inheritance

B)Here is the truth of the matter: Separation results in Strength

1)Compromise always results in weakness

C)Ch. 9 is the Problem – Ch. 10 the outpouring

### Ch. 10 The Outpouring

A)That type of Honesty and realness sets the stage for what happens next Ch.10:1

Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly.

People are attracted to honesty and humility.

A)Had Ezra been standing on the street corner – yelling and pointing his finger – people would have been running from him – not to him

B)Lesson in Humility: Ezra was saying we have sinned – we need forgiveness

1)Lord we need to repent

C)When we mourn – when we are broken – over sin

1)Instead of assuming that posture of “can you believe what they did!”

D)So the people respond to Ezra's heart here!

E)I love this: No Band – no hoopla – no big event – just a Genuine move of God

1)OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - Repentance

Marks of Genuine repentance:

RD v.2-4

<sup>2</sup> And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, “We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. <sup>3</sup> Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have

been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. <sup>4</sup> Arise, for *this* matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it.”

1.)It recognizes sin as first and foremost against God.

V.2 “We have trespassed against our God

While sin always hurts other people and we need to ask their forgiveness

A)Sin is first and foremost against God Himself.

B)David: Sinned against you.....you only –

C)Not downplaying – sin against Bathsheba – Uriah – Ahitophel

1)Sin is first and foremost against God -

D)Genuine repentance accepts the responsibility for what we have done.

1)No excuse making going on here! – no rationalizing their sin

Rd V.5-11

Marks of genuine repentance:

1.) It recognizes sin as first and foremost against God. V.2

2.) Make Confession V.11

A)Confession – Homolego – Say the same as - Not making excuses – not rationalizing – not downplaying – OWNING OUR SIN.

B)1 JOHN 1:9 – WE CONFESS – God is faithful to forgive and to cleanse –

1)Cleanse – Cauterize – Purges it from us.

Marks of genuine repentance:

1.) It recognizes sin as first and foremost against God. V.2

2.) Make Confession V.11

3.) Make Separation V. 11

A)True repentance requires not only admitting our wrong to God and others, but also taking practical steps of obedience to correct our wrongs.

B) Sometimes that can involve doing **the hard thing**: - Put away their wives and kids.

C) That would not have been easy!

D) **Uganda: Africa – Polygamy** – Saved – Husband of one wife.

1) Pick one – financially take care of the others

#### Note the Phrase in V.11 – to do His will

A) KJV – Do His pleasure

B) Key aspect in Repentance: More than wanting our will – His will – His glory

C) More than our comfort – We want to please and glorify God

<sup>12</sup> Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, “Yes! As you have said, so we must do.”

<sup>13</sup> But *there are* many people; *it is* the season for heavy rain, and we are not able to stand outside. Nor *is this* the work of one or two days, for *there are* many of us who have transgressed in this matter. <sup>14</sup> Please, let the leaders of our entire assembly stand; and let all those in our cities who have taken pagan wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the fierce wrath of our God is turned away from us in this matter.” <sup>15</sup> Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite gave them support.

So the People agreed except for a small contingency – but because of the rainy season they asked for time.

A) Grace: Time was granted!

B) The rest of the chapter is a list of the names of the people involved – 111 men are named

1) That is **only .4% of the entire population** of men who returned in the first wave.

C) EZRA Making a mountain out of a Molehill?

D) Like I said before: A little leaven.....

Notice who is a part of this group

A) V.18 – Priest – V.23, Levites – V.24, Singers – Worship – Everyone up front

B) V.24 – Gatekeepers – Ushers

C) Reminder there is a high responsibility for those who are involved in SERVICE

**So as we close tonight:**

A) Self Examination – Is there an area in your life – been compromise –

B) Might think – ever so small – but it is a big deal to God

1) Sin always grows – like mold – Cancer

C) Confess it tonight

D) Take the steps to Separate: Can't be friends

Need Direction: Fast – Prepare to hear

Calling: Willing to Sacrifice – Rewarded