

Sermon, May 1, 2011
“Rebuilding the Temple”, Ezra 3:8-13
Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

Review of the Books of History so far:

From Joshua through Chronicles there are 5 important themes

- Only King God can lead you into the “promised land”
- Trust and belief in the King will redeem you, bring you salvation
- Obedience will allow you to dwell in His Kingdom at peace,
- There are consequences to disobedience
- Repentance will restore you

Overview of Ezra:

- Ezra and Nehemiah were originally written as one book in the Hebrew Bible.
- Ezra encompasses the time from the 1st and 2nd return from exile in Babylon/Persia in 538 BC to 458BC.
- Author Ezra.
- The 10th book of history, 15th book of the Bible.

Overall Outline Ezra:

- I. The First Return under Zerubbabel (1:1–6:22)
 - A. Cyrus’ Decree to Return (1:1–4)
 - B. Treasures to Rebuild the Temple (1:5–11)
 - C. Those Who Returned (2:1–70)
 - D. Construction of the Second Temple (3:1–6:22)
- II. The Second Return under Ezra (7:1–10:44)

Major Themes of Ezra:

- Somewhat parallels the book of Exodus; like a second exodus.
- Ezra, Zerubabel, and Nehemiah are Moses-like figures.
- They entered again a hostile land, this time the region of Samaria (the heart of the old northern kingdom) was giving them trouble
- They reformed the life of God’s people and reestablished the “Law”
- They built the temple and walls of Jerusalem.
- The primary message of the book is that God orchestrated the past grim situation (captivity) and would continue to work through a pagan king and his successors to give Judah hope for the future (return).
- God’s administration overrides that of any of the kings of this world.
- The book of Ezra is a message of God’s continuing covenant grace to Israel.¹

There are many lessons in Ezra. One is the rebuilding of the Temple, the symbol of the presence of God among His people. There is a heartfelt burning to be back in relationship with God, to be in the presence of your creator, the people of God live with the understanding that they are in the presence of God.

Judah suffered the consequences of an unrepentant heart and the beautiful city of God was ruined, ransacked, and destroyed

- **2 Chronicles 36:17-21** ¹⁷ Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, ... ¹⁸ All the vessels of the house of God, large and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his officials, all these he brought to Babylon. ¹⁹ They burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious vessels.
- Jerusalem, God’s chosen holy city, fought for and established during the time of King David, was now destroyed.
- The Temple, God’s holy place and presence, was ransacked and torn down stone by stone.
- The glory of God’s holy city was removed
- His love preserved them in exile and eventually brought them to repentance.
- The people returned and began to restore the City of God.

¹MacArthur, J. J. (1997, c1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.) (Ezr 1:1). Nashville: Word Pub.

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The rebuilding began with Zerubabel leading the people to restore the Temple. (Ezra 3:8-9)

- The Temple’s significance was central to the Jewish people.
- From the tabernacle in the wilderness to the lavish and beautiful Temple of Solomon, the Temple represented the very presence of God among them.
- Their season of conviction and repentance would lead them back to seeking the face of God and looking to Him for their sustenance.
- They eagerly began their work and laid the foundation.
- The foundation of faith is relationship with God, being in His presence and looking to do His will.
- The Jews would look at this expression in an outward fashion by building something for God.

The foundation laid for the presence and glory of God was celebrated. Praise and thanksgiving was given to God. (Ezra 3:10-11)

- God’s people were longing to be back in union with their creator.
- Their time of exile was over; the time of glory awaited them in the presence of their God.
- Even the foundation laid was significant enough for praise and worship to the one and only God YHWH.
- Your foundation of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is cause for celebration and thanksgiving.

However the temple human beings strive to make will pale in comparison to the Temple God will design to make His presence and fellowship and relationship evident. (Ezra 3:10-11)

- The second temple was not like the first and is not the temple of God’s presence that He ultimately desires.
- The Jews who wept remember the glory of the Temple of Solomon and while it is true that this second temple would not compare, it is also true that the temple of God’s intention was greater still than that of Solomon’s.
- This second temple pointed to the true temple of God’s presence.
- The prophets Haggai and Jeremiah prophesied in the days of exile and restoration.
- **Haggai 2:3-5**
- Even though it is not what it will be take heart, a new covenant is coming...
- **Jeremiah 31:31-33**
- Even Solomon knew that the temple must be a representation of something greater to come...
- **1 Kings 8:27** ²⁷ *“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built*
- The tabernacle, the first temple of Solomon, the second temple of the exiles, the redone temple of Herod would point to the true king to come and the ultimate union with God in His presence....
- **Matthew 27:51** ⁵¹ *And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.*
- With Christ’s sacrifice, the Holy of Holies where the presence of God was signified was now open to His people.
- **1 Corinthians 3:16** ¹⁶ *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

Conclusion

- There is cause for celebration, for worship, praise and thanksgiving.
- The new covenant has come.
- God’s presence highlights His longing for restored relationship with you.
- God’s presence is with us collectively today as we gather in His name and sacrifice our praise, prayers, and ourselves to the Father.
- You are part of a living Temple and God is truly with you.