

+++ The Duty of Every Day

Ezra Chapters Three and Four

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~ Christians and non-Christians in the world today are looking for the same answers to life's questions. A quick scroll across the forums on which I teach the Bible will reveal hurt, sorrow, much suffering, and abundant hardship. It seems everyone is looking for solutions to problems and relief from afflictions. The problem is: they're looking in the wrong place. Even well-meaning Christians are looking for answers and solutions in worldly theories, standards, and philosophies – where it will never be found. This report from our Spiritual Safari is going to direct us to the place where we *can* find those answers and discover the comfort and hope each of us need so desperately.

Thus far in Ezra, we have seen the children of Benjamin and Judah return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple after seventy years in captivity. We saw how less than fifty thousand returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel to do the restoration work of the temple and city. Later, another detail will return with Ezra of about two thousand people; and there were others who likely put the total number around sixty thousand. That's still not many considering there must have been several million Jews in Babylon at this time. Most of them didn't want to leave the affluence of Babylon. A return to a burned out and broken-down city where the temple was destroyed was not an attractive proposition. I don't think we can blame anyone for that....

III

¹ And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

~ Chapter two concluded with Israel returning to the land; so, obviously, there is some time span between chapter two and chapter three. We saw

how those who returned were given offerings by their brethren in Babylon. The substance and gifts they had in chapter two verses sixty-six tells us they didn't have a whole lot of anything on the return trip. So, you figure it out.

For instance, they had sixty thousand people — but less than one thousand horses. That's not many. Even with the number of asses given, less than ten percent of the people would have had one. That's all they were given by their brethren to rebuild the temple and restore the land. That may be bad, but today's modern giving is even worse. Later, Haggai will rebuke the people for building their personal homes and neglecting the temple work during this time span — which may have been several months — but it may have been as long as a few years. This is a very telling spiritual picture....

² Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God.

³ And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening.

~ These people knew what was written in the Mosaic Law because they searched the Scriptures. That's how they learned it, friends – no other way. They didn't have a controversy or a dispute over the Law of Moses; because Scripture was the authority. If we do not study the Bible today, it can never be our authority – impossible. The ideas and opinions of certain self-appointed individuals about the Word of God are puerile and meaningless; because most have *NO IDEA* what is actually written in here.

Ezra brings us a principle of all-importance in our hopelessly confused age of abject Bible ignorance. See, what you say and what I say and what the man down the road says means *NOTHING* – what matters are: what does God and the Bible say? Well, we can never know what God says until we actually take the time to learn the Bible properly, correctly and completely in an educated, systematic, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-led Bible study. The Scriptures are one hundred percent self-sufficient. They contain all the

instruction needed by those who would be faithful to God in any particular circumstance — or period of church history.

That's why our Spiritual Safari does not speak on subjects or topics. This is not a political, psychological, or a sexual safari by any means! I know those topics are very popular today in the church; and addressing them at the expense of sound doctrine is the reason the church is in such terrible shape. You cannot lift out one or two chapters from a few books of the Bible and label it credible theology. Those of you who have only been saved a few years, but have never began a sincere, educated, and systematic Bible study, are more frustrated and confused by Christianity than ever before.

Most people are literally stuck in one or two passages that they have totally exhausted, and which no longer mean anything to them. Then, there are sections of Scripture such as this where the pages from the Bible have never been opened to. If you are not willing to consider the total Word of God, then you are not interested in the Lord Jesus Christ, friends; and you will never find the answers to your problems in this life. How tragic. There's also a very high probability you have never even been genuinely saved and converted in the first place.

On the other hand, if you regularly study your Bible to show yourself approved, then you aren't going to need a seminar or self-help book on how to be happy and get along in your marriage. In fact, if you strive to know the total Bible correctly, you aren't going to have many questions in this world; but, either way, you won't need a course to tell you how to be a more ethical businessman or a proper lady in society. All the directions and guidance we need are at our fingertips. The Word of God is our answer today; but, it won't make sense when we mindlessly copy and paste a phony theology. Why not learn the total Word of God directly from the source today? ~

⁴ They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;

⁵ And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD.

⁶ From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.

~ So, the remnant of the children of Israel that have returned from the Babylonian captivity turn back to the Law of Moses and build an altar. The burnt offerings speak of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and Who He is. Notice they built the altar *before* they laid the foundation of the new temple. These people, at the time in which we are studying, are meeting around the death of Christ; and the meaning that has for them is significant. Christ also happens to be the *ONLY* meeting place for believers in the church today.

Quite frankly, every baptized believer in the body of Christ should understand that everyone else who names the Name of the Lord Jesus and confesses Him as Lord and Savior is their brother. Those are the people with which we can have fellowship. Social status, wealth, gender, religious denominational affiliation, and race, mean absolutely nothing to the genuine believer. That's what is taking place in the time in which we are studying; but modern-day believers are utterly fractured and divided. There is no unity amongst believers that should characterize the family of God – it's just not there. The Psalmist says, "... *how wonderful it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity.*" When that happens, then the Lord will command blessings on this life forevermore – you may want to write that down....

⁷ They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

~ These who returned were mostly very poor and humble; they were not people seeking wealth or position. What they desire at this time is to do the

will of God – period. They sure went about it in a humble and lovely way, too. You and I are living at the end of an age and, let's just keep this real; all the great discoveries in this world are over. It becomes those who have an understanding of the times to shun and forsake the pretense. Counting the congregation and turning in a numbers report of alleged converts is for fools, my beloved. There weren't many people to number who were returning to rebuild the temple at the time in which we are studying. It was a fairly easy count.

We need people in ministry who are willing to take their place with the lowly in simplicity. The meek will God guide in judgment; to the humble will He teach His ways. Everyone is trying to do something big and spectacularly sensational these days; but we don't need that. The pictures I see on the forums on which I teach seemingly depict an entire country full of people turning to God-only-knows-what in some type of ridiculous "crusade" or "conference" — but that is not needed — and they aren't real, either. What we need to do is what these people in Ezra's day did; and that is: meet around the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and His death, burial and resurrection....

⁸ Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD.

⁹ Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites.

¹⁰ And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.

~ These people are so thrilled with having the altar and foundation completed that they decide to go ahead and hold the dedication service at that time. They sang songs and spoke praises to God – and they didn't even have a building. I know of a church that was started by a Godly couple in a metal garage in their backyard. They had fans blowing hot Florida air around. All they had was a foundation at that time; and that's all they needed.

We need to thank God for those types of Christians today. That church has a nice building now with air conditioning; but I would like to see them build a permanent church of their own. Well, the early church began in the home; and it's going to end in the home. The true and living Bible believing genuine church body of believers will have been mostly snuffed out by the false teaching mega-churches when the rapture takes place. It could be very soon – I would almost bet on it – except I don't gamble....

11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

~ The younger generation had never seen the temple of Solomon; so, this was all new to them. Naturally, in their youth and enthusiasm, they were praising God – and God blessed them. However, some of the old-timers remembered the old temple; and they weren't impressed with this thing. I'm sure some of them said something like, ".... *this is nothing; you should have seen Solomon's temple.*" There are always plenty of wet blankets to be thrown on the believer who is on fire for the Lord. I find that many older

people discourage the work of the Lord by young people today; and I feel that's one reason our present spiritual movement is almost exclusively outside of the church.

People do not trust the church in this modern society – and I don't blame them – because many of the older generation remember the old days; and these days are not good enough for them. Well, I am just as guilty of this as anyone — but let's not judge too quickly; the Lord knows those who are His Own. God is the one Who is going to separate the wheat and the tares; that's God's business – not ours. If we could establish some unity in the Lord Jesus Christ as believers, I think we could rejoice rather than have all the criticism we see today. Thank God that He saves people in spite of us teachers and preachers....

IV

¹ Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;

² Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.

³ But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

⁴ Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

⁵ And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

⁶ And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

⁷ And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.

⁸ Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort:

⁹ Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites,

¹⁰ And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time.

¹¹ This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time.

¹² Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.

¹³ Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.

¹⁴ Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king;

¹⁵ That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have

moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.

¹⁶ We certify the king that, if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

¹⁷ Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.

¹⁸ The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.

¹⁹ And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein.

²⁰ There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them.

²¹ Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me.

²² Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

²³ Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.

²⁴ Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

~ Our Spiritual Safari concludes this report with the rebuilding effort of the temple ceasing due to opposition. Note that the opposition did not come from inside – it came from outside. Chapter four is quite detailed, so we

aren't going to hang around here too long in this report. Liberalism divided and split the modern church many years ago. Today, the liberal comes along and says, "... *fundamentalists fight too much.*" Then, they attempt to recruit to their false teaching. The ones who refuse to compromise and join with the liberal are always labeled troublemakers, of course. Liberalism will only accept you on their terms, though; with you worshiping the way they do — and without questions or comments. Make a note.

Zerubbabel wasn't very nice in verse three; in fact, he seems rather rude in his opposition to the ecumenical movement's invitation. Friends, we cannot always be overly-polite and cordial. When the world's theories and philosophies come into conflict with the Word of God, the Word of God *must* prevail for the child of God. There's no other acceptable course. The world likes the power of positive thinking, but they cannot grasp the concept and power of negative thinking. Zerubbabel was absolutely correct in his negative thinking. Sometimes, it's just not wonderful for all of us to come together. Sometimes, everything just isn't great with those who appear to want to be your friend.

Naturally, the moment they were turned-down by Zerubbabel, they fired off a protest letter to Artaxerxes. Suddenly, these people who wanted to be friends bring them the king's letter ordering them to cease and desist. So, the work stopped at that time. In our next report, we'll see what they're going to do after this. Sometimes, it appears the work of the Lord is being hindered by our enemies; but God is sovereign, and He can turn the hearts of men and kings any which way He wants to in order to encourage His people through His prophets.

In our next several reports, we'll learn about the moving of God to fulfill His plan for His people. Are you discouraged today because it seems as if God isn't moving in your life? No matter how we feel, there's always hope; and that hope can only be found in the Word of God! I hope you – whoever you are – will finally make a sincere decision to learn the Bible properly, correctly and completely today. If you read the Scripture passages, and then read these reports – and then read the passages again – you will soon discover Living Waters springing forth from your soul ~

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