

Promise Keeper

Ezra 2-3

- The decree has gone out and the people of Judah are encouraged to go back to Jerusalem and reclaim their land, and rebuild their temple, all while restoring their spiritual heritage. Many times people after taking for granted their blessings from The Lord, and literally throwing it away, don't get second chances to do what God called them to do the first time, and yet Israel has been given just that by The Lord.

V1-70

- **V1-35** although Ezra wrote the book it won't be until chapter seven that he enters the picture, and so the people are being led by a man named Zerubbabel, he was a descendant of King David and thus an heir to the throne of Judah, but since they couldn't have a King yet they decide to make him the governor.
- In chapter one we saw King Cyrus proclaiming that the Jewish people can return, here we see the Jewish people reclaiming as they travel back to Jerusalem. Chapter consists of the names and Genealogies of those who went back, and it should not surprise us that they are first listed by families, as The Lord's desire is that entire families be saved.
- **V36-63** after the families, the priests-Levites, the gatekeepers, and the servicemen, what's interesting is that unless someone could prove their lineage then their service would be limited **V62-63**. This is why we have standards in place when it comes to ministry, for God has given each of us gifts, talents and personalities, not for us to choose what we want to do, but to prepare us to do what He has called us to do, and for that to happen others will be able to verify it > **Prov 18:16**.
- This proves that the Jews weren't just being sent back to occupy Jerusalem, they were going back to rebuild and restore that which they had thrown away before, and for that to happen they needed **authentic men of God**, not just men who called themselves **men of the cloth**, they had to fit God's criteria or the foundation wouldn't be built on God's Word, but on man's will, and that had already failed them

- **V64-70** once there they make an offering for the rebuilding of the temple, notice it was offered freely and by the heads of the Father's houses, and they gave according to their ability, that meant these people gave generously as they possibly could. It is so important that the leaders of those in the church and in the family, are seen as willing supporters of the work of God, for without that it will be fight within the church and the family, instead of a blessing of giving to further the gospel.

Chapter 3

V1-13

- **V1-2** after a grueling nine hundred mile, 5-month journey through the desert, the people of Judah have arrived in Jerusalem and pitched their tents. But what they found waiting for them wasn't some well-kept vacation spot, instead it was nothing but a heap of ruins left from a seventy-year abandonment. You ever leave your basement, attic, a room unattended to for a few months and come back and see what has happened, usually its condition is worse than what you left it in.
- So Zerubbabel and the leaders have found that the hardest thing about building from the ground up is preparing the soil in order to lay a firm foundation for it to stand upon. They decide to celebrate some of their spiritual heritage, and what better time to do it than the seventh month which was sacred to the Jewish people.
- It opened with the **fest of trumpets** on the 1st there new year, the **day of atonement** on the 10th Yom Kippur, a time of repentance and fasting, seeking forgiveness, its their holiest of days, and from the 15th to the 21st it closed with the **feast of tabernacles**, remembering God's provision and protection for forty years in the desert. Before they could celebrate these, they needed to restore the altar, always remember the path to repentance and forgiveness begins at the altar.
- We cannot change the trajectory of our lives until we come to the place where my knees are bowed, my face is to the ground, and my heart is humbled, then and only then can we become altered people. Understanding our need for forgiveness, having a desire for mercy, excited to be in The Lord's will, accomplishing His purposes.
- **V3-6** but it wasn't without opposition, where God says rise up and build Satan will come and stand up and oppose, the question is will you continue or give in to fear. The other nations weren't too happy to see the Jews come back to Jerusalem, and the people were afraid of provoking and offending their enemies.

- The question is will you give in to your fear, which is real, or listen to The Lord, which also is real, sadly many give into to their emotions deciding they don't want any trouble. Fear is a huge tool of Satan > **2 Tim 1:7, 1 Jn 4:18**. They go ahead build the altar and observe the feast and the regular sacrifices resume.
- **V7-11** when we worship in spirit and in truth its amazing how that motivates us to be obedient in other areas of our lives, for once they overcome their fears and do what God called them to in building and restoring the altar, now they give of their resources to rebuild the temple. Obedience must start somewhere folks, and for them it was the altar, and overcoming their fear of their enemies.
- It took them until the next year, was seven months to gather the materials needed for the temple, and once they began to work notice the praise from their lips started to come out. Four important facts are stated here > **1st** the people gathered **V1**, **2nd** the workers stood together **V9**, **3rd** the Levites sang together **V11**, **4th** everyone rejoiced together **V11**.
- **V12-13** what Satan wanted was to use fear to stop them, but God used it to bring unity upon His people, and they came together to accomplish a mighty work for The Lord. Once those who had seen the first temple saw this, they cried, both from sadness because this was a far cry from what it used to look like, remember Solomon had spent a fortune building it. But also, that they had seen it raised up once again which after being taken to Babylon they never thought would happen.
- The younger generation had a whole different view, they rejoiced and celebrated what had been accomplished because they didn't miss what they had never seen or participated in, they were just happy to see this temple go up in the midst of all the opposition and hardship that they had faced. It reminds me of **Acts 17;24**- God doesn't dwell in temples made with hands, as He lives in us, but how many have put their trust in buildings thinking that's the proof of God's power.