

Ezra 1-3 – 17 January 2016

Introduction –

When young and growing and only seeing life from “under the sun”, we begin very *idealistically*. (Talk about this)

Over time that fades a bit and becomes only *optimism*. (Talk about this)

Continually that fades, (if living under the sun) down to *realism*. (Talk about this)

Finally we find ourselves living in *pessimism*!

This will naturally happen b/c we live in a very rough world filled with sin and problems.

God offers us a walk with Him that prevents us from going to the place of pessimism and leads us to a place of hope and peace. **We can forget what is behind.**

Today, as we open the book of Ezra, let's look at **How to succeed in your next phase of life: 3 Miles walking with God!**

Quote Joshua 6 – “Now Jericho was.....”

The 1st mile of our walk with God will be a success when we step out in faith!

It was people of **faith** that conquered the land of promise in the first place during the days of Joshua.

It's always people of faith that God uses as His appointed times, not the unbelieving.

As Israel's punishment and exile from the land, in the days of Babylon is coming to an end, God is looking “to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards Him.”

Just as Israel was taken to Babylon in 3 waves, so they return in 3 waves.

- 1) Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest (Ezra 1-6, Haggai, Zechariah) dated 536-516 BC

Esther (Esther) dated 465

- 2) Ezra the priest (Ezra 7-10) dated 457-432 BC
- 3) Nehemiah (Nehemiah) dated 445-425 BC

Chapter 1:1-2 – (READ THIS)

1. Read Jer 25:11 – Serve Babylon 70 yrs, then God will punish Babylon.
2. Read Jer 29 – After 70 yrs... a good work
3. Read Dan 9:1-2 – Daniel knew 70 yrs were done
4. Isa 44:28:45:4 – 150 yrs before he was even born
5. Daniel also predicted the over throw of Babylon by the Medo-Persians.
6. As the end of the 70 yrs was coming **FAITHFUL** Jews would have been getting excited.
 - a. As a king named Cyrus comes to power, excitement!
 - b. Same excitement today as we look at the world around us.
 - c. John 14:29 – I've told you these things before they come to pass so that when they come to pass you might believe.

Chapter 1:3-11 - (READ THIS)

1. The Nation's methods.
 - a. Babylonians and Assyrians policy was to take conquered people out of the land.
 - b. Persians policy was much more humane, ruling over and exacting tribute money.
2. Who returned?
 - a. Vs 5 – Judah, Benjamin and Levites.
 - b. Also Manasseh and Ephraim are mentioned later.
 - c. There are not 10 lost tribes.
 - i. Paul said he was of the tribe of Benjamin.
 - ii. There were Levites in the time of Jesus.
 - iii. James wrote his book to the 12 tribes.
 - iv. It was only necessary to keep tribal distinction until the prophesied Messiah came thru Judah.
 - v. God knows who they are, He'll seal 144,000.

Chapter 2:1-58 (DON'T READ THIS)

1. Why is this list of names here?
 - a. It's the historical record.
 - b. It a permanent reward for those whose **faith** prompted them into action for God.
2. Lists those who set their heart to return to Israel.
 - a. Vs 36-39 – Priests are here mentioned.
 - b. Vs 40-42 – Levites are mentioned.
 - c. Vs 43-54 – Nethinim – The descendants of the Gibeonites who deceived Joshua.
 - i. Rehearse the story of the Gibeonites. (Jos 9)
 - ii. They were put to work as servants and temple servants.
 - iii. Having been exposed to the Lord many of them became faithful to serving God.

The 2nd mile of our walk with God will be a success when we overcome sin even though the ideal situation is lost.

- d. Once you lose the ideal situation, still pursue the best course.

- i. Sometimes we loss the ideal situation out of no fault of our own.
 - ii. Don't give up b/c ideal is lost.
 - iii. God will show the way thru all situations that are less than ideal.
 - iv. Example of Moses:
 1. Killed the Egyptian
 - a. Should he give up and pout?
 - b. "God can't use me now"
 - c. He did a little of this in desert
 2. Listened & turned to God & was STILL used, sin and all, to lead the Israelites.
 - v. My story with Taylor.
 1. The Lord taught me how to pursue the best Godly outcome from a horrible situation.
 2. The Lord used scripture from later in this very book to lead me.
 3. He can do this for you too.
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Chapter 2:59-63 - (DON'T READ THIS)

1. What?
 - a. Those priests that couldn't track their ancestors.
 - b. They were kept out of the holy things until a priest with Urim and Thummim can determine of the Lord if they were of the line of Levi.
2. Why?
 - a. This shows how serious the Israelites took their ID.
 - b. They knew for sure of what tribe everyone in the nation was from.
 - c. So we can have absolute confidence that when Jesus came, He could prove that he was of the house and lineage of David, ready to be revealed as the Messiah.

Chapter 2:64-70 - (READ THIS)

1. About 50,000 people in all returned to Israel in this wave of people.

Chapter 3:1-6 - (READ THIS)

1. The Leading Men

- a. Zerubbabel was grandson to Jehoiachin king of Judah.
 - i. This is Joseph's forefather which shows Jesus' earthly right to the throne of David thru his son Solomon.
 - ii. Had the Monarchy continued Zerubbabel would be king, but he's known as the governor of the land.
- b. Zerubbabel led regarding political things and Joshua led the nation regarding spiritual things.
- c. Read all about this time period and of Joshua and Zerubbabel using the books of Haggai and Zechariah.

2. The people began by fearing God and keeping His commandments.

- a. They build the altar to offer sacrifice upon.

- b. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge.
- c. They kept the feasts and new moons.
- d. Vs 5 – The people freely gave of all that they were to God.
- e. Pressure is never right when giving to God.
 - i. Some are pressured by excitement.
 - ii. Some are pressured by crying leaders.
- f. Paul – “As every man has purposed in his heart, so let him give.”
- g. The whole rule of giving should be “from your own free will.

Chapter 3:7 – (READ THIS)

- 1. (Point to Charles and Gloria) “And Charles and Gloria are rich today b/c of their giving” ha ha
(This is a joke)

Chapter 3:8-11 – (READ THIS)

- 1. The foundation is now laid to the temple and the great rejoicing begins.

- a. Notice we can worship and praise God with loud voices.
2. B/c God is good (in Himself) and is mercy (toward men) endures forever.

Chapter 3:12-13 - (READ THIS)

The 3rd mile of our walk with God will be a success when we choose to rejoice in God regardless of circumstances!

1. **#3 – Choose to rejoice in God as you move thru life with what you have.**
2. You see it's a matter of setting your mind on the right things.
3. Is God still merciful and good to us when we get a blessing that is less than the one we had before? Yes
 - a. Isn't it still more than we deserve? Yes
 - b. The older men's pain is real, but it was caused from thinking about the past.
 - i. Stay focused on what God wants to do in your life today.

- ii. Stay focused on the sure hope of tomorrow.
- 4. You may have experienced or maybe you will yet go thru a great loss.
 - a. Won't God yet bless you with all you need to get thru it? Yes
 - b. He will never leave you or forsake you.
 - c. Consider the blessings of today and the great hope for tomorrow.
 - d. What does God have for you today, by your own free will to set your hand and mind to?

Conclusion –

Want to be successful in the next phase of your life?

- 1) **Step out in faith** – what decision is God calling you to make?
- 2) **Overcome sin even though the ideal situation is lost** – Have you settled for sin in your life just b/c a situation can no longer be perfectly the way it was designed? Change it! Go for God's best!!
- 3) **Choose to rejoice and be content** – Renew your mind!