

Ezra 5-6 –12 January 2023

“Turning Stagnation Into Realization”

Introduction

*In the Kings/Chronicles, Israel went into Babylonian Captivity in 3 waves, now they return the same way

1. 1st Wave - Ezra 1-6 (536-516 BC) - Gov Z & J.P.
2. 2nd Wave - Ezra 7-10 (457-432 BC) - Ezra
3. 3rd Wave - Nehemiah (445-425 BC) - Nehemiah
4. Book of Esther happens between 1st & 2nd waves

*Chap 1-2 we saw God always initiates a work & the faithful are called to join Him in the work

*God stirred their return to their land & faithful go

*Now we see the steps needed to ‘build back better’

*Chap 3-4 we saw the faithful building the core of their spiritual life back from nothing

*Built an altar in Jerusalem then started the temple but then got hindered and stopped the work

*We need God’s favor to turn stagnation into realization

***Today let’s look at 3 effects of God’s favor on our Christian work**

1st effect of God's favor is Motivation: God turns our pondering into purpose (Chap 5:1-17)

Read Chap 5:1-2

1. God stirred up Gov Z & J.P. by His prophets Haggai & Zechariah by saying...
 - a. Is it time to work on your personal life when your spiritual life is still in ruins? No
 - b. Unclean will make you unclean, stay away
 - c. I [the Lord] am with you and will use you
2. Read Phil 2:13 – God knows how to call us to deeper waters & to stir up the gifts that are w/i us
3. Read I Tim 1:12 – God's is always opening our eyes to the work he has for us

Read Vs 3-5

1. In face of renewed protest, Israel keeps building the temple b/c “the eye of” God was on them
2. Read Hag 2:23 – As one that is chosen
3. Read II Cor 3:5-6 – Spirit is what motivates us

Read Vs 6-11

1. So the Samaritans are recounting Israel's answer to them of what they're doing
 - a. "We serve the God of all things!"
 - b. "We're returning to our roots"
 - i. Rev 2:4-5 – Do originally intended work

Read Vs 12

1. Notice the honesty & humility in their answer

Read Vs 13-15

1. Now Israel recounts their legal authority under Cyrus' decree for what they're doing
2. They've been stirred by the Holy Spirit to see the great purpose in what they're doing

Read Vs 16-17

1. So they're asking King Darius to determine if this is lawful for Israel to be building the temple
2. Israel no more frozen w/ pondering, but stirred into action to glorify God

2nd effect of God's favor is Power: God turns our enemy's hate into help (Chap 6:1-12)

Read Chap 6:1-2

1. Medo-Persians were known for making and not breaking laws & wonderfully preserving records
2. Achmetha is modern Hamadan on road from Baghdad to Teheran in Iran
 - a. This is the traditional burial place of Esther & Mordecai – tombs can be visited

Read Vs 3-5

1. Darius reads that Cyrus' decree was indeed for Israel to rebuild their temple even to these specs

Read Vs 6-10

1. 'Let the Jews work continue, in fact begin giving them regular money from the tribute received' Wow!
2. Reminds me of Balaam trying to curse Israel and all he can do is bless them

3. Think of the life of Joseph sold into slavery
 - a. Seemed like all these events were “bad”
 - b. Read Gen 50:20 – Even the intentional acts of those against you can turn into your blessing
 - i. By fighting for God’s honor and plan
 - ii. By asking God for His favor and blessing
4. Don’t worry about fighting those that are against us just be concerned with asking and seeking for God’s strong hand to work thru you

Read Vs 11-12

1. So there’s even enforcement built into the law
2. Those against us think they have power over us, but God is greater than all
3. Turn to Zec 4:1-10–Holy Spirit works thru him
 - a. Ask God to show His power over them!
 - b. Ask God to show His power even thru us!

3rd effect of God's favor is Fulfillment: God turns our preparation into operation (Chap 6:13-22)

Read Chap 6:13-15

1. This is March 12, 515 BC
2. It's been 20 years since they first got back

Read Vs 16-17

1. So this dedication was much smaller than when they dedicated Solomon's temple but it was also pure and holy

Read Vs 18

1. Thus begins daily temple service to the Lord

Read Vs 19-20

1. They did this on behalf of the whole people of Israel

Read Vs 21-22

1. So both the Israelites AND local proselytes are here worshipping

2. This proves that what Israel was excluding in chap 4:1-3 was the mixing of God's purposes & plans w/ another's purposes & plans
3. All those that wish to conform to God's plan are welcome and are received with gladness

Too many Christians resign to have small goals; just to make some money and have a little comfort

1. We were created to spend ourselves on honoring God which in turn blesses us!
2. But there's always a season of preparation before the operation and culmination
3. Exp of Paul the Apostle
 - a. Read Gal 1:15-2:1 – Motivated by God to prepare for the ministry
 - b. Read I Tim 1:12 – God then enables and empowered him for the work
 - c. Read II Tim 4:7 – God fulfilled His work in Paul and brought him to that place of great worship & satisfaction

Conclusion

So, the temple is built and they're living, not in stagnation, but in the realization of the victorious life of the believer! Have you realized all that God has for you in this life by asking for His favor?

1. **Ask God for Motivation: God can turn our pondering into purpose**
 - a. We need kickstarted into action
2. **Ask God for Power: God can turn our enemy's hate into our help**
 - a. We need a super-natural ability to move
3. **Ask God to Fulfill His plan thru you: God can turn our preparation into operation**
 - a. We can see great things when we live for God's plan and purpose

And so it is God's favor that we need to *motivate* us, to *empower* us and to *fulfill* us