



# EZRA

▶▶ THE RETURN

## THE FLIP SIDE | EZRA

EZRA 3:1-13

### INTRODUCTION | Welcome | Online Audience | App

What an amazing start to our series going through the book of Ezra. God is doing something NOW in the hearts of His people as He is calling us to Return back to Him! (New, Rebuild, Restore...)

**Psalm 16:11 NLT** *You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.*

PRAISE BREAK

**ILLUSTRATION** | The Flip Side... COIN (Story about there being Two Sides to everything...)

**The Flip Side Definition:** There's always an opposite side. A different perspective, story, experience, side to learning & growing. The good & bad. Peace & Trouble. Sickness & Health. Joy & Sorrow...

**GOD NEVER PROMISED THE ABSENCE OF PROBLEMS, BUT THAT HE WOULD BE PRESENT IN THEM.**

**Ezra 3:1-6 NLT** *1 In early autumn, **when the Israelites had settled in their towns**, all the people assembled in Jerusalem with a **unified** purpose. 2 Then Jeshua son of Jehozadak joined his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his family in rebuilding the altar of the God of Israel. They wanted to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, as instructed in the Law of Moses, the man of God. 3 **Even though the people were afraid** of the local residents, **they rebuilt the altar** at its old site. Then **they began** to sacrifice burnt offerings on the altar to the Lord each morning and evening. 4 They celebrated the Festival of Shelters as prescribed in the Law, sacrificing the number of burnt offerings specified for each day of the festival. 5 They also offered the regular burnt offerings and the offerings required for the new moon celebrations and the annual festivals as prescribed by the Lord. The people also **gave voluntary** offerings to the Lord. 6 Fifteen days before the Festival of Shelters began, the priests had begun to sacrifice burnt offerings to the Lord. This was even **before** they had started to lay the foundation of the Lord's Temple.*

They were home... They had settled in, got things in order but knew that there was more ahead than just getting comfortable. They were experiencing **THE FLIP SIDE**. God was stirring their hearts to come together with a unified purpose. I solely believe like the Israelites, there has been a time of unsettling. Maybe even feeling like Exile... But He's calling us back. Not to settle in, get comfortable & relax but to come together for one purpose!

One of the first things the Jewish people did upon their return was rebuild the altar. The altar was central to Hebrew worship. It would have been the first time the Jews could have sacrificed offerings in seventy years.

**Verse 3** even talks about how they were afraid... they moved forward anyway. They rebuilt the altar at the old site. Sacrificing their offering on the altar to God each morning & evening. Another thing that really encouraged me was that they did all this even before they started to lay the foundation to the temple.

## **OBEDIENCE TO GOD IS OUR OPPORTUNITY... THE RESULTS OF THAT OBEDIENCE IS GOD'S**

**Ezra 3:7-10 NLT 7** Then **the people hired** masons and carpenters and bought cedar logs from the people of Tyre and Sidon, paying them with food, wine, and olive oil. The logs were brought down from the Lebanon mountains and floated along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea **8** The construction of the Temple of God began in midspring, during the second year after they arrived in Jerusalem. **The work force was made up of everyone** who had returned from exile, including Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jehozadak and his fellow priests, and all the Levites. The Levites who were twenty years old or older were put in charge of rebuilding the Lord's Temple.

**9** The workers at the Temple of God were supervised by Jeshua with his sons and relatives, and Kadmiel and his sons, all descendants of Hodaviah. They were helped in this task by the Levites of the family of Henadad.

**10** When the builders completed the foundation of the Lord's Temple, the priests put on their robes and took their places to blow their trumpets. And the Levites, descendants of Asaph, clashed their cymbals to praise the Lord, just as King David had prescribed.

What was so significant about the temple? In the Old Testament, God's presence dwelt in a physical, geographical location. There were times in scripture where the presence of God was found in a pillar of fire and in a cloud. But ultimately it was then found in the ark of the Covenant.

**2 Chronicles 5:14** talks about the time when the presence of God filled the temple...

For the people of Israel, the altar & the temple were central to the future of all the exiles who were finally home. **THE FLIP SIDE** was knowing what they knew from before... Knowing that God was with them. That he was reclaiming them back as His people... So they let out a shout of praise!

So what did this praise sound like? What happened next? Were things going to turn out the way it did before? Were they going to be a mighty nation again?

**Ezra 3:11-13 NLT 11** With praise and thanks, they sang this song to the Lord: "**He is so good! His faithful love for Israel endures forever!**" Then **all the people** gave a great shout, **praising the Lord because the foundation of the Lord's Temple had been laid.** **12** But many of the older priests, Levites, and **other leaders who had seen the first Temple wept aloud when they saw** the new Temple's foundation. **The others, however, were shouting for joy.** **13** The **joyful shouting and weeping mingled together** in a loud noise that **could be heard far in the distance.**

Sit with this for a moment... Think about what the people were experiencing.

One generation was shouting about what was to come & **THE FLIP SIDE** was weeping about what was... They had seen the past & thought this is what it had to look like. While the others were looking at the past & what they had heard... believing for what will be.

Have you ever found yourself wishing & dreaming about the past? About what once was? How great or good or easy things used to be?

I mean think about the trials... Think about the struggle to be pushed out of a promise. To live life in exile. Having to settle into maybe never going home again. Think about those who are here now & those who are not.

There's such a heaviness in this moment that I pray we begin to understand **THE FLIP SIDE** when it comes to our worship. When it comes to our seeing God's work fulfilled in us.

When I look at the past... I know what happened. I also know what I wanted to happen. How I felt, the insecurities, the way I really like that moments. The lessons, the heart checks & the growth that helped me grow into who I am today.

### **THE PAST, THE PRESENT & THE FUTURE ARE REALLY ONE... THEY ARE TODAY!**

There is so much that can happen when we understand the opportunities we have today.

**Verse 12** The ones that should have been leading. The ones who should've known that God is with us and He's doing a new thing. That he's reclaiming us, reforming us... But they saw the foundation. They compared it to what they had seen & were disappointed at what it was not.

### **SOME OF US ARE COMPARING OUR FOUNDATION FROM SOMEONE ELSE'S FINISH LINE**

The temple of old was amazing. It was beyond immaculate. It was full of so much bling that it would put Tiffany's to shame. But they were comparing their New beginning to what God completed when the original temple was built.

**You can't experience THE FLIP SIDE if you're continuing to reread what happened before.**

They weren't going to build the temple exactly like it was before.

What God wanted the people of Israel to experience? What amazing things that were going to happen when Jesus entered the picture to fulfill God's promise in the New Testament? They didn't know. They didn't know that one day this temple would be the one that Jesus walks into... Not Solomon's.

What God wants to do in your life! We can't build this by ourselves. We're definitely not going to build it like it was before. We have this opportunity to believe in the one who began a good work. The one who not only began a good work but is faithful to complete it.

God is Good! He is Faithful! He is True! He is full of Grace & Mercy. Thank you Lord for new life. Thank you for my home. Thank you for my family, marriage, job, health, etc...

Isn't it funny how we can praise God & see all the things because we see **THE FLIP SIDE**.

We know that God's presence doesn't need a building. We know that God isn't restricted to a physical place found on Google or Yelp. We know that through the birth & death of Jesus... everything changed.

**God is within you & me when we believe in the one who has & will set us free.**

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NLT 19** *Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you & was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.*

## **CLOSING | Pete | Band**

We can worship God anywhere & anytime. May the love that we experience cause us to shout with joy because of the Goodness of our God!

Maybe you're feeling like your an exile on your own right. Waiting to get back to church to worship. To experience life, purpose, value, but can I tell you something? That doesn't have to be. You can be a light in dark places. You can stand because of the one that lives within you.

Maybe God brought you here to remind you of what you'll be working with. God will use everything that is left in your life to work in & through you this next season.

Why? Because that is who He is! He is the God of **THE FLIP SIDE**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-5 NLT 1** *For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. 2 A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. 3 A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. 4 A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance. 5 A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away.*

God is Present... he didn't leave. He's showing us another perspective. He's giving us **THE FLIP SIDE**. Sometimes you do both! Sometimes you weep & worship in & through the sorrow. Sometimes you sit in lament knowing that it will be alright even if you can't feel it or see it right now.

Learn to find joy while you dry the tears out of your eyes & keep living anyway.

## **WHAT'S ON THE FLIP SIDE WILL BE GREATER THAN BEFORE**

For the glory of this present house will be greater than former house!

**Haggai 2:4-5, 9 NLT 4** *But now the Lord says: Be strong, Zerubbabel. Be strong, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people still left in the land. And now get to work, for I am with you, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. 5 My Spirit remains among you, just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. So do not be afraid.'*

**9** *The future glory of this Temple will be greater than its past glory, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. And in this place I will bring peace. I, the Lord of Heaven's Armies, have spoken!"*

## **TALK ABOUT IT - QUESTIONS | THOUGHTS to GROW through with family, friends & myself:**

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week's message?
2. Is there something I can do today that will allow me to make Obedience an opportunity?
3. In what ways have I dwelled in the past that have kept me from experiencing God today?
4. Have you experienced the sense of being an exile in your day-to-day life? Why or why not?
- 5 How can this season be greater than before?