

# COMING HOME

A STUDY OF EZRA



## EZRA COMING HOME: PURPOSE AND REMEMBRANCE

*June 26, 2022*

Eddie Williams

Ezra 5:1-5

The book of Ezra is rarely taught and almost never taught verse by verse. Few miracles happen, few notable figures emerge, and yet, it is integral to God's unfolding narrative and rescue plan for his people. Join Doxa as we unpack the physical and spiritual rebuilding that happens in the old Testament book of Ezra. For more information about our gatherings and how we make disciples in the everyday stuff of life, go to [doxa-church.com](http://doxa-church.com) or find us on Instagram @DOXA. Hi and good morning church. Today we will be reading Ezra 5:1-5.

"Now The prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of God of Israel who was over them. Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them. At the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus: 'Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?' They also asked them this: 'What are the names of the men who are building this building?' But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop until the report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it."

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

It works. How are we doing this morning? Good morning everybody. Hey, my name is Eddie. I'm the lead teaching pastor here with Doxa. So glad you guys could join if you're new. I'm so thankful you didn't abandon us because the sun is out, like so many of your counterparts did. No, I'm just kidding. I'm glad you guys are all here. Hey, we got a lot of ground to cover. We're

gonna be in Ezra Chapters five and six together. We're gonna traverse that entire thing. So I'm gonna pray and then we'll get right into it. Does that sound good? Okay.

Lord Jesus, thank you for another opportunity to speak before your people. I do pray on a day like this, with the sun is out and there's just so much going on in the world that you would cover this place in your spirit. Would you protect us? Would you protect me as I preach? Would you protect my friends here as they listen to a word? Would their hearts and minds be open and receptive and ready? Lord, it is just a weird time we live in and so I, Lord, as we pray, as we traverse a text like this, it feels so timely for all of us in what we're about to face here in culture, but it also is timeless and we're thankful for its timelessness, Lord Jesus. And so I do pray that anything that comes out of my mind, that's from me, Lord, would that just be rejected, and Lord would your Holy Spirit make the words that are from you and your Word stick. In Jesus' name. Amen.

All right, everyone. Well, we've been in Ezra for the last few weeks, the book, and if you are just joining us, it's an unusual book. And in fact, the Bible can feel incredibly complicated, incredibly complicated, especially when you first start reading it. But studying books like Ezra sort of help us connect the dots. Helps us connect the dots for more well-studied books like Genesis and Exodus to the Gospels where Jesus shows himself. And so Ezra helps us see the story of the Bible sort of unfold. And it helps bridge that gap. And now, while the Bible is huge and we can spend our entire lives sort of plumbing its depths, the Bible can actually become less complex if you understand its bigger story. I'm serious. A book this size can actually become less complex if you understand the larger pattern that is unfolding.

So today I wanna share with you a pattern and I wanna just get right into sharing with you this cycle that I've sort of put together, that every story in the Bible follows and it'll be right up here on the board. Essentially it's this. First we forget God's Word, God reminds us, God sovereignly acts, and then we celebrate. Okay. Now if you're wondering like how does this all work? Over the last few weeks I've been making, doing some recaps to get you sort of into that story of Ezra, to share with you the entire story of the Bible. And I'm gonna do that again right here. Okay. Does that sound good? Okay. So I'll explain it like this. We forget. Right? So first God creates the world. He creates everything perfect. And it flourishes. He creates man and woman and they flourish and they are fully and completely connected to God. We've been saying that, right? And they've been in this wonderful presence of God. They love God. They're connected with him. They're in his presence. They see him. However, humanity, man and woman, they become deceived by the serpent who gets Adam and Eve, humanity, to focus in on themselves and not God. And so once they begin to focus on themselves, they forget, they forget God's Word. And so what happens when we forget? They rebel, they sin and death enters the world and it becomes even more difficult to continually remember God's goodness. Now the result is, the world we all experience today, the world you experience death, suffering, oppression, injustice, this world, okay? The world that we experience today is because humanity forgot God's word, but God being loving, kind, and all perfect decides he's going to remind humanity of his goodness. So in Genesis chapter three, God tells humanity that he's going to send a Son through their family line. He's gonna come through this people called Israel into this place called Jerusalem. And he would reconcile humanity back, back to God himself. And we would be back in this loving connection, relationship with him. And so this promise of this Son coming would be a constant reminder to Israel, God's people, throughout history that they could look

forward to a day where the world would be renewed and restored and their relationship with God would be reconnected. Okay? But as God always reminds us, his promises are always accompanied by his actions. So God sovereignly acts, he sends his son Jesus in the world through the family line of Israel, into this city, Jerusalem. And he lives perfect. Again, you know the story or maybe you don't, if you don't here, it is. He lives so perfectly. He is killed by the people that dislike him. But he resurrects from death sovereignly saying, if you believe in me, you will not fall to your sin. You will not taste death, eternal death. You will be reunited with God in glory. That's a wonderful message and that's the story of the gospel. And then lastly, we celebrate. We get to celebrate that death no longer has the power over us, over the people that believe in sin. You might suffer in this world. This world might be hard. But you would be free from sin and you would not taste this eternal death. And you'll be with God forever. We forget, God reminds, God sovereignly acts, we celebrate. The whole story of the Bible right there. Now the whole Bible follows this pattern. Not just once, but over and over and over again.

And in Ezra chapter five and six, we are right in the middle of one of those cycles. Okay? Go figure. And we are at a point right now where God has been gracious to Israel, but they've forgotten how good he is. And they stopped building the temple that they were supposed to build. And he decides he's gonna remind them, act on their behalf, and then Israel would celebrate. It's a lot of information and it's a nice day outside. And we're in Ezra chapter five and six. And so my obligatory, before you check out of this sermon, I have to tell you, okay, that this pattern, isn't just the pattern for people in the Bible. It's the pattern of your own life. You are, you forget God's Word. God has to remind you. He acts. And then we celebrate over and over again. This is your pattern. So if you pay close attention, you'll also notice that that cycle doesn't stop at "We celebrate". It repeats itself, which means you, even after celebrating the goodness that God does in your life, begin to forget that promise. And you have to be re reminded over and over again. So how do you get out of that cycle? It's a good question. Luckily for us, God knows. God knew that this plan was happening and he doesn't have a plan to just like, make you feel good in this life. While you continue on the cycle, he actually has a plan to get you off of it. And I'm gonna reveal that solution at the end of this message. But for now, let's walk through those four things together in the context of Ezra chapter five and six. Okay. Let's look at verse one.

"Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of God of Israel who was over them."

Okay. Recap. Last week, there were some adversaries that discouraged Israel from continuing their work. Do you remember what their work was? To rebuild the temple and they stopped building the temple. Right. And do you remember how long? Just for a couple days, right? No. They actually stopped for 15 years. 15 years. They got a little resistance and they quit for 15 years. They were worried and afraid at first, maybe understandable. But then those days turn to months, and months turn to years, et cetera, et cetera, and so on and so forth, right? It's a long time. 15 years. Eventually they'll let their emotions get ahold of them and they became an excuse for their inaction. But if you also remember, God never wanted Israel to stop rebuilding. He didn't want them to stop. And Israel, they knew how good God was. They left captivity out of the foreign lands and went back to Jerusalem to rebuild this temple. And yet they forgot and they stopped building. And that's where we get this first part of our cycle. We forget. We

forget. Now God, he wants to send reinforcements in the form of two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. Names sound familiar? Anybody. Well, they should. Right? Because these two people have books in your Old Testament. They have letters. They're two prophets. And each of these books are prophecies to Israel to not forget God's call on their lives and to not forget his goodness. Okay. So I know you're probably not doing all your morning devotionals in the book Haggai. Okay. I understand that. Nonetheless, there's actually some amazing stuff in there. God is crazy. He is a conductor orchestrating these scriptures as they all connect. Haggai and Zechariah are two hyperlinks that connect the book of Ezra to the rest of the Bible, which is pretty cool. So the book of Haggai tells us why Israel forgot God for 15 years and stop building the temple. And so I'm gonna read a text for you and pay close attention and see where you see yourself. Haggai 1:4-6. It says this,

"is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?" Talking about the temple. "Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes."

Does it just feel like that for me every month? Or is that everybody? Inflation? Yeah. Now he says, consider your ways. And you actually see this a lot in the Bible. This word, this idea, consider your ways. It's actually a cultural idiom for something for this saying, put your heart on the road, put your heart on the road. And that's why we don't translate it like that. Cuz doesn't make any sense to us. What it really means is consider the road you're following. Consider the ways you're going. Haggai is saying, consider how you stopped doing God's work, but kept doing your own. You were afraid to do God's work. And yet everything you needed to do still got done. Haggai is saying, well for 15 years you said, man, I'll tell you what it is scary out there. I know God has called us to rebuild this temple, but I just don't know if it is time. But, Haggai is saying, you went ahead and built your house. You got those panels done on the house. You went ahead with the remodel. You put some money into it. You maybe you did a, you know, a reverse mortgage, whatever you did it. You got the stock portfolio taken care of. You got the kids in soccer and baseball. You climbed the corporate ladder. You got really into that hobby and God's house? Still in rubble. For those who here that are Christians, what was that moment in your life where you were first on fire for Jesus? Just think back to it for a second. What was it? What was it that day that you met him? Like, was it that conference? Like what was it? Maybe it was a, a sermon or a worship set. Maybe it was just you alone with your Bible, like me. You were all in, right? Do you remember that moment? Think about it. Seriously. Maybe you were six years old and you don't remember. Great. What was it like? You were skipping around for Jesus. You loved him. You were excited. You cried over the Bible. And then what happened? Has your passion drained? Has the call of Jesus on your life no longer been so, never been that palpable? Is it no longer exciting? Have you just drained or did life just get in the way? Work, school, things to do just happened, right? If that's you, you're like Israel here. Haggai comes to warn Israel that you've forgotten, not just to do God's work, but you forgot who God called you to be. And how many of you are in that spot? What about you? Huh? You were so fired up. You wept, you laughed. You worshiped, you praised his name. I've seen people. I've prayed with people that have come down the aisles at conferences and sermons. And they're weeping praising God that this is the moment I change my life. And then 5, 10, 15 years later, those

same people are, man, I just don't know if I trust God anymore. What happened? Is that you? What was that moment that you were so fired up and now look at yourself, what happened? Life get in the way? Failure, hardship, pandemic, or death of someone? If that's you again, you're like Israel, you forgot who God's called you to be. Do you know that you, God calls you his son and a daughter. He looks at you as his children, genuinely his children. Not a person who somewhat kinds of worships God and thankful you come in and you throw a few shekels in the offering bin and you go back and hopefully this worldview is a good worldview outta the myriad of other worldviews he can offer you, hopefully you like this one. You find yourself a gifted enough preacher or a good enough worship leader, then maybe you can just sort of form for yourself a nice little life and God will sort of be up in the distance, sort of like going, okay, I think that probably works. That's not how it is. God's a, he's a dad. He loves his kids. He longs for you and we get apathetic on it. And he wants us to turn the corner. He loves us. You tasted calling and purpose. And what? Here you are. Got the mortgage, and vacation, fully funded this and that. Or maybe you're here and you're down and out from a string of bad luck with money, relationships or whatever it is, churches. And you've forgotten. And here's the kicker. Haggai tells Israel that building their own house instead of God's house doesn't work. But we all know that. He said, you've sewn much, you've harvested little. You eat and you never have enough. You drink and you never had your fill. You clothe yourselves, but you're not warm. And again, you earn wages and dropped right through your pocket holes. Money goes away. Crazy. Have you ever wanted something so bad? Like an item or a job or a vacation, and then you got it and you were like, that's it. You ever done that? You're like, I can't wait to get this thing or go this place and you get there and you're like, oh, I mean, I thought it would be a little better. Just a little better. They always, they have often ask Tom Brady, Tom, Brady's got however many Super Bowls, seven Super Bowls, they say, Tom, what's your favorite Super Bowl. You know what he says? The next one. No matter how many you get it, doesn't satisfy. And what are you chasing down? And how many have you gotten? And what has to happen? If it doesn't work, you'd go, yeah. I must have to go more. TV didn't work, 50 inches didn't do it. Need the 65. Need the 75. Need the 90. Some of you have one bigger than your house. At least bigger than my house. You guys stop. Or it's not a TV. It's something else. Man, you know, I thought this role was it for me at my company. I thought this was it. And then <clicking tongue>. Maybe I just gotta get to that next level. That next level. They often ask people how much money in your 401k is enough for retirement? You know what? The answer is 10% more. It's 10% more. It's not what I have now. It's whatever I'll have when I get to 10% more. It's what it is. This is why many of us spend our lives chasing our tail trying to out-earn, out-love, and out-fun the deepest needs of our heart, which is authentic purpose from Christ, just like the Israelites. And this is why none of us will actually ever be satisfied. Never. Unless God reminds us. And this is our next part.

God reminds us of the real call of our lives and our goodness. We have to come back, remember what God had told us to do. God reminds Israel by sending these two prophets, Haggai and another guy named Zechariah, and Zechariah, he wants to remind Israel what God says about them and what he's going to do through them. Here's verse 17 in chapter one of Zechariah.

"Cry out again. Thus says the Lord of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again, comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem," the city they're building.

Zechariah comes and he goes, Hey, listen, guys, you have to remember, God's going to do amazing things through this place. He's going to save all of humanity through it. You gotta start building. You gotta start building. Now it can be tempting to see God as abrasive here. Maybe you're thinking. I mean, I just feel like, why can't God just let 'em live their lives? They're having a good time. They're not hurting anybody. I mean, Zerubbabel and the crew here, they're they're hanging out. Why can't God let them meet him on his, on their own timing? Why wouldn't God just let them slowly come back to him over time, As long as they're living a godly life? Well, as you can probably tell, if you don't know already, I played football. And if you played any sport, you have people that coach you and maybe even in a business as well, you might have a manager or a director over you and they often coach you. Right? And sometimes they coach hard. Sometimes it's a lot. And you're like, oh my gosh, here we go again. This one on ones, oh man, here we go. And he's gonna, he's just like, the coach is getting after you. And he's like, Hey, you gotta do this. You gotta do this. Gotta do this. Well, one time I asked one of my coaches, I just feel like I got most of this handled, coach, why are you coaching me so hard? And he said, oh, I'm coaching you hard because I care about you. That's hard to swallow. And I was, and I said, well, that just doesn't feel nice. He said, oh no, no, don't worry. It's when I stop coaching you that you should be worried. Why is that? Oh, because then I've given up or I've already made a decision with what we're gonna do with your employment. God reaches out. He reminds his people because he cares about them. In fact, Romans chapter one says that God will often give people who don't love him up to their passions and let them desire the things of their heart, instead of calling them back to himself, God's reminders are a good thing. So how does Israel respond? Verse two.

"Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them."

Wait a second. God reminds them and they start doing it? How does he respond guys? He gets to work. 15 years off, he starts working. Remember this though. God's reminders is not all we get as God's people. God always backs up his promises through action. And that's why he sovereignly acts on our behalf. He sovereignly acts on our behalf. Now let's see how this narrative continues here in verse three.

"Now at the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus: 'Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?' They also asked them this: 'What are the names of the men who are building this building?'"

Weird. So you mean for 15 years they did nothing. They put new roofing on their houses. They climbed the corporate ladder. They got their houses nice and in order, they got gardens planted. They're good to go and no resistance. And it says at the same time, a prophet speaks to 'em and they start doing God's work, opposition shows up. Isn't that weird? Not weird at all. It's not weird at all that when you try to do God's work, there would be people that don't like God trying to stop it. That's exactly what's going on here. At the same time, God speaks through prophets, opposition also speaks. Things were going perfect until they began following God's call in their lives. Verse five.

"But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius," that's the king of Persia. "And then an answer be returned by letter concerning it."

It says the eye of their God was on them. So God is going to watch over and protect Israel. Israel is living within the will of God for their lives. Okay. And all of a sudden, God shows up and is like, I've gotta watch on them. I'm gonna make sure they fulfill the calling I've given them. Now, we said, we're going over chapters five and six. That's a lot. We're not gonna read all that, but I will recap it here for you. The rest of chapter five is the letter that Tattenai, this governor of the people of the land, writes to the king of Persia. And let me tell you, if you've been on Twitter the last 48 hours, it's a lot like that. It's just a bunch of slander and hate and a bunch of terrible things saying, why are they doing this? They shouldn't be doing it. I don't know why they're doing it. I'm gonna send this off to the governor. And he is like, I want this guy canceled. I want him thrown out. I want them out of Jerusalem. And you know what? They might even, they might have ulterior motives. They might, I think Israel might, if you read through the letter, it actually says a lot of this stuff. But remember the eye of God is on Israel. And the most of chapter six is the response back from king Darius, king of Persia, to back to Tattenai, the guy who's overseeing the land in Jerusalem, a foreign guy. And here's a summary of that in chapter six, verse six, check this out.

"Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River," this is king Darius writing. "Shethar-bozenai, and your associates the governors who are in the province Beyond the River, keep away. Let the work on this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site."

What? Keep away. That's all he gets back. Big, old letter. They ward over that thing. They wrote weeks and weeks and they sent it off in the mouth of a Raven or whatever they did back then. And it shows up and he pops the seal. Nope. Keep away, take it back. That's brutal. The pagan king, while all powerful in his own right, is very much under the authority of the almighty God. Okay. It sounds an awful lot like what's going on in our government today. Okay. There's a lot. God can use wicked rulers to accomplish his purpose regardless of where we're at in history. Okay. Now it's an unusual time to speak against something like this idea of Roe V. Wade. And I feel like I feel, I felt burdened for the last three days to sort of war over how I might bring this in because in my mind, as with chapter six, feels like it fits in with what's going on here. And so it's an unusual time. I think the cultural moment is so strong. And I think for the first time it feels like the majority of people actually agree with this idea of abortion. Remember last week when I told you it's not a pastor's job to be cool. And that like, because of the Bible, you really can't be cool. Here's one of those moments. Okay. Just, just buckle it. Okay. Listen. Abortion is a wicked act of worship to the gods of sex and comfort. It is literal child sacrifice. God abhors abortion. We live in a world where the culture cannot define woman or human life, but wants to rule and make wholesale decisions regarding both of them. That seems crazy. God does have a definition of woman. God created woman to be worthy of dignity, purpose, and value, to be made equal in the image and likeness of God, to be created like God, but not exactly like one another, man and woman. This is how he's created it. God does have definitions for woman and for life. God is the author of life, scripture says, and God has definitions of children whom he deems so worthy of value that he said it's better to tie a millstone around your leg, your neck, and jump into Lake Washington than it is for you to harm a child. He cares about kids. And as

hard as the conversations are around something like this, and you could just feel the tension in the room. If you were to teach on abortion in 2012, it was not like this. It just wasn't. It's a different cultural moment. It's a different cultural moment. And the message from the church is not, it's the same, it's the same message. It's the same message. It hasn't changed. And yet it's even more difficult to speak it cuz you can cut the tension with a knife in here, but God does not believe as difficult as the situation around abortion may feel, God does not believe in punishing the child for the sins of its parents, in any scenario. And yet that's what we try to do with abortion. I'll give you an example, not an example of that, but I pastored a church in San Francisco, much like Seattle except like turned up maybe 20, 20 notches. And it's my hometown and I love that place and it's, it's a great place. And I spoke in 2017, I did a sermon during Christmas on the birth of Mary or birth of Jesus through Mary and I talked a little bit about abortion and I said, I'm thankful that Jesus wasn't aborted because she was a teenager and she wasn't married. And in that day, women were marginalized and oppressed in those days. And, and to a large degree, like that was a bad spot for her to be in. And I'm thankful she pushed through that scenario. And afterwards I had a guy come up to me and talk and Hey, listen, if you're in this boat, like I'm with you and I'm for you. And I would welcome conversations with you. Okay. But he came up after me and I don't know the guy, he was just visiting that Sunday. And he said, wow, man, I really appreciate your boldness around this concept. I was like, well, what concept? Cause we were talking about the birth of Jesus and he said abortion. And that kind of caught me off guard cuz I didn't think it was that large of a large of a section. And I said, well, what exactly do you mean? He is like, well, I mean just the, the boldness, you could just easily declare that abortion was not biblical and that God didn't like abortion. I feel like, man, I couldn't have done that. And I was like, well, well thanks. So I was like, well, why do you think it was such a hard deal? And he is like, well, I just feel like there's a lot of, you know, I'm pro-choice and I said, oh, okay, are you a Christian? And he said, yeah. And I said, okay, like why do you believe that? And he said, well, it's more of like what I don't believe. The word abortion is not in the Bible. And I was like, okay, well I find it in the 10 Commandments. I find it, plain as day, thou shall not murder. And then he said, well, what does murder mean? I said, well, what does murder mean? I said, well, what does life mean? I don't know. Okay. Well, it seems funny that we would like default to aborting if we don't know what life and death are, we should probably start there. Right? All that to say, especially today, the temptation is like I mentioned last week, there's a paradigm you need to follow. Recognize versus define. Adam and Eve were always taught to recognize what God called good and evil. They were always supposed to recognize what God had laid out in the world as what's good and what's evil. It's when the serpent comes into the world, he distorts the truth. He changes what's a truth and what's a lie. And then Adam and Eve are no longer tempted to just recognize what God calls good and evil. We are to define for ourselves what we call good and evil. And what you are seeing today is people grasping at straws, clutching around for the light switch in the dark, looking to define good and evil for ourselves, but not submitting to what God has already called good and evil. His life or God's plan for our lives leads to flourishing, and we are at best guessing, this is at largely an experiment, we are 50 years in of an experiment of what, how this is gonna go. We are absolutely at our best guessing of what will happen. So what do we do with all this? I believe God can use pagan government to declare a holy edit just like he did through Darius to Israel.

But back to Israel's story here for a second, that's not the end check or I'll just tell you, versus eight through 10, Darius orders Tattenai not to just let Israel, not to just let Israel rebuild the temple, but to cover all of the costs for it. So, Tattenai's hanging out and he pops his seal and he is getting ready to go read off Israel their rights and he gets it and he rolls it and he goes, Hey Tattenai, you're gonna let them build, but you're also gonna cover all the expenses. He's like what? We don't have that in our bank. He's upset. He's mad. Right. Do you think that Tattenai and the rest of the people in the land were happy with Israel after getting that? Do you think it was like, all good? We're fine. Right? No, probably not. Probably got mad. So Zerubbabel and Israel would have to deal with unhappy people in the land. Wouldn't they? They would have to see them walking around and having their conversations. They would have to pass by them through the land and maybe see them eating dinner. They would have to, I don't know, see their posts or sit next to them in a cubicle. Right. It's a little difficult to do such things right now for not just people that call themselves Christians, but for everybody, right. It'd be hard to do that. This means you're gonna, you're gonna go and you're gonna see these comments. It's gonna be hard. And let me just sidebar on social media, social media, like social media feels so much more damaging than it is helpful these days and politics just are damaging. So you have these two things that nobody likes coming together. And it's like a, it's like a miracle whip sardine sandwich that like we willingly eat constantly. And it's disgusting cuz no one likes either of those things really that separately. But when you mix 'em together, for sure, no one likes it. And then we're just eating it over and over again. And we're just getting madder and madder that we're eating. Stop.

It would be hard to see their, it would be hard for Tattenai, and for Zerubbabel and these people to interact. But it does mean for the people of Israel, that there are going to be people, eyes looking at us, of those who are Christians, I should say, looking at those people, wondering if they just don't talk the talk, but do they actually walk the walk? Do we just post online or do you do anything to help the people you're talking about and building up caricatures about. People will be watching your witness. This means our best witness as people, for those of you that are Christians, will not be winning an argument at work or crafting the most Instagram savvy post. Your best witness on this issue will be your work that you do to serve the oppressed, to work with the broken, to adopt children, to work with foster care agencies, to serve the lost, the oppressed, the hurting and the poor. Are you doing those things? Because, and for those of you that aren't Christians here, I love you, I'm glad you're here. Most of my family aren't Christians. I became a Christian at 19 years old. There's a reason why people in church make you so angry when they post about social media, because they're not doing anything else. All they're doing is posting and you're trying to win a culture war. God's not calling anyone to win a culture war. He's calling people to make disciples and to serve the lost. Are you doing that? Because if you're not, then your Instagram post is hypocrisy of the highest order. And it makes sense why I wouldn't want anything to do with a person like that. So it works both ways. Our best witness is serving others. Now as a church, Doxa is continuing to work with various organizations that serve foster children and women who are in danger of getting an abortion or are single mothers. We support this backpack, this caregiver backpack drive, that's gonna happen July 30th. We are learning how we can support organizations like CareNet and FSFA and Acres of Diamonds, which are doing significant work with foster kids, supporting families, providing resources to women who have suffered domestic violence and

have suffered in poverty. Now, my mom falls into that category. She was a single mother. She was incredibly poor. My dad was in and out of homelessness. He was black. My mom was white. And my mother's parents did not like my dad very much. He never married my mother. And he took advantage of her in a number of different ways. She was a really good candidate for abortion, really good candidate. No money, whole future ahead of her, needed to make the decision, right. We wanna support those kinds of women so that they, that they can raise up people that have an opportunity to live. Doxa supports. Yeah. Thank you.

Doxa supports, we have, Doxa has these things called care communities and these care communities that happen within missional communities or outside missional communities, they band around to support either single mothers who are considering or considering having an abortion or just need resources or are poor or band around to help those who have adopted children. And so if you're looking for tangible ways that you can get involved with Doxa, you can be a part of a care community in your community, or you can talk to Allison and maybe we can hook you up and let you join one of those as well. Okay. But the burden has to be on us to make sure we are living what we say we live. There's too much hypocrisy in the church.

Now there's tremendous, I think this is a tremendous opportunity for the church, I think I've already made that clear. Christians already adopt at two and a half times the rate of a regular person. Can we increase it? Can we adopt more children? Can you make an extra room in your home or buy a bigger home to support an extra child who doesn't have a family? Can you do that? That will be your witness to people in a foreign land who need to hear the gospel. It will not be your post. It will be your willingness to adopt your willingness to give your time, your effort, your energy, and your money to these causes. And by the way, if you're a member at Doxa or you give to Doxa, like I've always said, you don't just give to Doxa, you give through it. Doxa supports these causes financially many of them. And we're considering ways we need to do absolutely more. So continue to do that as well.

Can we do the same? God called Israel in Ezra five and six to be distinct, to be set apart or holy from the other nations. Not to divide them and create some sort of weird boundary between them, but so they can minister to them and that people would know who Yahweh was. And we're called to do the same. We're not called to be holy and set apart so we're separate and angry. We're called to be distinct in our behavior and our actions. So that way we would minister to the people who are outside of these walls and some of you in here as well. That's what we're supposed to do. Okay. Back to the narrative for a second.

Does God, does this ruling mean that the king of Persia and Darius are holy and good because they made a godly ruling? No, just because an unjust government makes a just law does not make them holy before God. Okay. I'll prove it to you in this text. Look at verse 11. This is king Darius still talking.

"Also I make a decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled from his house, and he shall be impaled on it, and his house shall be made a dunghill."

It seems like a 12 year old got up here and wrote that. Did Ollie get up here, Donald.? And now you might be wondering what the Hebrew translation is for dunghill. Just use your imagination. Okay. So if a pagan government protects God's church or God's family from building this building, does it make their laws holy? Does it make them holy and good and all together perfect? The answer is? No. Political idolatry is not a response to a godly ruling. We cannot worship political parties or the people that specifically that made the rulings. We were never

meant to do that. That becomes political idolatry. You're not supposed to praise government. You're supposed to praise God. What are we missing? God works through any government, any person, even an animal to accomplish his will. He does it all the time. And he works through the Persians who ransacked Israel. If he can work through any government, he wouldn't work through them. I mean, they're terrible. What's the point? God sovereignly acts to accomplish his purposes. And it doesn't matter what our will is or how we decide we're gonna go about something. He brings about according to the purposes of his will, and we should praise him for that. Coincidentally, it brings me to my next point.

We should celebrate. Now, Israel, they're sitting back, God provided sovereignty through his rulings and they protected him. So how did they respond? Verse 15 of chapter six.

"And the house was finished on the third day." Yes. They got to work. They built it. That's great.

"In the sixth year of the reign of king Darius. And then the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the returned exiles" what do they do, guys? "They celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy." They celebrate, right? And that's our fourth circle. That's our fourth cycle. They celebrate. It turns out when we live aligned with our plans and God's plan that his purposes are accomplished. And it doesn't matter how difficult, it doesn't matter how difficult it is. It works. There's an issue though, because there's this uneasy feeling over this celebration. And maybe because of all of the stuff I just talked about regarding the, the world's recent events, you feel like this hangover over this idea that we should celebrate God. And you know what? I felt that tension too, as I was putting this together, but in the narrative, we actually know that while Israel is celebrating right now, they again are going to forget God's word and they will have to repeat the process again, over and over and over again. And it's sad. Now, again, this is a cycle here. This is a cycle here. It goes back to we forget. It doesn't end here. Okay. Then that's the biggest cause here. Okay. It is a cycle over there it is. Look at that. Boom. Over and over again. We're in this cycle.

Now God knows that there is a cycle here and he wants it to end for good. He does not want this to continue. In fact, the reason why we have this cycle is actually why God came to the world. He wanted to fix this cycle of perpetuity. This sort of, we forget, God reminds, God's sovereign. He wanted to fix this for good, because these celebrations we have sometimes are bummers, because something hangs over us. We sort of know that there's still evil and injustice going on in the world or that eventually our celebration has to end. You know what I'm saying? Have you ever been at a party and you were having a blast or maybe you're on vacation and you're having a good time. And then the thought pops into your head, oh man, this is gonna end soon. Have you ever been there? I'm that's like, I, that is, I'm the worst. Like five days into, we got five day vacation, day two. I'm like, oh man, we're gonna leave. This is, this is brutal, right? I am that guy. Or you have the case of the Monday, Sunday night. And it's like, oh man, work here it comes again. These are all the awful tensions that we have in celebrations. But our cycle here is not a linear graphic. It's a cycle. And unfortunately we feel that sudden rush of bummer, flow over to us and it hurts. But it's actually the feeling of a symptom of a broken world that we're all experiencing. And it's sad. But again, this was never God's plan. In fact, he actually has a plan to fix this thing together. You see, we forget God's word. God reminds us. He sovereignly acts. And we celebrate. God wants humanity to one day, live into a perpetual state of celebration where no one would ever forget his word again. And all of the brokenness and the evil and the injustice and the oppression that hangs over all of our parties would be gone

one day. And that's why he comes back. Not just once to rise from death, but a second time. And he, doesn't just, God's not just calling you to be saved by grace through faith and then you go on living your life in perpetuity on this cycle. If you thought the Bible's only about your personal salvation, you thought way too small. God is not trying to just save you. He's trying to save the entire world. He's redeeming it and renewing it and restoring it in all of the evil and the brokenness and the loss and the abortion and the, and the broken relationships would be eradicated from earth forever. And God will judge the living and the dead to either everlasting life or into eternal darkness and separation from him. And those of us that love Jesus and worship Jesus, not because we're amazing, but because God is amazing and he's graciously offered his freedom to us. Those people will get to witness to him. Now, listen, if you're sick of celebrating things and having this hangover, Christianity is for you, cuz Jesus has come to solve that very issue. And if you're here, maybe I'll just talk like straight with you, I guess. I mean, if you're here and you're not a Christian, I've been in your shoes, it's tough to get behind people who seem so lost and so broken. And it's true. Like no one here is telling you that we got it all figured out. In fact, I absolutely don't have it figured out. That's not the point. The church isn't going to make you a better person. It's gonna make you saved by Jesus. And through him, you lose your brokenness. Jesus grants, you his righteousness and you get to wear his perfection. I'm cloaked in Jesus' righteousness. And now I'm not afraid anymore. I'm not as scared anymore. I'm not longing for all these hard things. And I know that ultimately Jesus comes back and he wins and there won't be any broken celebrations. I want that weekend feeling forever. I want that birth of your child moment forever. I want that for you too. In Jesus, we can have it. If we just listen to his reminders, let me pray over us.

Lord Jesus, I'm thankful for all of the, all of the blessed, blessed distractions of microphones going out, Lord, this is just, it's great to see you work. It's great to see you maneuver through your people. I am thankful for them Lord, because your glory gets to be displayed. Lord, as we walk through really hard conversations, would you remind my friends here that our first call isn't to be right? It's to be loving, joyous, peaceful, and patient, and kind to even those who disagree with us. We wanna love those people. And back up our love with action that supports your kingdom cause. Lord, we pray for more babies adopted. We pray for more pregnancies carried to term. We pray for more families, more care communities here at Doxa to support these women and these families. We pray for children to grow up and to be VPs of sales and athletes and congressmen and stay at home moms and students. Lord, we pray for their opportunity as the God of life. In Jesus' name we say, amen.

