

COMING HOME

A STUDY OF EZRA



EZRA: Coming Home: Worship and Response

June 12th, 2022

Eddie Williams

Scripture Reference: Ezra 3:1-3:7, Ezra 3:10-3:13

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 or find us on Instagram (@Doxa).

I'll be reading from Ezra three this morning when the seventh month came and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem, then arose Joshua the son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel with his kinsman. And they built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it. As it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God, they set the altar in its place for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands. And they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord burnt offerings morning and evening. And they kept the feast of booths as it is written and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the rule as each day required. And after that, the regular burnt offerings, the offerings as the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the Lord and the offerings of everyone who made free will offering to the Lord from the first day of the seventh month, they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, but the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters and food, drink and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring Cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus king of Persia, skipping down to verse 10. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests and their vestments came forward with trumpets and the Levites, the sons of Asaph with symbols to praise the Lord, according to the directions of

David, King of Israel, and they sang responsibly praising and giving thanks to the Lord for he is good for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel and all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid and many of the priests and Levites and heads of father's houses, old men who had seen the first house wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid though many shouted aloud for joy so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping for the people shouted with a great shout.

And the sound was heard far away. This is the reading of the word. You may be seated

Donald Good morning, everybody morning. Everyone's doing great. I don't even have to ask you guys are just doing fantastic. Hey, um, we, Donald got to give away a copy of this book and you know, as we go through series, especially ones in the old Testament, sometimes they're a little complex. Let's be honest. What you just heard? Did you even listen? It's a lot. Okay. Hopefully I can explain that to you, but I do think if you are a book nerd like me, this book will actually help you. This is the same copy that we gave away earlier. It's called now. And not yet by a guy named Dean Olrick. It's a great book on the book of Ezra and the book of Nehemiah, which is actually one book right in the, in the Hebrew scriptures. So go pick this up and if you want more recommendations, come find me.

I'll be happy to share those with you. I wanna give a special shout out to the ASL crew back there. Uh, we got some interpreters back there. They're crushing it. And we're thankful for you guys. That's right. That's right. We're thankful for you guys. Um, I, I also saw someone interpreting in the hall, so we had some over, over spill, which is awesome. I think that's great. Hey, um, we are trying to move to a couple gatherings and so definitely sign up to help serve and that'll help us do that sound good. All right. If you've got Ezra three open, keep it open. I'm gonna pray and we're gonna get into it. Okay.

Lord Jesus. I ask, um, that the spirit come, that the spirit fill this place. Um, this is a, it's a tall task to open up your old Testament, Lord God, and, uh, comb through it and to find out what you have. And so Lord Jesus, I ask that you fill me with the spirit as I try to preach. I pray that anything that comes outta my mouth, that is just from me, Lord, would that be just cast aside by my friends here, but if anything comes from you, Lord God, would that be received? Would our minds and hearts be open and Lord Jesus would believe this message, just gathering together with a desire to worship and to know you in a new way in Jesus name. Amen. All right. Well, again, like I said, a couple weeks ago, I like to preach these books as if I was in your shoes.

And I was a non-Christian as an adult and I've sat in gatherings and it's hard to understand some of these Old Testaments. So let me catch you up a little bit on the story of where we find ourselves into the point of the whole story of the Bible to right now. Okay. So early on in history, God creates humanity, right? And humanity and God, we're in a really good relationship. Perfect relationship fact. They were United man and woman lived United to God. They lived in his presence. They were loved. They were safe. They would never die. But along the way, man, and woman, they go haywire. Okay? And they sin against God. God says, don't eat of any, you can eat of any tree in the garden, except for this one. Don't eat of that one, the knowledge of good and evil. And they do it okay.

With the help of a serpent. And with that rebellion comes, this broken relationship with God comes, sin comes death. All of this horrible stuff comes into the world. But even though God

humanity rebelled against God, God still loves humanity so much. And he wants to establish his people. So he wants to give them a promise. And this promise was that he would bring about this guy, this kingly Messiah, this savior that would come be born through the people of Israel and come through the place of Jerusalem. And this guy, Jesus, he would essentially reunite humanity and us back to God, destroying sins, power over us and make this world a better place. But before God could send this wonderful kingly Messiah, Jesus, to the world, Israel kind of gets full of themselves. They establish Kings. And I'm telling you that none of their Kings do do well.

None of 'em. They had several, a lot of, all of them failed in some way. And some of them were downright evil. So evil. In fact, God's like, I gotta scatter these people. He scatters Israel into the nations and they are scattered about, but God, again, remember is still faithful to his promises because judgment is never the end of God's story for his people. And so he reaches back in history and says, I'm gonna regather you all. Now, Ezra chapter one, which we talked about last week, pastor Donald, it's the story of God. Speaking through this guy, Cyrus, who essentially is a pagan overseer of the Persian empire to, and he's speaking to this guy to release the Israelite, to allow them to go back to this place that the Messiah would come through, right? Jerusalem, bring all these people back and to rebuild God's house, the temple.

Now Ezra two, which we touched on last week and we are not gonna preach on is 70 verses. And it's a list of names. And this is essentially a giant record of all of the people who are going back to Israel to do the work. Okay. So if you'd like to read through that, go ahead. It's gonna take you 45 minutes and you're not gonna pronounce a single thing right. Okay. So, but you should still do it cuz all scripture is breathed by God and profitable. Of course. But now we find ourselves in Ezra, chapter three, with those people recorded in Ezra, two, standing at the remnant, the foot of essentially what used to be their temple. Okay. So that's where we find ourselves right now. Now imagine for a second you're Israel and you're returning to Jerusalem and the remnant destruction, uh, is still all there.

Right? Nothing's being rebuilt. It's not like they're they put a target there or something like it's just all still destroyed. And so they wander up and they see all of the discovery of the side of their old temple and they see essentially the Temple's foot and its foundation destroyed. And that temple used to symbolize something big for them. And it really symbolized their prestigious history. It was David's dream. It was Solomon's work that was able to execution that built this temple. But more than that, most importantly, the temple symbolized the place where God's presence would dwell amongst his people. And so their thoughts seeing that destroyed could have gone a number of places. I don't know about you, but in a place there's a lot, a lot of ways you could think you get angry and get mad. You can get sad. There's a lot of places.

They went to a very specific place though, in this text and you heard it in the reading and they went to a place of fear. They were afraid. Have you ever been in a situation that was, I don't know, too big for you where you felt like I'm just so overwhelmed by fear and I'm so paralyzed. I don't think I'm gonna make it out of this. Has anyone ever been there? Just me like right. Just me. Okay. So you've been afraid. Okay. We've all been afraid. I, I don't know what you do with that fear, but what are we supposed to do with it? Where we're terrified of the outcome. We're terrified of the outcome of what's gonna happen. What's gonna happen now after all, again, this temple symbolize people's safety in God. And when their safety is destroyed, what are they supposed to think?

There's a lot of ways they could go. Remember they could get angry, they can get sad. What do you do when you're scared? Do you, do you bail? Do you run from the problem they could have did that? Or do you bury your, your head in the work? Cause that's what they could have done. They could have buried their head in the work of building the temple. They could have maybe gotten started on the foundation right away and said, you know what? I'm not gonna think. I'm just gonna start working. Their mind could have said a number of things, but here's where their mind went. It went to the altar, the altar of the temple. Now what's the altar? Well, the altar is really a symbol of this idea of worshiping God, it's this this way. We, we make peace with God. It's the way we make sacrifices.

It's it's an act of worship. So how do you then hearing what they do? They build the altar. How do you deal with your fear? How do you deal with situations that inspire crazy emotion? It's not like anything stressful is going on in the world right now. How do you deal with that? Well, I'm gonna give you sort of the assertion of what we find Israel do and see if it applies, okay, here it is. Worship. They worship with the altar. Now worship is the proper response to fearful, sad, confusing, and even dangerous situations. Now you might be thinking, you know what? I came to church and of course the pastor says, oh, you gotta worship your God and in the midst of fear. And that's so really like sort of canned Christian message, right? And maybe you think I'm giving you the old Jesus juke, right? I'm hitting you with a Jesus juke and, and boom, you gotta believe in Jesus, cuz he's better than you before you think I'm Jesus juking you here. Hold on a second. The lack of worship in your life might still be why you're so afraid.

The lack of worship in your life may be why you keep running from specific situations in your life. This might be why you just can't talk about that person or deal with that situation anymore where you just have to change the subject. When dinner comes where you just can't think about it anymore. This might be why you work so much and you've given your life over to your work and you've buried your workplace. You can't think about your daughter anymore. You can't think about your cousin or your ex-girlfriend or, or that job you lost. You can't think about it. So before you check out a today's sermon, okay, because it's on Ezra chapter three, before you check out, understand that your deepest fears are tied to your lack of worship and you have 'em cuz we all do so God today wants to offer you freedom from the fear and anxiety that might cripple you.

If you just thought deeply enough about it. When were, will you offer up that item, that person onto the altar to God in worship. So he can alone free you from that problem. When, when will you do it? That's the message. So in Ezra three, we learn three crucial things about how worship frees us. It's not just fun to sing. We worship in one way through song. That's great, but worshiping in all life, three crucial things about worship that can free us. Okay? First thing let's look at verse one into our texts. It says this when the seventh month came and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man that's United to Jerusalem, then arose Jeshua, the son of Jozadak with his fellow priests, Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel with his kinsman and they built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it.

As it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God. That's a lot of weird names right there. Now if you're paying attention, if you're really paying attention, let's pause for a second. You might be thinking this book is called Ezra. Where is Ezra? Great question. Well, Ezra does not arrive until 58 years after the temple has been rebuilt. You may note, they just showed up to the foot of the broken temple. In fact, Ezra doesn't show up till chapter seven of the book of Ezra. So some of the problems with preaching a book like this and why it's like less travelled because it's not, it's

not exactly a fully linear book. And it's very complicated. In fact, some of the texts in, in Ezra repeat themselves in the Nehemiah. So be patient on Ezra. But for now we get a guy named Zerubbabel which is some of you women that are pregnant.

Here you go. There's a great name. <laugh> likely this man is the governor of the people. He's the governor of Israel and what's his first task. Well it's to get the job done. What's the job to build the temple, right? Remember he's gotta rebuild this temple and I don't know what you would've thought, but like there's a lot of ways they can go about this. How many of you are the person that if you were in this situation, you would've started counting bricks, assessing damage and clearing rubble. Like you're the pre-work person where you're like, yeah, measure twice cut once you're sh- you're shuffling things over, you getting everything right. I, that I'm lacking in that spiritual gift. I'm just telling you right now. I am lacking in that area. I am a measure once cut twice kind of guy cut three times kind of person.

How many of you would've said, you know what? You know, I, I know that there's work to be done, but come on, we're getting it's Israel. It's Jerusalem guys. Let's relax. Let's start a fire. Let's get a meal going. How many are you? That person? How many of you are the person that's like, come on, it's Jerusalem. This will look great on my Instagram. Let's go see some sites. I haven't been here a while. You know what I mean? Like, boom, like Golgotha. You're seeing all the sites, right? Maybe that's you or how many of you are just the people that would've said, you know what? I'm just gonna start stacking rocks. I need to get this done. Like, let's just get this done. And then we can have fun. That's me. It never works. It almost never works. Right. <laugh> what is, what did they do?

What does Zerubbabel do? What did, what did the team do? They built the alter for something called burnt offerings. Now burnt offerings. These are free will acts of obedience and worship to God. So they, they love God and they wanna worship him. And that's what they do first, which tells us something that we need to know about worship. And that's this worship should come first. Worship needs to come first while you can respond to all of life's challenges or tasks in a number of ways, worship should always proceed. All action. All of it. Now you might think again, especially though in the face of fear, look at verse three, they set the alter in its place for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands. And they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening. What's the key word here.

Fear. They're afraid. They're terrified. Now Israel just exiled. Remember they were just exiled. They came back to this land. They just made a big trip. All these other people, sort of, some people had moved into the land. They were scattered about. Some were Isrealites that had been scattered previously, but many of them were foreigners from neighboring places. And so there were people there that they didn't know and they weren't sure if these people were gonna be angry or they were gonna kill them. They had no idea. I mean, this wasn't, there was no laws, right? This place was abandoned. Nonetheless, Israel instinctively understood that the most important part of doing God's will wasn't the work. It was the worship. It wasn't the work. It was the worship because listen, fear is so powerful. It's so powerful. Weirdly enough fear. We feel fear because we're not in control.

Right? But then we, we in fear, we act to do things to put us back in control. Do you understand? But we we're not in control. And so you might abandon a task. Like I, I can't solve this problem. I'm gonna go, you're not in control or you know what? I'm just gonna put my notes to the grind

and say, you're not in control. Fear reminds us that we're actually not in control. And yet our fear causes to act as if we are, we are fear should be a reminder that we're not in control. And that's why we should worship the God who is in control in those moments. Well, getting in this building was tough. And those of you there's so many of your faces that you, you were participating in getting this place, built it. It was hard and not just like physical labor, I mean poor pastor Tim partially tore his bicep, trying to get this place ready to go. That's what your story he did. You didn't know that he's a humble guy. That was me. I've been like, guys, I'll show up in a sling.

I lifted so many boxes yesterday. Why weren't you there? No, it was hard to get into this place. And you know how Doxa's history. There's a lot of challenges over the last 10 months. First for us, I'm relatively new, right? I'm nine, 10 months on the job. That's pretty new. That's a transition for a church. Doxa was in a building for its entire history. Moving outta that space. Huge transition. Right. We moved from a 10:00 AM service, which is great time to go to church to a 9:00 AM. Some of you not so good, right. To a four o'clock which some of you really enjoyed at first and then stopped enjoying later, right? Yeah. There were all these changes? And then as we're trying to get into new space, we have to go, um, we, we we're in a spot where we actually can't gather cause we had to leave the last space and we, this building wasn't quite ready.

We kept finding out. And so we had two weeks where we had to go fully online. And man, I'll tell you what, this staff works really hard, but there was some fear. It's a lot of fear like, oh man, we've done a lot to make a lot of change. It's hurting people. We've heard from some people. They don't wanna be a part of this anymore. They're moving on. And it's a lot of change. There's a lot of fear going on and now we gotta go online for two weeks. And what will that do? And man, people's attention spans are so short. Do we start TikTok and get, get in in that way? Like how do we, how do we handle this? And so then finally the building's ready and we got everything dialed in. We just need this one more approval from the city of Redmond to rubber stamp this place.

And we're good. That's it? Three o'clock Friday comes. He doesn't show up-- guy doesn't come. Now all of a sudden we're fixed with a decision of, well now what do we do? Like we we've been out two weeks. There's all this fear that we, what do we do now? Because now we can't be in the space. And so we thought we talked about it as elders. And we said, do we just meet anyway, do we go old school, church style and meet illegally? Probably not a good way to kick off your relationship with the city of Redmond. So we didn't. And then we said, you know what? And God put it in someone's heart. And I forget who it was. I said, you know what, why don't we just, why don't we use this as an opportunity to welcome people in and to pray over the space and to give thanks to God for it.

And so what did we do? Some of you were there. We just opened the space up. We did some tours. We had some coffee, but we mostly just said, come pray over the building, come anoint this place, come pray over it. You wanna bring some oil? I don't know what you think. Come, come hang out and pray over the space and enjoy it. God was not looking for the rubber stamp from the city of Redmond to open up this building. God believes that worship comes first. And that what's the most important work that we could be doing is not a gathering or announcements or anything. It's to pray it's to worship Jesus and give thanks to him for a space like this. And so God said, here's the holy pause on your work of rebuilding Doxa. And I'm going to go ahead and give a pause and you're gonna give thanks.

And you're gonna offer up wonderful praise on the sacrifice on the altar to me. And then the next day, boom, here comes the rubber stamp of approval from the city. Once God gave his, they gave theirs pretty cool worship comes first, right? It has to come first. It always has to come first scary moment in our history. Again, the most important thing wasn't our work. It was the worship many plans form in the person's heart, but it's the Lord's plan that prevails that's Proverbs 19:21 worship first is always priority. Okay. There's some other things we can learn though. Okay. So let's get back in the story here. Now, remember Israel's back in the land. They feel their fear. They feel their need for God. There's a lot going on. What do they do next? Well, they've gotta actually establish some old habits. They gotta establish some old habits.

Look at verse four. It says, and they that's Israel. They kept the feast of the Booths as it is written and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the rule as each day required. And after that, the regular burnt offerings to offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the Lord and the offerings of everyone who made a Freewill offering to the Lord from the first day of the seventh month, they began to offer burnt offerings again to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple had not yet been laid. Now remember part of them coming back to the place of God was to remember that they were the people of God and what the people of God do is they engage in regular rhythms together to look back at the God who has saved them and has made them.

And so they had to reinstall some of these regular ceremonies, right? The feast of the Booths, these number of things. So they could do it. Now, remember, think about this. It might have probably felt a little mundane in the past to be able to do some of these things, these regular rhythms and routine, even though they're supposed to be fun, oftentimes can get mundane, but they hadn't done 'em in decades. The people that were alive remembered, they haven't done 'em in years, they've been scattered about and the new people, maybe hadn't never done those regular rhythms. Now they might have felt red--They might have felt, uh, mundane, but once they started doing 'em again, they realized, oh my gosh, this is amazing. But as a result of not doing it for a long time, their worship to God suffered, which brings us to our next thing about worship, which is this worship thrives in regular rhythms with others, worship thrives in regular rhythms with others.

Now remember these ceremonies and these festivals were powerful. Worldview builders. This helped shape them into the people of God. And before you think, God, by the way is just this like DMV working angry guy who sits back and calls your number. And hopefully you have all the paperwork and if not see you in five weeks kind of person, it's not, God, he's not a angry librarian, right? God is, is much different. In fact, he institutes regular rhythms that are parties. These are parties. It's the feast of the booths. Feast. It's a week long I guarantee you, no matter what company you work at, you don't walk into orientation and they go, Hey, listen, by the way, I just let you know. We take the month of October completely off. We just party. Yeah, we do. We do this thing called the feast of the Booths. We sleep in tents. It's--we camp for a whole week. We eat crazy good food. It's awesome. And then after that we have another festival. It's great. You guys don't do that. You get cake on birthday month, right? Like, oh geez. Like store-bought cupcakes from Safeway. That's what you get. Okay. You bananas at Amazon, that's it bananas that company's got more money than God himself. And they got bananas for you.

<laugh>

Some of y'all they celebrate, they celebrate parts. Now this specific party, feast of the booze. What is that you ever thought about? Like, Hey, you've sometimes we read so fast through these old Testament verses what's the feast of the Booths? Well, it's held at the end of all of the fall celebrations. Yes. Celebrations. There's a lot of parties. And then they hold the feast of the Booths and it, and, and essentially what they do is that now at least they hold it at the end towards like that harvest time. And they're thanking God and praying for a fertile, uh, thanking God for all of the rain that hit the fertile land. And they have these giant grapes and giant olives. And it's wonderful. And they thank God, but actually, and more originally impressed--Most importantly, the party was originally meant to look upon Israel's journey out of Egypt and into the promised land.

So these are God's people they would get to celebrate during this week that God had freed them from oppression and slavery outta Egypt and journeyed them through the desert and provided for them a land, the promised land Jerusalem that they would ultimately have. So to celebrate, they would build a booth, which is kind of weird translation tabernacle, or I guess for us, maybe like a tent or like an outdoor glamping situation. What's nice, nice thing. Right. And they would sleep in them. And I think we have, why don't we throw that picture up? I, I, I wanted to get you, so here's what they do. They build them outside of their houses and then they sleep in them in remembrance of them being on the journey in the desert, cuz they didn't have houses coming out of slavery and into Jerusalem. It's pretty cool. Right?

It's a way that they symbolically remember God's faithfulness and deliverance. But this party though, wasn't just about looking back at what God did. The party was also about looking forward to what God would do and what would God do for Israel? He would bring God would bring a kingly Messiah that would come to them who wouldn't just crush the rule of the day. He would save them from all of the brokenness in the world. They're looking forward to this Messiah coming now for some of us, I understand today this dismissing our church routines today. And you may be thinking like, I already know, I can catch a sermon online. Yeah. I know you could catch a sermon online. I can catch 'em too. We can all catch sermons online or I could, you know, I could listen to some worship music. You know, I, I get it.

I can kind of pick and choose what I wanna do to sort of, I don't need a regular gathering and routine necessarily. And I would say how very American of you, it's very American of you all throughout history to decide that as an individual, you get to decide how you engage God. Wouldn't that be something. If God had a say in how you'd engage him. Imagine if I told my wife, Hey, listen, I know you want a wedding ring, but I'm gonna get you a fruit loop instead, cuz it's a lot cheaper for your ring. But I love you because I'm showing you, I love you with this fruit loop. She would say, Uhuh, find another man. I'm not doing with that. Right? <laugh> you, God has something to say about how we engage him. So these rhythms, they matter to God. They absolutely matter to God.

Now if you opt outta regular rhythms in your life, maybe it's going to an MC gathering or taking communion together or reading your scripture in your home or coming to coming to a gathering like this in church or with a church family. If you opt out of those, you're missing something because they're not just meant to get you to look back at all of the information you've acquired about God. They're also to make you just like Israel. Look forward with anticipation at the coming of Jesus and to look back at what he's did in your life. But look forward that Jesus is coming again. And all of the brokenness you experience is gonna one day go away. Wouldn't

that be great. Now, if you do opt out of regular rhythms with people, you're gonna do something instead. And how are you gonna deal with all the fear and the emotions of the day?

How are you gonna do that? Well, one way you'll deal with it is you'll deal with it alone. You'll be alone. And I gotta tell you, Satan really likes when you're alone because you're an easy mark. You're a real easy mark. In fact, you're most surely outmatched in isolation and I don't care how intelligent you are. I don't care if you went to Dartmouth. Okay? I don't care if you have an MBA, doesn't matter how intelligent you are. Satan is far more crafty. He's been around a lot longer. He's fooled people five times smarter than you being alone is most assuredly a way to get hammered by the enemy. Well, how else would you deal with it? If you don't deal with it alone? Well, you could find an echo chamber like social media. You could find a group of people that only tell you what you want to hear.

Right? No feedback, no negativity, because anyone who's negative is a hater, right? So don't hate on me. Like whatever I believe is what I believe. And you can stop because this is what I believe. And guess what happens? You become a worse version of yourself in an echo chamber. You become someone without any checks and balances and you become a caricature of whatever opinion you have. You become an easy mark alone or an echo chamber. Not good.

Have you ever opted out of something that you knew was good for you? And then you got worse as a result. Has anyone done that? Come on. No, one's quit a diet. Nobody. You're like, I'm gonna do this wonderful diet. It's so great. Whole 30, 27 days in you're out and you're eating Coldstone and it's raining outside. Like it's sad. It's sad. And you didn't get worse.

How about a physical health? Yeah, I'm gonna stop working out. I'm not gonna do anything for a while. You get sick. You tired. How about counseling? If you start counseling and you opt outta counseling, don't you start to think differently. Feel differently. Doesn't that happen? Does that happen? How about a church family? If you opt out of a church family and all of a sudden, you're not thinking the way you do, all of a sudden, all the other tasks of life become way more important, right? Football's like I gotta get home and watch football as if you can't just Tivo it it's super easy to do. Right? I do it every week. <laugh> if you've ever opted outta something like this, you know, you get worse, right? We need United rhythms.

Speaking of sports, Steph, Curry's playing right now. And I felt, I feel real lonely in this room saying that, cuz I just know you guys don't have a basketball team and, or we don't have a basketball team and uh, yeah. Oh yeah. Calling me out. But even if you don't, has anyone watched the NBA finals at all? There's a couple people. Okay. So this guy, I mean he's brilliant. I mean his, his shot, his stroke is amazing. He shoots all these three pointers. Right. And I was thinking, and I was sharing out, out there in the lobby with some of our volunteers. It's like, he must get afraid because there's millions of people watching him shoot threes, millions of people. And the other team knows he's really good. And so they just drape all over this guy and yet he shoots it right through the net every time you're like, how does that happen?

Right. It feels like skilled surgeons or people with pilots, people with high pressure situ--jobs feels like they would get frayed. And it, it would make sense if they failed from time to time too. Right. Makes sense. Except for the fact, except for the fact that they've been practicing over and over again, the same skill repeatedly, repeatedly, repeatedly that when fear comes, they instinctively default back to what they've been practicing. Right? When the emotions of the world hit us. When the diagnosis comes or you turn on the TV and you see the news where you

see all the horrible things that happen in the world or the broken relationship happens, what do you do when that fear or emotion hits you? Well, I'll submit to you and say, I believe you default back to what you've been practicing in those situations. And what do you practice escapism?

You practice running from the problem. Do you practice burying your head at work? Or maybe you just practice disassociating from your wife and children, so you don't have to deal with it and you can be physically present, but not mentally there with them. What do you practice? Maybe you're an old fashioned and you just medicate with alcohol. What have you been practicing? When the storms of life hit you, you are going to default back to what you've been practicing. Okay? Regular rhythms with Jesus, help us practice being in relationship with him so that when the storms of life hit us, we default back to what we've been practicing. And if we have been practicing worship with Jesus, when the bad thing happens, we go to a place that's not just a source, but it's a source with a solution. So then all of the sudden we're defaulting back to something that solves the problem that created the fear in the first place.

Do you hear me? Do you understand that's huge and yet fear causes us to act as if we're in control. And so we disassociate or medicate. Worship is done best in regular rhythms and we absolutely need it. Okay. There's one more thing. One more thing for us to learn from Ezra. One last thing we learned about our worship here, look at verse 10 with me. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets and the Levites, the sons, Asaph with cymbals to praise the Lord, according to the directions of the, of David King of Israel. And they sang responsively praising and giving, thanks to the Lord for he is good for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel and all the people shouted with a great shout when they praise the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

Okay. So the Israelites continue to build and they get the foundation of the temple built. Okay, now this cannot be understated. How big of a deal? This is in history, cuz I know most of us haven't gone through the book of Ezra, but you have to remember, God speaks to, to Adam and to Noah and then to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. And then eventually he goes to David and Solomon and this giant temple is built and then it's destroyed. And their hope for the future is gone. And these people find themselves at the foot of the temple and its foundation is finally rebuilt and we know the temple gets fished later. We know that. And so here they are at the precipice of their own history. And so what's their response. They sing, they sing, they sing songs. They they're praising God.

Oh my gosh, I I'm looking back at history. God, I cannot believe we are actually on the foot of history right here. You're unbelievable. And what's crazy is they sang a song that was prophesied about that. They would sing a hundred years earlier, crazy Jeremiah 33, verse 10. Look at this. This is about what's happening here. Thus says the Lord in this place of which you say quote, it is a waste without man or beast. That's Jerusalem in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate without man or inhabitant or beast, there shall be heard again, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bride groom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing they as they thank or as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord. Quote, give thanks to the Lord of hosts for the Lord is good for his steadfast love endures forever. God says I will for--restore the fortunes of the land. As at first says the Lord.

See the Bible's intelligently designed. It's a collection of 66 books, 39 in the old Testament, 27 in the new Testament. It's not concocted by somebody in the fourth century Constantine. They are

ordained books of the Bible written by man inspired by the holy spirit and come together. And they all flow just like this. It's beautiful. It's like a wonderful historical ancient symphony that God is writing. And we see the symphony come together in this moment. Now Israel in their worship, they're reminded of God's goodness. And that they're fortune and prosperity that they're having right now is not just happening in a vacuum. It's distinctly tied to God's sovereign plan through history. You ever been in that moment where you're seeing a bunch of stuff happen in your life. And there's been some ups and downs over the course of years and you're going, where is God in this?

And then the light goes on like eight years later and you go, oh, this is what God has been doing this entire time. This is an unbelievable thing. Now imagine that happening to Israel. What, what do you, how you respond? Oh my gosh. God, you did it. You did it. Yes. Here we go. Yay. God, thank you. You praise them. You scream. But not everybody worshiped in such a happy manner. Like how could they be sad? Verse 12, but many of the priests in the Levis and the heads of the father's houses, old men who had seen the house, the first house, the first temple wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house and being laid though many shouted along for joy. Wow. So seems like a really happy moment in the history of Israel. And yet there are people weeping, not just crying like, oh man, it's touching like pouring weeping, sorrow.

The response to the foundation being laid is very different. You see, I think that the temple, seeing the temple begin to take shape, conjured up trauma in them, right? Cuz they were older. They maybe them seeing the temple, uh, being built, reminded them, of being torn from their homes. It reminded them of the faces of people that they no longer see cause they're in a foreign land or they, or they've been killed or maybe the image of the new foundation just didn't look like the old one. And they were reminded of the glory of the great temple that Solomon built and it made them sad, which is our third thing about worship. And it's this worship is often complex and doesn't look the same for everyone, for them in order to worship deeply, they needed to tell the truth to themselves. And by the way, that's really hard to do.

That's incredibly hard to do, to tell the truth about where you are and for you to get there. You have to be honest about where you're at. You have to be incredibly honest. The rebuilding of the temple was good news and a cause for worship to be sure, but sometimes good news in our lives from God tastes like vinegar in our mouth. It's hard to swallow at times because we're a complex people living in a complex world that is not black and white. There are hard things taking place just because you can celebrate doesn't mean everyone can celebrate in that moment now, conversely, just because you're sad doesn't mean everyone else has to be sad either. It's not both. What do I mean by all this? Well, I'll give you a good example. Father's day is next weekend.

Any fathers couple just a couple. Yeah. Not, not super pumped to be dads guys sad. Father's day is next weekend. And one of the, one of the things that happens with church when you're doing a, when you're doing, when you're helping serve a church family and when you work or you work, maybe you're working vocational ministry or even you, your volunteer is you all, lots of people rightfully have thoughts and ideas on how church should go. Like for instance, the worship's too loud, right? The problem is you often get the opposite. The worship's too quiet. So now you don't know what to do. Something happens with mother's day and father's day, every year. Okay. Where there are people that have lost their mothers or fathers. They can't be mothers or fathers. And so when the father's day or mother's day announcement comes, they say, Hey, listen, I lost my dad when I was younger or I lost my mother or I can't be a mother. I'd appreciate it. If you

say it, if you sort of emphasize that this year and maybe talk less about sort of celebrating moms or the opposite will happen. Well, they'll say, Hey listen, you guys have been sort of not talking a lot about mother's day. I'd love to see some hype. I want flowers,

Something golf balls for the dads, with the Doxa logo on it. Like something <laugh> get hyped and we have these sort of tension, right? Like what do we do? People want no mother's day. They want mothers. Like what do I do? Right? Father's day for me is a really hard day. Um, many of, you know, my story, but my dad left my family when I was nine. And I haven't heard from him in a really long time. And when I do hear from him, it's usually really bad negative stuff. And so when father's day comes like I've been really good at sort of hiding my emotions and disassociating. But in, in lat--in latter years, I've been trying to feel those emotions and I can't help, but every father's day, look back at the door like this. And I, I long for my father to walk through that door and to grab a seat in the back and to sit underneath the preached word and come to know Jesus, I would, I would love for that to happen. But at the same time, you know, it just makes me sad to celebrate father's day. But at the same time, I'm a dad

And I have four kids and three of them are kind of sorta conscious and they

<laugh>,

They, I want them to be able to celebrate their dad the way I wish I could celebrate mine.

And I long for all of you to be able to celebrate your mothers and fathers the way I wish I could celebrate mine too. And I don't wanna rob you from that, but here's the craziness. And it is the tension of a broken world. We live in that days that are supposed to be celebratory, hurt others. But the great thing is I can actually still worship a holy God in the midst of that tension, it's painful, it's joyous, but I can still worship in smiles or in tears. Worship is not always high fives and happiness. And man, I tell you what, there's nothing more annoying to me than going to a place wherever it is, where everyone is faking. Like they're happy. Cause life is just not like that. It's just not. And so I wanna be in a place where I can be authentically myself and come as I am, worship is not always high fives.

Worship can be done in your anguish and sorrow and it can be done in your lack of a father too. That's good. Okay. Now let's make space for people to worship as they see fit. Why? Because God makes space for us to worship. As we see fit verse look at the end of verse 12 and verse 13 though, many shouted aloud for joy so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping for the people shouted with a great shout and the sound was heard far away. We worship God. We cry out to him in lament or happiness or screams of excitement. God is there and he listens to our worship and the sound, if we worship properly, regardless if it's angry, sad is loud and it could be heard far away. You see the sounds of worship may come in the form of lament or sorrow or joy.

And the sounds of praise may come in tears or sorrow or happiness. But regardless of which form they come, they are always sorted out by the ear of our God. Amen. And he hears you and he loves you. And he is sad for you. And he is excited alongside you. That's the God we serve his, your cries and worship are always sorted by his ear. And they, your praises will not fall on his deaf ear. So what God do we worship? What news shall we worship? Well, the news is that God, despite humanity breaking a relationship, sends this son, this kingly Messiah named Jesus to the world. And he sends Jesus in this world to be part of the nation of Israel and to come

through the city of Jerusalem, the same city that Ezra and his people are building. Okay? And this guy, Jesus lives a perfect life.

He doesn't sin. He is perfectly clean. He's so clean. In fact, we decide we want to kill him and he's executed, but because there's no loss or brokenness or suffering in him, they're suffering in him. There's no loss or brokenness or sin in him. As he, he cannot be held by death and he resurrects and a giant Boulder is rolled away by itself. And this guy, Jesus walks out of the town too. And he doesn't just come alone and he doesn't just come with a message of positivity to give you peace. That's not just how he comes. He comes with a message. And the message is, if you believe in me as your Messiah, the broken relationship you experience with God can be fixed and I can do it. And the reason that you don't believe in me is because of that broken relationship and I wanna fix it.

And the reason why you're so fearful and anxi--and anxious and depressed is because you need me more and I can solve your problems. And it's not just what I'm done. It's what I'm going to do. Because what I'm going to do is I'm going to fix this place for good. And there's not gonna be any tension in our worship then because there's not gonna be any sorrow. There's not gonna be any lament. There's not gonna be any sadness. There's not even gonna be any unbelief. Only joy. Do you want that? I do too. Let's pray. Jesus, you are king.

You are Lord. You are sender. You are God. And we love you. We give you our praise. Lord. We're about to worship you through, through our regular rhythms. <laugh> through our communion, through our response time, through our, our worshiping through song, through our offerings, Lord, we pray, you take these things and you multiply them for your kingdom. So more people can hear your good news that if we believe in you, our worship one day will only be joyous. That's good news. We love you. And we give you all of our things and his name. Everyone said, amen.