

# Finishing Well

Lesson #20

Keys To Revival

May 17, 2023

God raised up Zerubbabel to lead the remnant to rebuild the literal, physical temple.

- At His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, Jesus Christ will lead the remnant who have been out of their land back into their land. He will build a literal, physical millennial temple.

However, 16 years passed because they became discouraged. God sent Haggai the prophet to deliver a message to them on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. [Tishri 21]

- They praised God for His protection of their ancestors during the wilderness.
- They thanked Him for the current abundant harvest.
- They celebrated the future coming Kingdom and their coming King.

Haggai's message: Keep Working: You have God's Presence God's Covenant  
God's Promises God's Provision

Ezra & Nehemiah take us back to a wonderful time of spiritual revival.

A remnant of God's people returned from the Babylonian captivity to the land which God had promised to the descendants of Abraham Isaac & Jacob.

Ezra led the 2<sup>nd</sup> group of exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem about 80 years after Zerubbabel led the 1<sup>st</sup> group.

- The temple had been rebuilt and dedicated for ~55 years, but the lives of the people were in shambles.
- Intermarriage with foreigners opposed to God threatened the spiritual future of the nation. On a cold, rainy day, Ezra addressed the people and made it clear they had sinned.
- Confession, repentance and action were needed. All the people heeded Ezra's message.

About 13 years later, Nehemiah came to build the walls and gates of Jerusalem.

- The lives of the people were in shambles again. They were starving spiritually.

Neh. 3 God revived the hearts of the people to start rebuilding the walls.

They worked while mocked and attacked, and yet they completed the wall in 52 days.

Key: No time to let down your defenses! Completion of the wall is a moment of supreme PERIL.

- Surrounded by enemies of God who are eager to attack despite the wall.
- Jerusalem, God's dwelling place, is in perpetual danger from the enemy.
- Scripture bears out: Great moments of victory can be very dangerous.

The Spiritual Ministry of Nehemiah for the people included:

1. Instruct the people in God's Word
2. Confess Sin
3. Dedicate the walls
4. Cleanse the Fellowship

Upon completion of the wall, Nehemiah established gatekeepers, singers, and Levites to demonstrate the priority of worship. Priesthood & sacrificial system were restored. All the Israelites and Gentiles would come to the city through the gates to worship the Lord. Certain gates were specifically for worship like the Sheep Gate where the sacrificial sheep would be led through to be offered to God.

The material needs have been met. Time To Address Spiritual Needs:

Nehemiah's Solution: Have a 'Bible Conference,' revival at the Water Gate.

It led from the old City of David to the Gihon Spring located adjacent to the Kidron Valley.

Key: The Watergate needed no repair, but the workers repaired the adjacent walls.

- Water is a type of the Word which never needs repair.
- It is pure, refreshing, cleansing & enduring.

The Word of God stands forever and will not fail.

Ps. 119:89 Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

Matt. 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Matt. 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Wiersbe: The Bible does not need to be repaired or improved. It is uninjured by man's assault.

The Bible stands like a rock undaunted 'mid the raging storms of time,  
Its pages burn with the truth eternal and they glow with a light sublime.

The Bible stands and it will forever when the world has passed away;

By inspiration it has been given, all its precepts I will obey.

The Bible stands ev'ry test we give it for its author is divine;

By grace alone I expect to live it and to prove it and make it mine.

The Bible stands tho' the hills may tumble; it will firmly stand when the earth shall crumble.

I will plant my feet on its firm foundation, for the Bible stands.

Isa. 40:8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of our God shall stand forever.

Water gate represents revival which results from the washing of the Word of God.

- Revive in Hebrew is Chayah = to refresh, rebuild, recover, be well, make alive.
- Restoration of hearing God's living, active, prophetic Word

Eph. 5:26 That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

John 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

- It is no coincidence that this gate was located next to the fountain gate as the two often go together.
- God's living quickened Word to us is represented at the water gate.
- The Holy Spirit makes the word of God alive to us personally, allowing cleansing, encouragement and direction to take place in our life.

Psalms 119 extols God's Word. The author mentions how God's Word brings revival.

- Ps. 119: 25, 50, 93, 107, 149, 154, 156

Key #1: A Strong Emphasis On God's Word Is A Primary Mark Of Spiritual Renewal. Judah had languished under the godless reigns of King Manasseh, and his son, Amon. Amon's son, Josiah, began to seek the Lord when he was 16 and to institute spiritual reforms. Then Hilkiah the priest found a copy of God's law and Josiah called the nation to repentance. Revival ensued because God's Word was obeyed. [II Chron. 34:14]

Key #2: In Revival, God restores devoted teachers of the Word of God to Leadership After the 2<sup>nd</sup> group of Jews returned to Israel from Babylon, God used Ezra to turn Israel back to the Word of God and repentance in Ezra 9 & 10.

➤ It is clear the initial revival did not last. God called Ezra again to help revive Israel. Ezra was an excellent choice to conduct this outdoor Bible conference.

Ezra 7:10 He was a priest and scribe (skilled in the Law of Moses) who had "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel."

- As a scribe, Ezra meticulously copied the Scripture.
- As a priest, Ezra studied it and taught it.

Consider: Revival cannot come without first a prepared heart and a mind grounded in the perfect Word of God.

Ezra was called to teach the Word of God and to stir up the people's love and affection for God's Word. This has happened in every revival. When God brings a revival, He raises up people who have been devoted to the studying and teaching of God's Word.

Consider: Revival cannot come without first a prepared heart and a mind grounded in the perfect Word of God.

God did the same thing with John the Baptist. He was raised by a priestly family in the wilderness. When God chose to turn Israel back to Himself before the coming of the Messiah, he called for a man who knew the Word and would preach it.

- He showed up in the Gospels preaching repentance and turning Israel back to God.

Key #3: In Revival, God Renews Reverence for the Word of God

Neh. 7:1; 4-5a; 73b Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, <sup>4</sup>Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not built. <sup>5</sup> And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy.

<sup>73b</sup> and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities.

Neh. 8:1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

- In revival, God restores unity among His people.
- They have a desire to hear and to learn the Word.

Neh. 8:2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

Themes & Timing: Month 7: Gather, Judgment, afflict your soul, repentance, rebuild, cleansing, restoration, renewal, revive, refreshing, rejoicing

God raised up Ezra to rebuild [Trumpets], cleanse [Atonement] and fill [Tabernacles] the Temple with the worship of God.

Tishri 1: Israel is expected to observe Feast of Trumpets

- Call to prepare to stand before the judgment of God.

Consider: The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the 7-year tribulation period:

Call to prepare to stand before the judgment of God

Judge the nation of Israel Ezekiel 20:34-38

Sheep & Goat judgment Matthew 25:31-46

Destroy the army of Antichrist gathered at Armagedon

Tishri 1: Marks the beginning of 10 days of repentance. Days of Awe

- 10 Days of introspection to prepare for the Day of Atonement

Tishri 10: Day of Atonement Yom Kippur

God's Divine Appointment: The approach to God was always limited.

- It was never true that there are many ways to God. There always was only one way.

Under the Law of Moses, the one way was by means of the *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement sacrifice, the most important day of the year for the Old Testament Jew.

- Not a festive day: only religious holiday characterized by mourning, fasting, & repentance

Question: What will bring mourning, fasting & repentance in the people? Word of God

- God graciously atoned for [covered] all the sins of all the people and gave the nation a new beginning.

Tishri 15-21 Feast of Tabernacles [Thanksgiving; forward to Millennium]

Perfect Time for the nation to get right with God & make a fresh new beginning.

Time for the Law of God to be read to the people so their worship and lives would be restored to God's prescribed order. [celebrate Millennial Kingdom]

Nehemiah will call the people together to honor the Word of God, confess their sins and dedicate themselves and their work to the Lord. It is time for consecration.

Neh. 8:3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

- Listened to the Word of God from "daybreak till noon." about six hours.
- All the people listened attentively to the Book of Law while standing.

Two little old ladies were walking out of church one Sunday. One said, "My, that preacher certainly preaches for a long time!" Her friend replied, "No, he really doesn't preach a long time, it just *seems* like a long time!" [J. Vernon McGee]

I wonder what they would have thought about a service that had about six hours of Bible reading and preaching at the people's request, during which the people stood the whole time! And they came back the next day for more!

Rowland Hill was an 18th century English preacher greatly used of God. Shortly before he died, he was visiting with an old friend who told him that he could still remember the text and part of a sermon that he had heard Hill preach 65 years before. Hill asked him what he remembered. He said that Hill had said that some people when listening to a sermon did not like the delivery of the preacher. Then he said, "Supposing you went to hear the will of one of your relatives read, and you were expecting a legacy from him. You would hardly think of criticizing the manner in which the lawyer read the will. Rather, you would be at attention to hear whether anything was left to you and if so, how much. That is the way to hear the gospel preached."

You can be sure: When there is decay in your time in the Word and in your passion for the Word of God, your sanctification will decay.

➤ Where the Word is not exalted, you will find that sin is not lacking.

Reverence of the Word of God is important because it is primarily through the Word of God that God sanctifies us. He makes us holy; He changes us into His image, and He gets rid of sin. However, when there is a decrease in the reverence of the Word of God, there will always be a decrease in holiness. People will start to fall away from God because the Word is absent.

Col. 2:8-10 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

<sup>10</sup> And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Spurgeon: I would rather speak 5 words out of this book than 50,000 words of the philosophers. If we want revivals, we must revive our reverence for the Word of God. If we want conversions, we must put more of God's Word into our sermons.

Key #4: In Revival, People Must Understand The Word of God

Wiersbe: The Bible is not a "magic book" that changes people or circumstances because somebody reads it or recites. God's Word must be understood [mentioned 6x in Neh. 8] before it can enter the heart and release its life-changing power.

Parable of the Sower - Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23 - Emphasis is on Understanding the Word of God. Jesus compared understanding and receiving the Word to the planting of seed in the soil, where it takes root and bears fruit.

➤ Seed= Word                      Soil= types of hearts                      Results= response

Heb. 4:12 Word of God is living and powerful...

Key: God's Word must take root in our heart and be cultivated so we will bear fruit.

Note:  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the seed did not bear fruit.

Question: Do most people hear the Word, but not receive it (take root) and bear fruit?

Heb. 3:7-8 Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

Hebrews states 5 admonitions to "heed God's Word" and the sad spiritual consequences that result if we do not.

1. Drifting From The Word	Neglect	Heb. 2:1-4	
2. Doubting The Word	Hard Heart	Heb. 3:7-4:13	
3. Dullness Toward The Word	Sluggishness	Heb. 5:11-6:20	Lazy Listener
4. Despising The Word	Willfulness	Heb. 10:26-39	No value
5. Defying The Word	Refusing To Hear	Heb. 12:14-29	

Christians in China spent literal months and years writing down their own copies of the Scriptures. When they couldn't take the copy of the Holy Scriptures home with them, they would memorize it. They simply cannot understand that we have a Bible, perhaps many Bibles, and yet not read and meditate in God's Word all through the day and night. People filled with the Spirit LONG for God's Word.

Rev. 3:2-3 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, (my maturity and spiritual growth?) for I have not found your works perfect (complete, mature) before God. Remember therefore how you have received (by faith) and heard; hold fast and repent (change your mind; turn and continue by faith). He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

A.W. Tozer: The average Christian is NOT Christ-like and lives a sub-Christian life.

Do not grow comfortable with your present spiritual state.

Do we not realize our spiritual life is a battlefield, a preparation for a greater life to come?

At the moment of justification, all are entered in the race for the prize and are commanded to walk in the spirit.

Heb. 5:11-14 Emphasizes the marks of spiritual immaturity and the call to maturity.

Warning #3 Given: Dullness Toward The Word; Sluggish & lazy listener - Heb. 5:11-6:20

Heb. 6:1 THEREFORE leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, Let Us Go On Unto Perfection;

[maturity; completion] Let Us Be Carried Forward:

- Holy Spirit enables us to progress as we yield to Him, receive His Word and act on it.

*Open Invitation To Enter & Dwell In The Presence Of God*

Tozer: We cannot enter into presence of God while we are rebelling against God!

Truth: If I want God to work in me and through me, I must respond positively to His Word.

I must stay under the conditions for Him to do His completed work in me.

Col. 2:6-7 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

<sup>7</sup> Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Phil. 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; (Promise> Reckon> Surrender>Thank Him)

Prayer of Spurgeon: Lord God, let the words leap out of the page into my soul,

Thyself making them vivid, quick, powerful, and fresh to my heart.