

Prophetic Fall Feasts of The LORD

Feb. 20, 2019 Lesson #7 Ezra

God works in a systematic and orderly way. Through the great Persian king, Cyrus, He fulfilled His promise that the Jews could return to their homeland after 70 years in captivity. Next God raised up Zerubbabel to rebuild the literal, physical temple and Joshua to serve the spiritual needs of the people. Nearly 80 years had passed since the first group returned to Jerusalem under his leadership. About 60 years had passed since the completion of the Temple in Jerusalem. [Insert Esther between Ezra 6 & 7] The Jewish remnant was struggling under difficult circumstances. Finally, God raised up Ezra [commissioned by King Artaxerxes of Persia, [464-423 BC] to lead a second group of refugees from Babylon to Judah:

1. Bring financial and spiritual support to the work in Jerusalem.
2. His teaching and leading will make a difference in the people and spark a revival.

The Secret of Ezra's Success: "The Good Hand Of The LORD Was Upon Me." [6x in Ezra 7 & 8]
Same Principle: John 15:5 Without Me You Can Do Nothing.

Ezra 7: Now after these things [book of Esther], in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,

⁶ This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

- Ezra's careful study of the Scriptures had increased his faith [Rom. 10:17] and helped him understand God's plans for the Jewish remnant. He prayed for God to intervene.
- God called Ezra to go to Jerusalem to be used as instrument in His plans.
- He gave Ezra the boldness to approach the king and gave the king a desire to cooperate with Ezra's request.

⁹ For upon the first day of the first month [Nisan 1; New Moon] began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month [New Moon] came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.

¹⁰ For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

- When you recall that Ezra was born in Babylon, you can better appreciate his achievement as a skilled student of the Jewish Scriptures.
- Example: prepared heart, devoted to study God's Word.

Ps. 119:97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

- Ezra also practiced and obeyed God's Word.

Wiersbe: "If our knowledge of the truth doesn't result in obedience, then we end up with a big head instead of a burning heart."

"Without diligent, personal study there is nothing fresh to apply or proclaim.

Without striving to personally apply the Word and grow in sanctification, proclamation will lack the fire of conviction. To focus on teaching alone, without conviction or practice behind it, is to substitute the form of the message for its substance.

But this sequence - seek, do and teach - is a powerful one."

II Tim. 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

The 3 qualities in Ezra 7:10 are paralleled in Matt. 13:52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

- Ezra was a scribe who studied the Word.
- He was a disciple who obeyed and practiced the Word.
- He was a householder who shared the Word with others.
- He was passionate for the purity of God's people, seeking to hallow God's name, to bring in God's Kingdom and to do God's will on earth as in heaven.
- Ezra's life directs our gaze to Christ. the Old Testament types prefigured in shadowy form things to come. Ezra is a type—his teachings pointed forward to the ultimate teacher of God's people: Jesus Christ.

Ezra 7:12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time.

- Artaxerxes appointed Ezra as the leader of the group and also the king's agent in Judah.

¹³ I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

- ~1700 will join Ezra to help restore the city and the spiritual restoration of the people.
- Their arrival and influence will spark a revival in Jerusalem.
- Consider: ~6 decades had passed since the completion of the Temple.

God had told the struggling remnant in Jerusalem, "The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine."

Ezra 7:15-26 1. God opens the royal treasury and provides money to buy sacrifices to be offered at the Temple in Jerusalem.

2. The king commanded his officers beyond the river to give the Jews money out of the local royal treasury.

3. Artaxerxes gave Ezra the remaining sacred articles from the original temple.

4. He allowed Ezra to receive gifts from the Jews who remained in Babylon and anyone else who wanted to contribute.

5. Ezra was given everything he needed to re-establish temple worship in Jerusalem, including sacrifices of atonement.

6. The King exempted the Jewish priests, Levites and temple servants from paying taxes or being conscripted for special duty to the empire.

7. He gave Ezra extensive authority to lead this effort, levy taxes, appoint judges, enforce the law and teach God's law and lead the people of Israel.

Ezra 7:26 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not.

²⁷ Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem:

²⁸ And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

Ezra 8:15-21

After about a week of travel, the group stopped at the River Ahava for 3 days before proceeding. Ezra took inventory of the people and discovered: There are no Levites among us.

- Ezra sent a committee of 11 men back to Babylon to recruit some Levites.
- 38 Levites responded and 220 temple servants
- Ezra's whole approach to this journey was spiritual. Spiritual purity & holiness
- Ezra called for 3 days of fasting and prayer for God's protection.

Shortly after Ezra and the people with him arrived in Jerusalem, he commenced his priestly duties of putting affairs in order. He was shocked to discover that his people had intermingled with the pagan nations that surrounded Jerusalem.

Many of the priests had gone out to make a living because the temple was not supported sufficiently to allow them to serve full time. Some of them had even taken wives of the pagan nations, as had many other Jewish citizens.

Ezra 9:2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

Intermarriage with people from some of the surrounding nations was expressly forbidden by the Lord because it led to idolatry [Deut. 7:1-5]. Idolatry had led to the downfall of the Israelite nation, undermined the power of God among them and dispersed and separated them into 2 nations, but even the horrors of defeat and exile for 70 years had not taught the people their lesson.

Consider: The flesh never changes. No matter how long you walk in the Spirit, you will never get to the place where you cannot revert to the worst you ever were if you depart from dependence upon the Spirit of God.

When they intermingled, they lost sight of God's purpose for them.

Isa. 66:2b but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.

Until God's people show respect for God & His Word, the Spirit of God cannot work in mighty power as He longs to do; we hinder God's work in us in our behalf.

Ezra Had a Heart For Holiness

1. Ezra was stunned and immediately began to mourn over this situation.
2. He tore his garments, pulled out his hair; sat in mourning for an entire day.
3. Ezra responded to the disobedience and rebellion of God's people by weeping over Jerusalem, just as Jesus would weep over Jerusalem's refusal to receive and welcome Him. Jesus is saddened by rebellion and disobedience.
4. Their inheritance was allocated on the basis of their tribal lineage.
5. The preservation of the purity of the seed matters!
6. These people have kept genealogies to trace the line of descent from Adam & Eve who heard God's words about the seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head [Genesis 3:15] and thereby re-open the way to Eden. Therefore, the concern to record the history of God's people is a concern to keep track of what God has done in the outworking of that ultimate purpose of God: to overcome evil and reopen the way to Eden, reopen the way to God's presence.
7. The promised Messiah was to come from the line of Judah [Gen. 49:10] and from the seed of David [II Sam. 7:1-17].
8. They must maintain racial purity. Not only would foreign wives lead them astray [Neh. 13:26-27], they would contaminate the seed. Divorce became necessary.

Ezra is passionate about the purity of Israel because he knows the world's desperate need for Israel's Messiah to accomplish redemption.

Ezra 9:6, 15 At the time of the evening sacrifice he bowed down before God and offered a prayer of confession, in which he numbered himself among the transgressors:

"O my God, I am ashamed . . . for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads. . . Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this."

Ezra 9:8 And now for a little space grace hath been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

- ❖ Notice, in the midst of reflections on the past, another forward-looking emphasis.
- ❖ The time references [God gives a "little relief" in our bondage] shows that relief has not come in its fullness. It's only temporary.
- ❖ In addition, the reference to a "a secure place," literally "a tent peg," is meant to connote a firm anchor of stability for the community. However, the notion also alludes to something that is transient since it probably refers to the nomadic practice of staking a tent. There is no final satisfaction here that these Israelite travelers have indeed arrived at their final destination, for this rebuilt temple is not the final temple.
- ❖ In the book of Ezra there is the recognition that believers are aliens and strangers here on earth: pilgrims pressing towards a heavenly city "whose architect and builder is God." [Heb 11:10].

Ezra 9:10 After all God had done for His people, they responded by disobeying His Word. "We are speechless." It becomes obvious the Jewish men were sinning against a flood of light. The religious practices of the Canaanites were unspeakably vile and the stench reached to heaven. God's law made it clear that Israel was to have NO association with these nations. Now over 100 Jewish men had taken the first step by marrying into their families. [Ezra 9:12]

1. How would this affect this future mixed generation of children when it came time to obey God and be a part of the covenant?

2. These Jewish men were sacrificing the future of the nation of Israel.

Ezra asked: "What shall we say after this?"

Ezra 9:13-15 "We are guilty." Guilt always shuts my mouth before God.

Ezra knew God could easily destroy the remnant and start again with another people, but He asked God to be gracious and forgiving.

Note: Before we can untangle the problems of life, we must take time to seek God in prayer.

As Ezra began to pray and weep at the altar, "a very great congregation of men and women and children" came together and they fell under conviction of sin.

Ezra 10:1 They too wept bitterly. Note: This response was not something Ezra worked up in the people. He prayed it down. Their priests had offered a lamb on the altar, but Ezra gave the Lord a greater sacrifice.

Ezra, along with some leaders, began to investigate the matter so cleansing could take place. Their investigation was completed in 3 months. They discovered over 100 offenders which included 27 priests, Levites, temple singers and gatekeepers [those who you expect to be models of obedience]. It was the 1st day of month 1, Nisan. [new beginning; restore; repair] God in His grace accepted their repentance and confession and granted them forgiveness.

Ezra: Hebrew priest, scribe, religious leader, and reformer who vitally influenced the Jews.

Ezra charted the course, laid the groundwork for a greater reformer, a true and eternal Savior to come for his people. Ezra's effective ministry included teaching the Word of God, initiating reforms, restoring worship, and leading spiritual revival in Jerusalem.

He was an encouragement to God's people to magnify worship as their top priority, to emphasize the need for and use of God's Word as the only authoritative rule for living, and to be concerned about the image God's people show to the world.

Nothing must supersede worship of God, and obedience is not optional.

God promised the people of Judah He would return them to Jerusalem after their 70 year Babylonian captivity to rebuild their city, rebuild the temple and restore proper worship.

God similarly promises to return Judah and Israel to their ancestral homeland.

Ezra: A Type of Jesus Christ At His 2nd Coming > Feast of Trumpets

1. Led a remnant to Jerusalem
2. Ezra set up Priests to restore pure worship

Many prophecies show that at Jesus Christ's 2nd Coming, He will gather the descendants of Israel and Judah from the ends of the earth.

Isaiah 11:10-12 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the *Gentiles* seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

¹¹ And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

¹² And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Jer. 23:3-8 And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

⁴ And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

⁵ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

⁶ In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

⁷ Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

⁸ But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Ezekiel 39:25-29 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name;

²⁶ After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid.

²⁷ When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations;

²⁸ Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land and have left none of them anymore there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

3. Ezra was sent to Babylon as a ruler and as a priest to establish pure worship. Jesus Christ will return on the Feast of Trumpets as a King and Priest.

4. Ezra reinstated the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast will be celebrated during the Millennial Kingdom.

Zech. 14:16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

5. Ezra set up religious instruction to teach God's ways and God's laws.

Jesus Christ Will Inaugurate A Time Of Instruction

Isa. 2:2-3 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

6. Ezra set up and appointed magistrates to judge and have authority over the people.

He appointed judges to enforce God's law.

Jesus Christ Will Appoint Some To Rule & Reign With Him In Different Capacities.

Isa. 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Matt. 19:28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

I Cor. 6:2-3 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

Rev.20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Isa. 32:1 Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice

Dan. 7:27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

II Tim. 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

Rev. 2:26 And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power [authority] over the nations:

Rev. 3:21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Note: There are promises to OT saints, the 12 Apostles, NT believers, Tribulation Martyrs

In order for God's covenant promise to Abraham to be fulfilled, someone far greater than Ezra must come. The revival He brings must involve the transformation of hearts of stone to hearts of flesh, the renewal that comes through the fulfillment of the New Covenant:

Ezek. 36:24-27 "I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you to your land. I will sprinkle pure water over you and you will be clean from all your uncleanness; I will purify you from all your idols. I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; I will remove the heart of stone from your body and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and I will make you walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances, and you will do them" (11:17-20).

Ezek. 11:17-20 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

¹⁸ And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence.

¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

²⁰ That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Jer. 31:31-33 "Indeed, a time is coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and Judah. It will not be like the old agreement that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. For they violated that agreement, even though I was a faithful husband to them," says the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The full and final fulfillment of God's promised blessings to Israel will not be found in the events of the restoration under Zerubbabel, Ezra or Nehemiah. It will only come about through the appearance of the Messiah when Jesus Christ returns to the earth on The Feast Of Trumpets. Thus, the Jews must look beyond the moment to the days ahead, when God will fully and finally bless His people.