

## **Ezra 3:1-7 (New International Version)**

### **Rebuilding the Altar**

<sup>1</sup> When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled together as one in Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> Then Joshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.

<sup>3</sup> Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices.

<sup>4</sup> Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Festival of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day.

<sup>5</sup> After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred festivals of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD.

<sup>6</sup> On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD's temple had not yet been laid.

### **Rebuilding the Temple**

<sup>7</sup> Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and olive oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia.

Good Morning First Baptist of Park Forest. I greet you this morning in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The God of Naomi, Ruth and Esther. The God, who sees us, hears us and answers us. If you know that God this morning. If it is your desire to serve that God this morning then I invite you to make some noise. Praise Him! For His goodness and mercy. Praise Him! For His abundant grace. Praise Him because knowing Him ought to make you want to Praise Him. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Before moving into the sermon for this morning I wish to acknowledge the Kingdom Seekers. It has been a busy spring and early summer for them. The third Sunday in May they lead worship as part of my 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration; the third Sunday in June they lead worship as it was their own Anniversary; and today the fifth Sunday in June they are leading worship as they do each 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday. First of all, let me say thank you to you for your faithfulness. Secondly, allow me to congratulate you on putting in the time to practice, learn and do those things that you think will bring glory to God.

Now First Baptist I want you to acknowledge what an awesome job God has allowed us to do with these young people. There are churches without youth, churches who cannot get youth to participate, and youth who say their churches do not care about them. We, by the grace of God, can say Kingdom Seekers are here, Kingdom Seekers participate and Kingdom Seekers are a priority in this church. Praise be to God.

For the next nine Sundays we will be considering the return of the Jews to Jerusalem as recorded by Ezra and Nehemiah. I don't usually give you a nine-week preview of where we are going, but I think it is important to this study. I am asking you to read Ezra during the month of July and

Nehemiah during the month of August. These historical accounts will help you as we study.

Now, allow me to provide some background information that I hope will help you to understand where we are in the biblical story.

Because biblical scholars are not able to agree on dates I am not going to provide dates instead I am going to give you a sequence of events, as it applies to this period of time and this study. I am going to need you to talk back to me this morning, because we have a long way to go and a short time to get there and I need to know I have not left you behind.

- The Jews have been in captivity Babylon for almost 70 years.
- King Nebuchadnezzar took them there when he and his armies destroyed the city of Jerusalem and took everything of value leaving behind a remnant.
- When King Cyrus conquered Babylon he allowed those who had been taken captivity the opportunity to return home.
- The Jews who wished to return to Jerusalem, which was now called Judah, began the 4-month – 900-mile journey back to their home – the land God had promised them, but taken away because of their disobedience.
  - The first group returned with Zerubbabel.
  - The second group returned with Ezra.
  - The third and final group returned with Nehemiah.

We will be focusing on the activities of the second and third groups of Jews that returned to Jerusalem.

I invite you to pray with me and for me as I work with this theme:

## **WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU GET HOME?**

SHALL WE PRAY!

God of heaven and earth we come this morning to thank you for your Word! We thank you for preserving it and allowing it to be translated and interpreted for your people all over the world. But Father, we have a request this morning, we are asking you to help us to understand your Word. Understand your Word in a way that it changes us, transforms us and sustains us. We ask, believing that anything we ask in your name and in keeping with your will you will answer. Abba, I ask that you use me for your glory this morning. Allow the words I have written, the prayers I have prayed, and the research I have done to feed your people. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. AMEN and AMEN.

## **HAVE YOU EVER NEEDED TO GET HOME?**

When someone asks me where is home I say Chicago. It is where I was born, educated and married. The longest I have ever been away from home is 632 days, 90 weeks or 1 year, 8 months and 24 days. I was in Duluth, MN and although I had not been taken there against my will, in many ways I was a captive. Captive to how someone else thought a preacher's wife should act. Captive to how someone else thought a preacher's kid should be raised. Captive as someone else was telling me the right way to serve God. Within a year of my arrival in Duluth I was actively trying to get home.

## **HAVE YOU EVER NEEDED TO GET HOME?**

When I am asked about my home church I say Friendship. I was baptized in one building, married in another, buried my father, brothers and mother is still another. But Friendship was and is home. Not the building, not the pastor, but the people and the memories and the roots.

### **HAVE YOU EVER NEEDED TO GET HOME?**

As I moved into my last year of seminary I need a **new home**. Friendship would not allow me to do what God had called me to do. First Baptist Chicago needed me to be their pastor's wife, not a newly graduated seminarian. And I needed to find a place where I could serve God according to the call God had given me. I needed a new home.

**That new home is here!!**

### **HAVE YOU EVER NEEDED TO GET HOME?**

**I find I can relate to each of the groups of people who were in captivity and needed to get home.**

- the old folks who remember how it use to be
- the middle age folks who vaguely remember
- the folks born in captivity who had only heard about home

The Children of Israel needed to get home. Home was the place the Lord God had promised to their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Home was where David had been King and had danced before the Lord. Home was where King Solomon had built and dedicated a temple to the Most Holy God. Home was where their memories were, their history and even some of their family.

### **HAVE YOU EVER NEEDED TO GET HOME?**

**I am sure there is someone here this morning that understands the question. And that someone might be able to answer "yes".**

**I have needed to get home.**

- Home from my self inflicted captivity of drugs and alcohol
- Home from war, jail, guilt of over wrong doing

- Home from my fears, my failures, my faults

Aren't you glad that somebody prayed for you and had you on their minds?  
Aren't you glad the God of heaven and earth heard your prayers, your mother's prayers, the prayers of the saints of God and let you get home?  
Aren't you glad that you had enough sense to come home?

**Well, I am just about done. I want you to return to the passage and look at what God's children are suppose to do when they get home.**

The people assembled together as one in Jerusalem

- no they did not join the church near them
- no they did not say God's knows my heart and I can stay home
- no they did not say the building is in bad shape

They assembled together as one in Jerusalem

- the place dedicated to God
- the place God told them to build
- the place where they had had met God in the past

They built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD

- they did not worry about the conditions around them
- they did not concern themselves with what the neighbors would say
- they did not even reflect on how they could do it better/different

They built an altar and begin to offer burnt sacrifices to the Lord.  
They begin to worship.

After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred festivals of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD.

- regular offering - tithes
- monthly offering – benevolent
- sacred festivals offering – prayer luncheons, KS Scholarships
- freewill offering- God, has bless me and I am going to bless someone else

Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and olive oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia.

### **WHAT DID THEY DO WHEN THEY GOT HOME**

1. They went to church
2. They worshipped God
3. They brought their tithes and offerings into the storehouse
4. They used the money from the storehouse to pay for things they need.

### **WHAT DID THEY DO WHEN THEY GOT HOME?**

### **WHAT DID YOU DO WHEN YOU GOT HOME?**