

Ezra 8:15-23 (New International Version)**The Return to Jerusalem**

15 I assembled them at the canal that flows toward Ahava, and we camped there three days. When I checked among the people and the priests, I found no Levites there.

16 So I summoned Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah and Meshullam, who were leaders, and Joiarib and Elnathan, who were men of learning,

17 and I ordered them to go to Iddo, the leader in Kasiphia. I told them what to say to Iddo and his fellow Levites, the temple servants in Kasiphia, so that they might bring attendants to us for the house of our God.

18 Because the gracious hand of our God was on us, they brought us Sherebiah, a capable man, from the descendants of Mahli son of Levi, the son of Israel, and Sherebiah's sons and brothers, 18 in all;

19 and Hashabiah, together with Jeshaiiah from the descendants of Merari, and his brothers and nephews, 20 in all.

20 They also brought 220 of the temple servants—a body that David and the officials had established to assist the Levites. All were registered by name.

21 There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.

22 I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him."

23 So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.

Good Morning First Baptist Church. "I was glad when they said unto me let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psa 122:1). Are you glad to be here this morning? Are you glad that the God of heaven and earth spared your life and you are able to gather in this Holy Place and praise His name? Are you glad that somebody told you about Jesus? If you are glad make some noise! Praise Him for He and He alone is worthy of all praise.

We continue this morning with our study of Ezra with a focus on 8:15-23. Although Ezra is considered the author of the book bearing his name it is here in the 8th chapter that we begin to see Ezra's part in the return of the Children of Israel to Jerusalem, the land promised to them by God.

As I hope you have read all of Ezra by now I will very briefly review where we are in the biblical story.

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- **I. The Return of the Exiles and the Rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 1:1-6:22)**
 - A. The Return of the Exiles (Ezra 1:1-2:70)
 - 1. The Decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:14)
 - 2. The Preparations for Return (Ezra 1:5-11)
 - 3. The List of Returnees (Ezra 2:170)
 - B. The Rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 3:1-6:22)
 - 1. The Rebuilding of the Altar (Ezra 3:16)
 - 2. The Rebuilding of the Temple Proper (Ezra 3:7-6:22)
 - a. Rebuilding Begins (Ezra 3:7-13)
 - b. Opposition to Rebuilding (Ezra 4:1-24)
 - c. Rebuilding Resumed (Ezra 5:1-12)
 - d. Opposition to Rebuilding (Ezra 5:3-6:12)
 - e. Rebuilding Completed (Ezra 6:13-22)
- **II. The Return of Ezra and the Rebuilding of the Community (Ezra 7:1-10:44)**
 - A. The Return of Ezra (Ezra 7:1-8:36)
 - 1. Introduction of Ezra (Ezra 7:1-10)
 - 2. Ezra's Commission (Ezra 7:11-26)
 - 3. Ezra's Doxology (Ezra 7:27-28)
 - 4. Ezra's Companions (Ezra 8:1-14)
 - 5. Ezra's Arrival (Ezra 8:15-36)¹

¹ <http://thirdmill.org/answers/answer.asp/file/41784> accessed 07.20.13

All our Kingdom Seekers are in worship this morning so I am going to ask you to allow me to bring this message at a level where they may each understand it. Will you each pray with me and for me as we search for the word for today in verse 23

²³ So we fasted and petitioned our God about this,
and he answered our prayer.

The question I wish to raise this morning is:

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ANSWERED PRAYER?

SHALL WE PRAY!

Father who revealed Himself in Jesus the Christ; God who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end; Creator of all that is; we come this morning because we want to know you better. We want to serve you like we should. We want to trust you in all things. We want to seek your will for our lives. Please help us in this time of hearing the message, to hear from you. Make it personal for each of us. Now Abba, I ask that you use me for your glory for I promise daily to serve you until you say well done. AMEN and AMEN.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ANSWERED PRAYER?

The first prayer that most of us learn is:

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
If I should die before I wake
I pray the Lord my soul to take.²

Kingdom Seekers when was the last time you prayed this prayer? When was the last time you thought about the words to this prayer? When was the last time you thanked God for answering this prayer?

If you are alive and awake this morning then I declare to you that God answered your prayer. You asked Him to keep your soul until you woke up. In other words you asked the Lord to let you wake up and the

² <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/nep/1777/> accessed 07.20.13

Lord did. I would suggest that your first experience with answered prayer occurred before you really understood what prayer was.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ANSWERED PRAYER?

The second prayer you probably learned was a prayer spoken before you ate. I have not been able to find the origins of the words we speak. But it is clear from scripture that we are to pray and thank God for the food we receive. Moses taught the Children of Israel to pray lest they forget and begin to think that they were responsible and not God. When Jesus prepared to feed the crowd with seven loaves and two fish He prayed first. So we pray:

God is great and God is good,
And we thank Him for our food.
By thy hand may we be fed,
Give us Lord our daily bread

Have you given any thought to where your food comes from? Have you given any thought to all the hands needed to get a loaf of bread to the table? A farmer for the wheat; A baker for the loaf; A supplier for the packaging; A driver for the transport; A stocker for the shelves and someone to buy it, bring it in the house and put it in a plate on the table for you. At least six people are involved in getting the bread for your pb&j sandwich to the table. All that God requires is a sincere thank you!

If you had something to eat before church, a snack during the time between Sunday School and Worship, maybe even a little something stuck in your mouth to keep your stomach from growling until the benediction. Then you have had another experience, TODAY, with answered prayer.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ANSWERED PRAYER?

The third prayer was probably the Lord's Prayer.

- ⁹ After this manner therefore pray ye:
Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
¹⁰ Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
 and the glory, for ever. Amen.
 (Matthew 6:9-13 KJV)³

Do you see the first two prayers you learned in the KJV of the Lord's Prayer? Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil sounds like a request for God to keep our souls. Give us this day our daily bread sounds like a request to me for food. So, I ask again:

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ANSWERED PRAYER?

As Kingdom Seekers, someone who is trying to get to the Kingdom of Heaven we have a responsibility to tell others about God. That is what the great commission says:

¹⁸ *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*
¹⁹ *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*
²⁰ *and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

**Ezra knew these things about prayer.
 God has kept their souls for 70 years in captivity
 God had provided for their daily bread and used the hands of
 foreign kings and jealous neighbors to do it**

As young Christians we sometimes may think we do not have anything to say to folks that will make them want to become Kingdom Seekers. But you do! You can tell them what you know about answered prayer.

³ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%206&version=NIV;KJV>