

## How to re-Build a Legacy (Ezra)

Is. 58:12 *"they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in."*

### *Guided Growth with Pastor Keith @ CBC Sunday, June 2nd*

**Reflection:** Last week we examined God's "If...Then" pattern that's woven throughout scripture.

Israel's history (and ours) is full of examples of this pattern unfolding. (Dt. 28-31; Jdg; 2 Chr. 6,7)

At Sinai God told Israel: (Ex 19:4-6) *"You've seen what I did ..., and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me... And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy (qādōsh: sacred) nation."*

Over the next 1000 years this pattern continued: When Israel Partnered with God, they prospered. Prosperity → Pride → Presumption → Pursuit of pleasure which produces inevitable Problems (Ro. 1) Their problems led to either further rebellion or recognition and repentance! Repentance led them to: Prayer and they began Partnering with God again. And the cycle began again!

After multiple cycles and warnings, this eventually led to Israel's captivity in 606 BC. After 70 years, God miraculously moved to give Israel another chance and freedom and blessing. In harmony with God's miraculous prophecies (Isaiah 44:28-45:4) King Cyrus permitted (and paid) for them to return and rebuild God's Temple and their lives! Ezra 1

### 1. Those willing to obey partnered with God, but soon faced:

A. Discouragement: Ezra 3:12; Haggai 2:3

B. Deception/Infiltration: Ezra 4:1-2 Jude 4 *"certain men crept in unawares"*

C. Detours (Frustrations): Ezra 4:3-5 *"weakened ... the people ... to frustrate their purpose."*

1) This litigation lasted 15 years!

a) They began a deceptive letter writing campaign against them. Vs 6-16

b) They saw an opportunity when Cyrus was replaced by Artaxerxes (Vs 11) who eventually ordered them to stop building! (Vs 17-24)

### 2. They began drifting away from God and toward their self interests.

*The current is always away from God!*

A. Most rationalized their selfish pursuits.

B. God raised up Haggai to challenge them. Haggai 1:4-5 *"Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Consider your ways."*

C. God raised up Zechariah to encourage. Zech. 4:6-9

### 3. They eventually stepped out in faith and began to rebuild. Ezra 5:1,2

*"the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, prophesied unto the Jews ... in the name of the God of Israel... Then rose up Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and ..the prophets helping them."*

A. This was immediately challenged. Vs 3,4

1) They took their names down. Vs 4

2) This became an opportunity to Witness. Vs 8-16 11 *"We are the servants of the God of heaven"*

3) They Reported their actions to the King (Darius) *but this time they kept building!* (5:5)

B. Darius investigated and re-authorized the Temple building. Ch. 6

1) He Ordered their enemies to help provide the building materials and animals! Vs 6-9

2) Asked the Jews to pray for him. 10 and threatened any who opposed them. 11

*What blessings might we be missing because of our hesitancy to trust and obey God?*

#### **4. After the Temple was built, the cycle toward pleasure & self interest began again.**

##### **A. Solomon did this after the first Temple.**

1) It took him 7 years to build God's house, *But 13 to build his own!* (1 Kings 6:38-7:1)

1 Kgs 11:1,4 *"Solomon loved many strange women, and his wives turned away his heart after other gods"*

##### **B. Israel did the same thing! Ezra 9:1-2** *"The people ...priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations..."*

**C. This went unchecked until Ezra came in 458 BC.** (57 years after the Temple rebuilt!)

## **Conclusion:**

### **How do we correct this inevitable drift?**

- 1) Recognize the real problem (sin) Rev. 3:15-18
- 2) Repent (of our Part in it). Rev. 3:19
- 3) Return to God's Ways. Rev. 3:20
- 4) Realign our priorities (to God's Plan) Rev. 4:11
- 5) Rebuild our lives on His Principles. Rev. 21:7

#### **Example of this process in Ezra.**

1) Recognize the real problem. Ezra 9:3-4 *"because of the transgression; ... I sat astonished."*

**Shāmēm': stunned, devastated, amazed!** Do we still "tremble at the words of God"?

Are we "astonished" at the sin around us? What did Ezra see that most others didn't?

Why did he see it (their sin) so clearly? What did he do about it?

2) Repent (compunction, reconsideration)

a) Ezra cared. 9:3-5 *"rent my garment, plucked hair"* and Prayed! 9:5-15

He knew that he couldn't affect change, But God could. (2 Tim. 2:24-26)

b) God brought deep conviction! 10:1,2 *"there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. We have trespassed against God..."*

James 5:16 *"Confess your faults ...and pray...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."*

3) Return to God and Receive His pardon. 10:3 *"Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God ..."*

4) Realign our priorities. 10:10-12 *"Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God, and do his pleasure:"*

5) Rebuild our lives on God's principles. The book of Ezra ends (10:44) with:

*"All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children."*

They certainly felt bad about it, but there's no record of what they actually did about it!

As a result, Nehemiah had to deal with this problem over a decade later. (Neh. 13)

## **Application:**

### **In order to rebuild a godly legacy, we too must:**

1. Recognize: Drift in our lives and its consequences. (Rev. 2:5)
2. Repent: Care and really Pray. (2 Chr 7:14)
3. Return to God and receive His pardon. 1 Jn 1:9
4. Realign our priorities. (Ro. 12:1,2)
5. Rebuild our lives on the foundation of God's Word and Will. (Mt. 7:24-27)