

AFTER THE EXILE

Introduction

- 1) Israel had been separated from their destroyed holy city and temple for seventy years
- 2) When the remnant of Judean Jews returned from seventy years of exile in Babylon, they went about rebuilding their homes, the temple, and Jerusalem (books of Ezra-Nehemiah)
- 3) Looking at two passages in Ezra and Nehemiah, we observe how spiritually anxious they were to assemble to worship God and hear His word
- 4) We must share this same hunger and desire to worship God and hear His word today!

I) A Desire for the Worship of God (Ezra 3:1-6)

- A) The seventh month was an important month (Lev. 23:23-44; Num. 29:1-40)
 - 1) Feast of Trumpets (1st day), Day of Atonement (10th day), Feast of Tabernacles (15th day)
 - 2) Eventually became the beginning of the Jewish new year (Rosh Hashanah)
- B) Gathered together “as one man” to Jerusalem (v. 1)
 - 1) Unity of mind and purpose (cf. Jn. 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10)
- C) Prepared to worship God (vv. 2-6)
 - 1) Rebuilt the altar to resume the burnt offerings to the Lord
 - a) While in exile, they were unable to do so as one nation at the temple in Jerusalem
 - i) Some believe that this contributed to the rise of synagogue assemblies
 - 2) Followed the law of God (vv. 2, 4)
 - a) Must worship God according to His will, not ours (Matt. 15:9)
 - b) Kept the Feast of Tabernacles (reminder of return from earlier Egyptian exile)
 - 3) Did not give in to intimidation by enemies (v. 3)
 - a) Must obey God rather than men (cf. Ezra 4:4; Acts 5:29)

II) A Desire for the Word of God (Nehemiah 8:1-18)

- A) Again, the people were gathered together “as one man” in Jerusalem in the seventh month
- B) Ezra the scribe is told to bring the “Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel” – people desired the authoritative and inspired word of God (vv. 1-2)
 - 1) Ezra was a priest of God and skilled scribe in the Law of Moses (Ezra 7:6-11)
- C) Read from the Scripture from morning to noonday – people attentive and reverent (vv. 3-6)
 - 1) Proper attitude – the word of God must be the center of our worship and learning
 - 2) Less Bible = less attention to the will of God
- D) Goal of reading, teaching, preaching Scripture is for all to understand God’s will (vv. 7-10)
 - 1) Great rejoicing in godly hearts when there is understanding (vv. 11-12; Acts 8:39; 15:31)
- E) Led to obedience and confession of sins (vv. 13-18; 9:1ff)

Conclusion

Psalm 122:1 – an attitude desiring the presence, fellowship, and worship of God. We are the temple of God today in which we offer up the sacrifice of our bodies in service to God. Do we strongly desire the worship of God and the word of God?