

It's A Process

Long Beach Alliance Church • June 1st, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

THUS SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS, THE GOD OF ISRAEL, "AMEND YOUR WAYS AND YOUR DEEDS, AND I WILL LET YOU DWELL IN THIS PLACE. DO NOT TRUST IN DECEPTIVE WORDS, SAYING, 'THIS IS THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD, THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD, THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD.'"

~ JEREMIAH 7:3-4 (NASB)

1) Discipleship Through Ezra The Scribe

- A) Sixty years after Ezra 6:19-22, revival is kindled in Israel. This revival is not birthed in Jerusalem itself, but once again (cf. revivals under Cyrus & Darius in Ezra 1-6) from far-away Babylon, where many Jews still live (7:1ff).

- B) The great accomplishment of Ezra 1-6 is the completion of the temple (6:13-18) and the restoration of temple worship and celebration (6:19-22).

- C) Despite the restoration of the temple and ceremony, the returned exiles are not yet a holy people because they do not follow God's Word (i.e. Genesis - Deuteronomy).

- D) God's people were outwardly obedient in most actions, but were not inwardly obedient in their hearts, which was revealed in critical areas of their lives (cf. Ezra 9:1ff).

- E) Thus Ezra, a skilled scribe (7:6) is stirred by the hand of God (Ezra 7:6, 9) to be a discipler* of God's people in His Word.

2) The Essence Of Ezra The Discipler

- A) Ezra brought **five critical components** to Israel which would develop the nation toward authentic holiness (instead of just ceremonial/traditional religious practices).

- B) First, Ezra was **chosen by God** (7:6, 9). The "hand of God" (a Hebrew metaphor for God's "hands on" power and favor) chose Ezra for His task. A discipler must always be one of God's chosen people. Imposters need not apply!

- C) Second, Ezra **studied God's Word** (7:6, 10). Ezra knew God's Word (i.e. "the Law" of God) because he studied God's Word. A discipler must always be a good student of God's Word. Every great teacher must first be a great student!

- D) Third, Ezra **practiced God's Word** in his own life (7:10). Ezra didn't just know the Word, he practiced the Word of God. This singular quality distinguished Ezra in Israel! A discipler must always first practice what it is he/she will preach!

- E) Fourth, Ezra was passionate to **teach God's Word** (7:10). Ezra's heart was to follow God personally, and to help others follow God through teaching and obedience to God's Word. A discipler must have a heart for others!

- F) Finally, Ezra had the power to **hold people accountable to God's Word** (7:26). Ezra wasn't just playing "church" with people, He was in the business of life change through God's Word! A discipler must be accountable and must hold others accountable to God's Word! No games -- life change!