

In-n-Out

Long Beach Alliance Church • June 8th, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

THEN I PROCLAIMED A FAST THERE AT THE RIVER OF AHAVA, THAT WE MIGHT HUMBLE OURSELVES BEFORE OUR GOD TO SEEK FROM HIM A SAFE JOURNEY FOR US, OUR LITTLE ONES, AND ALL OUR POSSESSIONS.

~EZRA 8:21 (NASB)

1) Mirroring The Deliverance Of The Exodus

- A) As Ezra begins his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, he has clear concern for “mirroring” the Exodus of the Jews out of Egypt from 1,000 years earlier.
- B) The registry of peoples who travel with Ezra (Ezra 8:1-14) emphasizes (by placing it first) Phinehas (Numbers 25), a recollection of purity within the Jewish community.
- C) Ezra’s call for the inclusion of some Levites in the Jerusalem journey is a recognition on Ezra’s part of the passionate role which the Levites played in the Jewish community, recollecting their integrity (Exodus 32:26; Numbers 3:5-8).
- D) Finally, the substantial offering (Ezra 8:26ff) which the Jews are bringing to Jerusalem (notably carried by 12 Levites), recollects God’s provision for the Exodus community, a provision which now continued for Ezra’s travelling party.
- E) Ezra’s mirroring goes beyond the surface connections (Phinehas, Ezra 8:2; the Levites, 8:15ff; the offering, 8:24ff), and reveals Ezra’s heart for spiritual continuity (past, present, and future).

2) Spiritual Disciplines For The Journey

- A) Running deeper than the surface connections to the past, Ezra's true desire for the Jewish community are for the fiery **purity** of a Phinehas, the integrous **passion** of the Levites, and the generous **provision** of the offering.

- B) However, despite Ezra's efforts to mirror the past in the hope for the future, he clearly realizes his own inability to be successful as a leader without the power of God. It is out of Ezra's inability to succeed that he calls for a fast amongst his travelling party (Ezra 8:21ff.)

- C) Ezra reveals that He has spoken what is true of God (8:22), and he has clearly made every attempt to reflect a community which is given to reflecting God -- but Ezra wants to have a heart which beats for God -- which can only be accomplished through true submission from the inside-out.

- D) Ezra studied God's Word (7:6), practiced God's Word (7:10), and from this source, actively humbled himself and the community (8:21) through fasting (8:21) and prayer (8:23).

- E) Ezra's hunger for God's glory was greater than his need for food. Ezra's desire for humility of the whole community was dramatic, and meant to emphasize God's success. Ezra risked everything in order to magnify God's glory (8:22).

- F) Ezra purposely asked God for things which could have been accomplished otherwise (8:22), in order to lead the Jewish community into complete submission to God. Faith is trust in God's Word, put into action. Ezra showed faith that he needed God more than anything (food, protection, success, or honor) -- and God listened to their requests (8:23).