Lessons From The Book of Ezra

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Category: Bible Reading

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Introduction:

1. It’s that time of year where our schedules are about to get even more busy.
2. With so many activities, it’s easy to ignore some things like our Bible reading. You may be behind and think there’s no reason to finish up the rest of the month. If that’s you, then I want to encourage you not to quit. We are in the book of Ezra right now.
3. Let me give you a brief summary of what this book is about. Judah has returned from Babylonian captivity after 70 years. God told them to rebuild the temple. There are two important men that will help Judah after the return: Zerrubabel and Ezra. Zerrubabel will help the people build the temple. Ezra will help the people to be faithful to God.
4. Tonight, I want us to consider four valuable lessons we can learn from Ezra, particularly about God and His word. As we consider these lessons we will walk through the main events found in this book. This will help you to understand some of the things you will read this week. These lessons will demonstrate the importance of God and His word.

The Lesson:

I. Lesson One: God’s promises come to pass.
   A. King Cyrus released Judah just as the prophets said would happen.
      1. King Cyrus was the king of Persia which had defeated the Babylonian Empire, Ezra 1:1-3.
         In 536 B.C. Cyrus allowed Judah to return to Jerusalem so they could build the temple.
         The events of Cyrus were prophesied by Isaiah more than 150 years earlier, Isaiah 44:28-45:1-6. It was the prophet Jeremiah who spoke of their return, Jeremiah 25:1-9.
      2. Through God’s providence Judah was able to return home.
   B. The lesson for us is that God’s promises always come to pass.
      1. God’s words are faithful and reliable. Yet, there’s something that we must not overlooked. Judah experienced both of the things found in Romans 11:22.
      2. People today think about God’s kindness, but often forget about His severity. Let’s not be deceived, Galatians 6:7. Ezra teaches us that God’s promises come to pass.

II. Lesson Two: Look to God’s word for encouragement.
   A. Judah faced opposition as they built the temple, but would be encouraged by God’s words.
      1. Zerrubabel had the task of rebuilding the temple, but quickly faced opposition, Ezra 3:8, 10-11, 4:1-5, 24. Sixteen years would pass and the temple would remain unfinished.
      3. Judah had become lazy and indifferent. After they were encouraged, the temple would be complete in four years.
B. God’s word provides for us the encouragement we need to do His will.
   1. Like Judah, tough times will come our way. Like Judah, God and His word is what we need so we can be encouraged. This is why our Bible reading is so important. We can get in a rut sometimes and we get lazy and comfortable. Like Judah, we too may need a push.
   2. Whether in the days of Judah, or in the first century, God’s people have always faced opposition and discouragement from others. The same happens to us, but we must press on. But if we don’t go to God’s word for encouragement then we might just be defeated by discouragement. The book of Ezra shows us that God’s word can help us in tough times.

III. Lesson Three: Be passionate about God's word.
   A. Ezra, a priest and scribe, had a sincere passion and desire for God’s word.
      1. Ezra is introduced in chapter seven. By this time Zerrubabel, Haggai, and Zechariah are dead. What the nation needed was someone who would continue the spiritual restoration of God's people. This is what Ezra would do. Ezra was a scribe and priest.
      2. He was passionate about God’s word, Ezra 7:10. He studied it, practiced it, and shared it with others. This was a man of conviction and purpose. There was great work to do. God’s people needed to hear, know, and do God’s word. They needed to be on fire like Ezra.
   B. The lesson for us is that we need the heart of Ezra.
      1. Passion for God’s word will help us to become greater workers in the kingdom.
      2. When we lack passion for God’s word, we may find ourselves like Judah, where we have to learn the hard way and miss out on blessings from God. We can avoid a lot of messes in our marriages, family, church, and society when we follow the template Ezra gives us in Ezra 7:10. This is what God’s people needed then, and it’s what we need now. The book of Ezra teaches us to be passionate about God’s word.

IV. Lesson Four: Take what God says about sin seriously.
   A. Despite the national improvements in Jerusalem, the law of God needed to be enforced.
      1. Many of the priests and Levites had married foreign women, Ezra 9:1-15. Ezra was upset because no one did anything about this great sin.
      2. Ezra would change all of that, Ezra 10:3, 4, 10-12. The people would confess their sins, repent, and do the will of God. They finally recognized the seriousness of their sins.
   B. The lesson for us is real simple: Sin is a big deal to God.
      1. Our sins should cause us to feel ashamed and embarrassed like it did with Ezra. Like Judah, when we are wrong, we should confess our sins to God and repent, 1 John 1:8-10.
      2. And like Ezra, we too, must take a stand for truth no matter what it may mean.

Conclusion:
   1. The book of Ezra teaches us some valuable lessons about God and His word.
   2. But this book will do us no good unless we put into practice the things we have learned, Ezra 7:10.