



Lesson 6 April 10th, 2021

Ezra: Faith and Action Preacher

Study Scripture – Ezra 10:1-12

Background Scripture – Ezra 9-10

Key Verse:

“My God, I am ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God, for our wrongful deeds have risen above our heads, and our guilt has grown even to the heavens”.

Ezra 9:6

INTRODUCTION

I heard the story the other day about some people who had a dog that they loved but after a while they could not afford to look after their beloved dog. So they put the dog in their car, drove about 100 miles away from home and then opened the car doors, pushed the dog out of the car, slammed the doors, and then drove off, heading for their home 100 miles away. They hoped someone would find their dog and look after him.

They really felt that they had gotten rid of their dog. But, about two months after this their old dog turned up at their home bedraggled, with some injuries, and dirty. The dog must have been through quite a bit as he struggled to go back to his old home. His sense of direction was amazing. He remembered the people that loved him and could not get that thought out of his mind.

This reminds me of our Lesson today. The Lesson was not about a lost dog who returned home after having been abandoned but it was about an entire nation of 5,000,000 to 6,000,000 people who had been kicked out of their home, taken away to a faraway strange land. This happened because they were not willing to behave at all. That nation did all kinds of things they should not be doing. They worshiped all kinds of strange idols, making friendships with all kinds of wicked people, treated the poor people in the country badly, and robbing the people who lived in the nation as well as strangers that were visiting them. They robbed everybody of anything that they had.

God was very angry with them. They had always been breaking the covenant that God had established with them. In this covenant He promised to bless them if they followed His laws but if they did not, He would make life very difficult for them until they began to behave. God had freed them from slavery in Egypt, looked after the nation for 40 years while they travelled in the wilderness, defeated their enemies in the Land of Canaan, and protected them all the time.

But they did not believe in this Covenant and did what they wanted to do, so God allowed their enemies to capture them and take them away from the land of Judah. Their enemies destroyed the beautiful Temple in Jerusalem, burned the city, burnt down every house and palace, destroyed the famous, beautiful Temple of God in Jerusalem, tore down the walls of the city, and completely wrecked the place. Then they took away all the people of Judah along with the king, the princes and princesses, putting them in chains and dragged them into exile in Babylon. It was a disaster for the nation.

The prophet Jeremiah had predicted that they would be taken into exile in Babylon for 70 years because of their terrible sins. That prophecy came true perfectly and 70 years after God stirred up a pagan king of Persia to send people back to live in the land of Judah. Not many of the people returned but some did, and they started to rebuild the Temple despite the opposition that they faced from the people who had taken over the empty land of Judah and were living in the land.

It was time for God to send someone who knew the law of God, who had dedicated his life to studying this law to go back to Judah from Babylon to teach the people and make sure that they were doing the right thing and not misbehaving again.

But when God sent Ezra the priest to teach the people who were now back into the city of Jerusalem, he found that were doing exactly the same thing that their forefathers had done which made God angry to the point where He kicked them out of the Land. Ezra was a studious, hardworking, no-nonsense teacher and preacher and he acted immediately he heard the bad news.

So he and some other elders and leaders got down on their faces and prayed to God to forgive them. They felt ashamed and humiliated that the people were misbehaving so badly. The people who were into marrying me the pagan people who lived in the land who worshiped all kind of strange gods. God had warned the people of Judah not to do that because if they did the pagan people that they married would entice them to go back to worshiping false gods and doing all kind of wicked things.

Ezra was extremely upset, and he begged God to forgive the people. He had to talk tough with the people in Jerusalem for the king of Persia had given him authority over all that area so that the affairs of the nation would be run properly. So EZRA prayed to God for forgiveness and then he demanded that the people repent and change their ways so that he did not have to punish them.

The people did just that. They repented and made a covenant with God not to break the laws of God. The people and even the leaders who had married foreign wives who did not want to accept the laws of God agreed to put away their pagan families. They agreed that it was too dangerous to have pagan wives who were not part of the religious community of Israel for these wives would turn their hearts away from God and entice them to worship idols, that was exactly what God wanted to hear them agree to, and so He began to bless the people again.



The lesson is that if you do not do what is right you might very well find yourself being taken away from your home. Sometimes you might like the dog in our story run into problems even if it is not your fault, for the fault might be with others who have committed sins and upset God.

But we have to remember that God loves people as well as animals. Once they recognize that they are doing wrong things and they repent things will change. He will allow them to go back home if they really want to follow Him and obey His laws.

He has provided the Holy Spirit to guide all of those that love Him and want to listen to Him.

If anyone is doing what is wrong and you have grown cold you need a revival. All you have to do is get down on your knees to pray, tell God you are sorry to upset Him. He will listen to you, examine your heart, and if you are sincere, He will forgive you and give you all the help you need to change your ways and prosper.

