

Ezra-Nehemiah: A New Beginning

Jeremy Bell

Ezra 1-6

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An overview of chapters 1-6 was given.

Application Points:

I. God is true to His Word and keeps His promises.

- 1:1 – “That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled”
- God keeps His Word, He does what He says He will do. He doesn’t keep His word until it becomes inconvenient. Not one of His promises ever falls to the ground. God said He would rescue His people after 70 years, and He did. God’s plans will always come to pass. His purposes will prevail.
- And every single promise that He makes, He will fulfill. We need to be reminded of that today. We may not always be able to see His answers, but answer He does.

II. God uses all kinds of people and circumstances to accomplish His sovereign purposes.

- God turned the heart of King Cyrus – 1:1
- God turned the heart of King Darius – 6:22
- God turned the heart of the Israelites – 1:5
- God raised up leaders to lead
 - Zerubbabel and Jeshua
 - Ezra
 - Nehemiah
 - Others
- Especially when you can’t see it, when you are discouraged, when things happen that you don’t to happen -- there is a way forward as you walk with your Lord. You can trust Him.
- Think about these people. They had rebelled against God and made a mess of their life Yet He is gracious and merciful. He brought them back home. He rebuilt their place of worship. He gave them His truth to once again comfort and instruct them in the way they should go. We have reason for hope today.

III. God disciplines His children for their good.

“It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?... He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” -- Hebrews 12:7, 10-11

- Consider the fruit of God's discipline of Israel. The law was again proclaimed. Sacrifices, feasts, festivals, and celebrations were reinstated as well as temple worship, and the priesthood.
- God gave His people a home which they had lost through their disobedience.

IV. God's merciful love for His people grants us a new beginning.

- God took a miserable people -- exiled, away from home, in a foreign land. And He brought them back.
- He gave them the joy of worship. He reminded them of His promises over them. He gave them a new beginning.
- This is what God does! His mercy gives us a new beginning!

Questions for Discussion/Application

- Having listened to the sermon, what stands out to you the most about chapters 1-6 of the book of Ezra?
- Re-read the section in the recap under application #1, "God is true to His word and keeps His promises." How does God's faithfulness to His purpose and plan to bring the people back to the land encourage you in your own walk with the Lord?
- The second application point was, "God uses all kinds of people and circumstances to accomplish His sovereign purposes." How does the fact that God used so many people to accomplish His purpose of rebuilding the temple encourage us today with how God might want to use us to build His kingdom?
- Jeremy drew the lesson from Ezra 1-6 that "God disciplines His children for their good (see Application #3)." Take a few minutes to review -- what circumstances resulted in the people experiencing the discipline of the Lord by being exiled?
- Re-read Hebrews 12:7, 10-11. How should we as believers think about the discipline of the Lord? How is the discipline of believers for their good, different and distinct from "punishment" -- meaning the punishment those who never put their faith in Christ will one day receive?
- What does it look like for believers to respond well to the discipline of the Lord?
- The fourth application point was, "God's merciful love for His people grants us a new beginning." In what ways was God granting the returned exiles "a new beginning"? How should this encourage us when we sin and fail in various ways?
- Consider taking time to pray, asking God to help us have increased faith for how the Lord would use us and that we would respond well in those times when we may experience the discipline of the Lord.