

Chapter 3 Part 2

“Hate sin. Find satisfaction in God by knowing Him; for the safest place to be is in the obedient worship of God.”

Ezra 3:12-13

In the midst of all this fulfillment, we encounter unexpected disappointment:

“But many of the older priests, Levites and family heads, who had seen the first temple, wept loudly when they saw the foundation of this temple, but many others shouted joyfully.” (v. 12)

Why?

- For starters, it was probably obvious that this temple would not be what Solomon's was.
- Also, there has been no mention of the ark of the covenant (God's presence - His shakina glory) in this passage. This probably means it was gone.
- As we read in Ezra 2, the number of people are fewer than 50,000, whereas they came out of Egypt with 603,500 men (Num. 1:46), just as God promised through Moses (Deut. 4:27).

The elders knew they have been so pitifully reduced **because of sin**. They had sinned against God and broken the covenant; therefore they experienced the curses of the covenant.

Perhaps even though they have been restored to the land, they can tell that all the glorious end-time promises the prophets made are not coming to pass.

- The desert isn't blooming (Is. 35:10)
- the Messiah isn't reigning (Is. 2:1-4 & many others in O.T. & N.T.)
- Jerusalem isn't being exalted (Ps. 102:13-16 & others)

There is a sense, here, in which they are already seeing prophecies fulfilled, but not yet seeing all of them realized. **This points us (the readers) forward as we study Ezra**, doesn't it?

- The New Testament Gospels tell us about those greater fulfillments,
- and John's Revelation tells us about how all things will be consummated.

The text implores us to **hate sin** as the older priests, Levites and family heads did (v. 12). They could remember what it was like before they broke the covenant with God. And so even though it was a joyful time, like the others felt - most likely the younger Israelites that didn't see the times of Solomon - who were shouting joyfully, **their hearts were heavy because of what they did and once had**.

Sin devastates our relationship with God.

- it is an affront to His face: showing Him with our actions that what Jesus did on the cross was of no consequence to us. **But God** even works our sin for our good - sometimes keeping us from feeling the full affects of our sin by providing **“safety nets”** that keep us from enjoying the sin as we used to and keeping us physically safe in the meantime. But **don't let that grace and mercy be an excuse to go on in your sin**. Turn from it by repenting (180° turn) and humbly approach the throne room of God's grace give Him your everything!
- it keeps you from experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit: when you allow distractions and sin to keep your attention, you miss out hearing that still small voice. Given enough time in our sin God may “wake us up” with something extreme. Only He knows what it's going to take to turn us back to Him, like the exile of the Israelites for an entire generation!

- it will endanger you and steal your joy: sin will make it so that even if God restores you, until He wipes away every tear you will feel sin's remorseful consequences. Sin will make it so that though you worship you will weep.
Hate sin.

But God was giving them a new beginning! And the people shouted so loudly that not only did it drown out the weeping of the elders but others heard it far away! (v.13) In the midst of our sorrow and joy He shows us:

- **if we want fullness of joy**, flee temptation and be in His presence (Ps. 16:11)
- **if we want unmixed gladness**, resist the Devil and preach to yourself His promises from His Word!
- **if you want to know how to overcome sin in your life**, worship! **Find satisfaction in God.** The powerful enjoyments God makes available in this world are to lead us to Him, the One who can create such pleasures!

Knowing God is wanting to be face to face with Him above all else! *Above hunger, above comfort, above things, above our families, above our friends.* Wanting to be face to face with the creator, savior and refiner of our souls above our needs is what knowing God is like!

Verse 8-11

That **desire to know God**, to be in His presence, to walk with him all our days - that is the desire that will enable us to overcome sin. As leaders at Calvary Arvada and in our homes, Satan knows the way to take people down is to destroy their leadership.

Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the others knew this as they began to build (v. 8) so they begin to **appoint mature leaders** to supervise the work on the Lord's house (v. 9-10). The word 'supervise' here uses a Hebrew word, natstseyach, that comes from the same root in the way that many of the Psalm superscriptions refer to "the choir director", menatstseyach. The way this works in Ezra indicates that the word translated "choir director" has to do with **leadership in more than just music:**

- leadership in the restored community, (discipleship)
- leadership in the rebuilding of the temple and
- leadership in the worship rendered to God.

So let's back up here and examine the picture the book of Ezra is painting for us. **It is a picture of the restoration of ourselves back to God through his redemption of world powers, our suffering and our sin.**

We are the temple of the Living God who seeks to dwell in our souls.

1. Does it not behoove us to seek a community of believers to be around who can encourage us?
2. As we "rebuild" our temple by the grace and mercy of God's sanctification of us throughout our lives we need leaders who are farther down this road than us to disciple us.
3. Then the worship we give to God will be more than song - it will be a life whose every aspect is about what He wants and not what we want.

In verse 11, we read of the worship the people who were saved at the new exodus and those gathered from the nations.

They sang with praise and thanksgiving to the Lord: “For he is good; His faithful love to Israel endures forever.” Then all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord because the foundation of the Lord’s house and been laid.

This where the rubber meets the road, so to speak, for us. Because here they are affirming that God’s love endures forever because God has been faithful to them in the distant past and in the recent past and they trust Him to continue to be faithful in the future.

Remember, Satan knows **the safest place in the world for us to be is in the obedient worship of God** because to worship God in obedience to His Word is to be in His presence. To be in the presence of God brings the feelings that result in the joyful shout that will be heard far away (v.13).

We have the message of the New Testament which enables us to join with this ancient community of returned exiles who praise God for His great acts of redemption. God is gracious to us today by teaching us through “types” - events, persons, or statements in the Old Testament that show us a picture of Christ or His revelation to us described in the New Testament.

For example, Old Testament patterns were fulfilled in the way that Jesus lived and died.

- God accomplished salvation in Jesus in a way that fulfilled the festivals of Israel, the Levitical sacrificial system, and the ministry of the temple.
- Christians are those who have been delivered from bondage (return from exile) to sin and death by the death of Jesus, our passover Lamb. (1 Cor. 5:7)

So let’s act on our remembrance of God’s providence - His faithful provision - and join other brothers and sisters in Christ in worshipping Him through the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of the father.

We are the living stones of this spiritual house, in whom the very Spirit of God dwells. Our lives are to be about worship, and we worship by obeying.