



# Biblical Literacy

Scripture • Substance • Spiritual Passion

## Lesson 57.3

## Old Testament Survey: Return from Exile, Part 3

### Outline for Class

- Welcome
- Theme Today  
*Ezra walked onto the pages of Israel's history at a time where a second temple had been constructed. Sacrifices were being offered at the temple, but temple worship alone was not the "point" of Israel's calling. Jeremiah had warned the Judeans earlier that temple worship was no magic pill and wasn't their temple, but the Lord's: "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD" (Jer. 7:3-4).*
- Prayer for A Worshipful Heart
- Video (30 minutes)
- Discussion & Points for Home

### Points for Home

- ❖ "Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the LORD" (Jer. 7:4). Many of the people in Jeremiah's day and Ezra's day thought they were satisfying the Deity if they would regularly offer their sacrifices in the temple. God is so beyond our understanding and imagination that we cannot begin to conceive of him in his glory. His desire is for us, his creation, to walk in his ways in fellowship with him. There is a bit of a practical anomaly that occurs here. The more we perceive God in his true grandeur and might, the more distant and alien he seems, and the harder it is to understand that One such as He would even be aware of us, much less hold interest in us. We almost do better understanding the call of God for fellowship when we reduce God down into our frame of reference. I suspect this is one reason for the incarnation. In Jesus, we see God living among us, talking to us, walking with us, and even shedding tears over our pain. This then is our call: Do not minimize God, thinking him adequately pleased by some simple act of worship or some token prayer. Remember he is greater than our greatest conceptions, and he desires so much more than a token recognition. He wants us to daily walk before him, trusting in his will for our lives, and seeking to reign over us daily as Lord.
- ❖ 2. "The hand of the LORD his God was on him" (Ezr. 7:6). As Ezra was leaving Babylon, we come across a phrase that gets repeated over and over in these chapters: The hand of the LORD his God was on him (Ezr. 7:6). 'The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him'" Ezr. 8:22). It was the hand of God the Deliverer! The "hand of God" symbolized the actions and attentions of the LORD God as he tended to the needs of his people and the plans of his promises. That hand of God is where he has engraved the names of his people (Isa. 49:16). It is the protecting hand we need. It is the hand of supply for our lives. It is the hand of our Deliverer!
- ❖ 3. "Then I proclaimed a fast there...that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey" (Ezr. 8:21). I am touched by the fervor of Ezra. He held such conviction, that he called a fast to accompany the prayers. What Ezra did was not unlike the understanding Paul reached in his life, namely that when we are weak, then God is strong (2 Cor. 13:9). The Hebrew that is translated by the ESV as a "safe journey" literally means a "straight way" (drk yshr). In humility, Ezra set his requests before God. Ezra then set out on his journey, trusting God would make it straight (or safe). Proverbs 3:6 uses the same word for straight (yskr), but instead of "path," Proverbs 3:6 actually says, "caravan" ('rhh). That was the precise need for Ezra, the need for his caravan's journey to be straight/safe. His humility was the trust and acknowledgement of Proverbs 3. Where does this leave me before God? Hopefully seeking the humility to lean on him, to seek him, to entrust him with my life inspired to find a measure of fervor beyond that I have experienced before!

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