



### **Biblical Building**

#### **Sermon #5**

***'Don't Let Buildings Distract or Dictate Our Mission!'***

***Ezra 3:8-13***

Sunday, June 1st, 2025

#### **Last Sunday in the Biblical Building Sermon Series:**

- Last Sunday in our Biblical Building Sermon Series, we looked at Ezra 3:1-7, and from this text I preached a message entitled 'The Essentials of Worship While Building!'.
- *In that text we found that the Israelites had to first rebuild the altar of God, before they could even consider rebuilding the temple.*
  - The altar had to be built first in terms of sacrifices.
- I asked the question based on our text last week: *What does the rebuilding of the Altar show us about the priority of worship amidst a building project?*

- *Truth #1: **Unity must be Present.** (v. 1)*
- *Truth #2: **Undershepherds must Preside.** (vv. 2-3)*
- *Truth #3: **Unwavering Obedience must be Practiced.** (vv. 4-7)*

- ***Based on last Sunday's sermon, are we keeping the essentials of worship present while we are going through this building process?***

***'Don't Let Buildings Distract or Dictate Our Mission!'***  
***Ezra 3:8-13***

#### **Sermon in a Sentence:**

*Whether a Building is grand in structure and attractive in curb appeal does not determine nor dictate the Worship that occurs in a Building where the Church gathers together.*

#### **Intro:**

- Distractions are something that all of us deal with, some more than others.
  - *In today's society we carry small computers in our pockets that seem to serve as some of the greatest forms of distractions known to the world.*
  - *We can be so focused on a particular task just to hear a 'ding' that can totally derail our train of thought.*

- There's a well known story that has been published before, of a situation in the 1957 World Series between the New York Yankees and the Milwaukee Braves.
  - *Yogi Berra, the well-known charismatic and HOF Catcher for the New York Yankees was catching behind Home Plate as the Young Power hitter by the name of Hank Aaron, walked up to the plate.*
  - *Yogi was well known for his chatter on the baseball diamond, that was often used to distract the other team and even frustrate them.*
    - Hank Aaron walked to the plate as the outfielders backed up against the fence, and Yogi said, *'Henry, you're holding the bat wrong. You're supposed to hold it so you can read the trademark.'*
  - Yogi, and onlookers recall the remark by stating that 'Aaron' didn't move a muscle, or even acknowledge Berra's remark.
    - *When the very next pitch came just after this remark, Hank Aaron hit a home run in the World Series to the left-field bleachers.*
    - Once Hank rounded the bases and got to home plate, he looked at Yogi Berra and said 'I didn't come up here to read.'
  - *What was intended as a distraction from Berra, became motivation and Hank Aaron,*

*hammering' Hank, stayed the course, and fulfilled his mission.*

- The Braves would then go on to win the World Series against the dominant Yankees.
- *What we find in our passage of scripture this morning is the temptation to get so caught up in the building, and not the mission that the building is to house and facilitate.*
  - In our passage of scripture we will see that now that the altar is in place, the building starts.
  - And once that happens, Israel essentially splits into two different groups.
    - *One group who seeks to give Praise and Glory to God that the building has started.*
    - *The Second Group was upset that it was not near as great as the last temple, Solomon's Temple.*
  - What happens in this text is what happens so often in Churches and organizations today.
    - *We get so excited on a mission or particular project, we're all fired up, and then once the dirt in the ground moves, distractions through our words emerge off our tongues.*
      - And if we aren't careful, we will let the distractions become strongholds, and then those

strongholds can dictate the mission of the entire Church, based on the building or another distraction.

- While there are going to be distractions and roadblocks among the way, God is going to see this through. I pray that the same will be true for us as we journey through this.

**Read Ezra 3:8-13\***

#### **Question to Ask:**

*How does the start of the rebuilding of the temple show us that our expectations, when not met, can distract us from our mission? And, that these expectations, when fulfilled, can dictate our mission?*

#### **Truth #1: Particles of Dirt are Moved. (vv. 8-9)**

- ‘Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the LORD. 9 And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers.’ Ezra 3:8-9

- IF the years in verse 1 and verse 8 are calculated from the same year, then this means that seven months were spent in preparation for the foundation of the temple to be laid.

■ **Ezra scholar, Thomas Petter, believes that this would have been mid-spring of 537 B.C.**

- Now, we may wonder, since they have the altar in place and have been doing the daily sacrifices, as we were told in Ezra 3:6, why would they not have built the temple sooner?

● **This is a good question.**

- The best way to answer why they wanted 7 months, **Intentionality.**
  - Which we will get to in a moment...

- ***This second month would have been the month AFTER the passover, and on our calendar, fallen in-between April-May, which was the beginning of dry season.***

- Some scholars will say that this was why they started building...

● ***(We must also keep in mind that according to the books of Haggai and Zechariah, there will be little more than simple repairing but onto the***

*foundation, due to what we will find out in Ezra chapter 4.*

- It won't be until 520-516 B.C., when this is officially completed.
- *A Reenactment.*
  - *I personally believe that the intentionality behind waiting until the second month has to do with the resemblance and even the reenactment, of King Solomon.*
  - 1st Kings 6:1 and 2nd Chronicles 3:1-2 tell us that Solomon began building in the second month.
    - 'In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD.' 1st Kings 6:1
    - 'He began to build in the second month of the fourth year of his reign.' 2nd Chronicles 3:2
      - *So while it also makes sense with the dry season and the festivals already concluded at that point, they are also following the previous example of Solomon.*

- As scholar, James Hamilton Jr. points out, it does seem as if the Israelites are reenacting the example of Solomon.
  - *This leads me to ask the two folded question, who are we as a Church following, and who are you following on a personal level, on a daily basis?*
- The apostle Paul made it clear in 1st Corinthians 11:1 to follow Him as he sought to follow Christ?
- It terms or Remembering, Reenacting, and Resemblance, I'm reminded of several neat facts in the history of our Church:
  - *In the 1930s with a young Pastor, a shattered economy, and much more, the saints at the then Sandy Run Baptist Church built a sanctuary, finished in 1939.*
  - *In the 1980s, amidst a not yet stable economy, and after the vietnam war, under a very young Pastor, 26, the Church decided to build and was completed in 1985.*
  - *And now here in 2025, after a global pandemic, unsteady economy, terrible inflation, under a young Pastor, we are set out to follow God and build another building.*

- Each of these building initiatives have been around 40 years apart from one another.
- How incredible is it that we can follow in the steps of our ancestors, too?
- **Verses 8-9 also make it clear that all hands were on deck for this project.**
  - They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the LORD. 9 And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers.’
- So not only are Zerubbabel and Jesuha in on this with their Kinsman, the Levites and Priests are too.
  - **The overall undertones of these verses are that of Unity, Cooperation, and Determination.**
    - All of which, Biblically and Practically, must be present when particles of dirt begin to move...
- **Who’s all involved on this project?**
  - **The administrative and spiritual leaders, priests, and levites.**

- What makes this even more interesting, is the parallel of King David in appointing Levites to supervise the work, as in 1st Chronicles 23:4-32.
    - **Notice that in verse 8, it states that Levites 20 years old and older could work on this.**
  - **Usually, according to the Mosaic law, Numbers 4:30, they couldn’t do this work until they were 30.**
    - **But it does seem clear that the exiles reinforced the age requirement that was established by David.**
  - Lowering the age requirement was not just spiritual but strategic, it would allow for more of a work force.
- **In verse 9, there is one interesting thing that points out to me:**
  - ‘And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers.’
  - **When reading verse 9 in the Hebrew text, there is a word that is not translated in the ESV translation.**

- The word ‘Ke’had כָּאֶחָד literally means to join together for one cause.

- *Most modern translations don’t translate this phrase over, as it is very hard to transliterate.*

- *But the meaning in the Hebrew is this, that the Levite Family came together despite any differences that may have been present, and sought to unite to get the work of the temple done!*

**Truth #2: Praise Deliberately Mentioned. (vv. 10-11)**

- So the people have come together and dirt is starting to move, work is starting to get done.
  - It’s no longer just an altar or words to make us feel like we are doing something when we’re actually not.
  - *According to verse 10, the foundation of the temple had been laid, and it was time to celebrate and praise the Lord!*
    - Anytime God moves, whether we think it’s big or small, we should praise Him!
- **Music in Worship Services Exists Solely to Praise the Lord. (vv. 10-11a)**
  - ‘And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of

David king of Israel. **11** And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.”

- *Verses 10-11 are a great example that the writer of this book (I believe it’s Ezra), was adamant about ensuring the theological interests were front and center.*
  - Now the foundation has been laid, but as I said earlier, it would still be later on that the Temple itself would be constructed. But, having the foundation done was a big deal, it was a step in the right direction.
    - Several keywords to look at here:
- **‘Priests in their Vestments’**
  - Exodus 28 describes the special garments that they wore and all the intricacies of it.
- **‘Came forward with trumpets’**
  - The Hebrew word for **Trumpets** (בְּתִצְצֹרוֹת) appears 29 times in the OT and each time it is in the plural tense, except Hosea 5:8.
    - 16 of these times (over half) occur in 1-2 Chronicles.
      - *I believe that this is strong evidence that Ezra did in fact like this word.*

- Numbers 10:2 tells us that the trumpets were made of beaten silver, and according to *Jewish historian, Josephus, the trumpet was ‘in length a little short of a cubit; it is a narrow tube, slightly thicker than a flute.’*
- *‘And the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals’*
  - The Hebrew word for *Cymbals*, *בַּחֲצֻצֹת*, occurs 13 time and all of its occurrences are in 2 Chronicles, here and in Nehemiah.
  - These would have been large and similar to cymbals today.
- *The musical instruments that were used that day in that worship service, were solely to enhance the worship that was taking place to God for allowing them to build the foundation of the temple.*
  - Musical instruments should not be used in a worship service for any other reason other than to bring God Glory.
- Notice there in verse 10, *‘according to the directions of David’*.
  - The mention of David along with the temple and music, speaks of a joyous worship celebration.
    - *David is the one in the Old Testament who brought Music*

*into the arena of Worship services, with God’s approval, of course.*

- 2nd Samuel 23:1 calls David the Sweet Psalmist of Israel.
- Verse 11 tells us:
  - ‘And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.”
  - *This quotation is from Chronicles 16, but originally from what King David wrote in Psalms 100:5.*
    - By singing this verse of Scripture, the people affirm that God’s love endures forever, because God has been faithful to them in the distant past, and recent past. They are trusting Him that He will be faithful in the future.
    - *This will become key when they enter into the challenges of Ezra chapter 4.*
- Notice in these verses, that not Zerubbabel, Jeshua, or any of the priests and Levites are praised or put on a pedestal here.



- No one's name, other than King David who instituted Music in Worship at this time, are mentioned.
- **Several examples for us to follow in this text:**
  - **#1: It does not matter WHICH instruments are used in a service, as long as they are to honor God and not to highlight the one playing them.**
    - Have you ever noticed that an organ is NEVER mentioned in the Bible?
    - Nor is a piano. Drums, guitars, flutes, trumpets, all of that can be used in Worship services.
  - **#2: It does not matter which songs nor the genre of songs, as long as they are theologically sound and contain the truth of God and bring praise to Him.**
    - Getting wrapped up in the genre of music is exactly what satan wants us to do.
  - **#3: The Worship time in the service is NEVER meant to be NOR should it ever be a SHOWCASE for someone's musical talents.**
    - If that's what you're looking for, go to the local theatre. In the Worship of the Church, we use

music to sing and shout to the Lord!

- **Expressive and Passionate Worship Honors God. (v. 11)**
  - 'And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. "
  - **The scripture is very clear in the word choice that is used, in HOW the people of Israel worshiped that day in response to the temple being laid.**
  - **They were EXPRESSIVE in their Worship unto the Lord.**
    - They Sang Responsively.
      - Not just standing there, but SINGING, ENUNCIATING.
    - Praising.
    - Giving Thanks.
    - Singing Scripture.
    - A Great Shout.
      - The Hebrew word for SHOUT here, תְּרוּעָה literally means a **LOUD** battle cry.
  - **Having grown up a Southern Baptist all of my life, until coming to this Church, I have not**



*seen hardly any Baptists Churches where expressive praise and worship was the norm.*

- *It's been within the last few years that we've gotten to that point, but, I'm glad we are at that spot and still think we can improve.*
- Many Churches (especially Baptists) look down upon expressive worship and categorize it as 'Charismatic'.
  - *In all reality, our text right here this morning shows us that it is indeed Biblical.*
- Many Churches would rather take out a book, with their head down, read notes, not know what the words mean, not smile, shout, or raise hands, and substitute that as, '*We Worshipped today*'.
  - There is nothing wrong with raising your hands in Worship, (as we will see in Ezra 8).
  - There is nothing wrong with shouting in worship as long as it is a shout of praise to God and not to get attention.
  - There is nothing wrong with going down to an altar.
- *Expressive worship gives praise, honor and glory to God.*
- *In addition to buildings, as we'll see next, Worship styles/Music was never meant to*

*dictate the Worship of the Word nor was it ever meant to distract our Worship of the Word.*

- Music is not how we should base our decision on where to worship, but on how the Word is handled and divided.
  - Lastly, but certainly not least, we have patriarchs deciding to moan.

### **Truth #3: *Patriarchs Deciding to Moan. (vv. 12-13)***

- Ezra makes it clear in his writing of this chapter, that there is to be a clear contrast between verses 10-11, and 12-13.
  - *On one hand, we have a group of people who are so thankful to have the foundation laid, that they can't help but praise the Lord.*
  - *But in Ezra 3:12-13, we are brought face to face with a group of people who are comparing it to Solomon's temple from days gone by.*
    - One of the worst things a person can do in their job, marriage, personal relationships, and in the Church is something called '*Expectations*'.
  - The excitement of this day was brought down a few notches, when the opinions of a few were brought up.
    - *The moans of a few here, in a select group, could easily distract the ones who were worshipping and were excited*

**to simply have the temple foundation being laid.**

- Notice that in Truth #3, it says ‘Patriarchs decide to moan’.
  - ‘Moan’, is defined as a prolonged sound of pain and grief.
- ***But to verbally and publically express displeasure, is a choice.***
  - No one is making you come out and say you don’t like the music.
  - Or you don’t like the chairs in the SS rooms.
  - Or you don’t like the preacher's personality or personal decisions.
  - Or, whatever, you fill in the blank.
- ***No, it’s a choice, one that created division and distraction here in Israel.***
- ***Yesterday’s ‘Church’ should not affect today’s Worship. (v. 12)***
  - ‘But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy,’
  - ***The first thing that jumps out to me is this ‘many of the priests and Levites and heads of father’s houses, old men’***
    - The ones who were making these complaints heard, were the one

theoretically who should have known better.

- ***The older folks, the patriarchs, the ones who had lived life and gained so much wisdom, yet, they ‘wept with a loud voice’.***

- ***The question to be asked here:*** Why are they weeping?
  - Because from the foundation itself, you could tell how big (or small) this new temple would be.
  - And to this patriarchs, the older folks in the group, based on the foundation it was obvious to them that it wouldn’t be near the size solomon’s temple was.
- ***Just as there usually is, there were reasons as to why the new the temple was smaller:***
  - #1: There is no mention of the Ark of the Covenant, it is believed by now at this point by most scholars that it is gone. So, they don’t have to house it and have all the parameters in order to house it.
  - #2: ***In Ezra 2, we’ve got a little over 42,000 returnees, coming out of Egypt, there were 600,000 men according to Numbers 1:46.***
    - So, it would make since, but just as God had promised through Moses in Deuteronomy 4:27, the

number of people after the exile would be much less.

- ‘And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you.’  
Deuteronomy 4:27

■ *Even if things do make sense Biblically and practically, it doesn’t mean that folks will always choose to understand it.*

- As Alexander MacLaren makes clear, the amount of patriarchs who actually saw Solomon’s temple would’ve been in their 80-90s at this point, and would’ve been children and teenagers when they originally saw it.
- Perhaps through the years word and testimony about it had been passed down.

- *Even if the Israelites had the money (which I don’t think they did at this time) to build a temple as large and extravagant as Solomon’s temple, it would not have been feasible for their needs at that time.*

- Somon’s temple was great for the Jews at that time. It was incredible.
- The Church you grew up in 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 years ago may have been great for that generation in that community at that time.

- *The message of the Church of yesterday and the message of the Church today should be the same.*

- *But the methods don’t have to be nor should they be.*

● *Clinging to Yesterday’s ‘Church’ confuses New Believers. (v. 13)*

- ‘so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.’
- *The sounds or praise to God could not be heard over the moaning and complaining.*
  - Oh my. What a travesty that this is.
- *May we never get to the point in our Church, through this building vision or in the future, where our moans and groans of not getting our way, is louder than that of our Praises unto God.*
  - It confuses those who are new to the family of God. They don’t know what they are supposed to be doing when they

hear the older ones, the ones they are to be looking up to, moaning and groaning.

○ *Ask yourself this morning, what group of people in this text do I fall into?*

- Am I shouting to the Lord praises?
- Or whispering to others my disapproval of how things are...

**Conclusion:**

- Do you remember back a few moments ago when I told you how the Great Yogi Berra tried to distract Hank Aaron? Hammering Hank Himself?
  - *Can you imagine with me for just a moment, that Hank gave in, and talked back and forth with Yogi, and then decided to turn his bat around to show the trademark logo?*
    - *Had Hank done so, maybe, just maybe, he wouldn't have hit that HR that would eventually allow the Milwaukee Braves to go on and win the World Series in 1957.*
    - Not because of how you face your bat in regards to the trademark logo, but it would've caused Hank to get distracted.
    - He would've let Yogi get into his head.
    - Instead, He didn't listen, he stayed focused, and accomplished the goal.
  - *Throughout this field of dreams vision that we are currently on, it can be very easy from time to time for us to want to stop, turn the bat*

*around, which could easily cause us to lose focus of our goal: To see lost souls saved and saved souls disciplined.*

- Let's keep the bat in our hands, eyes on the ball, as we seek to reach our goal and build this building all for the Glory of God so that the next generations in Gaston, might hear the name of Jesus.
- *Truth #1: Particles of Dirt are Moved. (vv. 8-9)*
- *Truth #2: Praise Deliberately Mentioned. (vv. 10-11)*
- *Truth #3: Patriarchs Deciding to Moan. (vv. 12-13)*