



Biblical Building

Sermon #9

'The Eye of God!'

Ezra 5:1-5

Sunday, June 29th

Last Sunday in the Biblical Building Sermon Series:

- Last Sunday we finished Ezra 4, as we concluded that part of our series with Ezra 4:17-24.
 - ***Last Sunday's text of Scripture contained the response of Artaxerxes to Rehum and Shimshai.***
 - I preached a sermon entitled ***'When God Allows a Halt!'***
 - ***Truth #1: The Complaint is Taken Seriously. (vv. 17-20)***
 - ***Truth #2: The Construction is Stopped. (vv. 21-23)***

- ***Truth #3: The Complete Story is not Shared. (v. 24)***

- Last week when we left off we learned that from Ezra 4:24 to Ezra 5:1, it would be 15 years until the work on the temple would resume.
 - Now, it resumes, and as we will see, God used two of the minor prophets to do it.

'The Eye of God!'

Ezra 5:1-5

Sermon in a Sentence:

The Eye of God was on the Jews for the entire fifteen years they were inactive in their efforts to rebuild the temple. Based on this text we know that God watches over us and sees all that we do.

Intro:

- Today and earlier this week we have spent a great deal of time celebrating our nation, and all that God has done for her in her time of existence.
 - ***God has done much in America.***
 - ***From her inception, the Lord allowed certain things to happen to allow America to exist and become the symbol of freedom that it is today.***
- ***The sad thing is that we have greatly stumbled in our ways, getting away from our humble beginnings and the privilege of religious freedom.***

- This can cause many of us to ask and or ponder, where is the Eye of God?
- *In other words, is He looking at what is going on in this country? Does he see that we have individuals who can't determine if they are a man or a woman though they were born with only 1 of two options?*
 - Does God not see the widespread murder of children in the womb?
 - Does God not see the murder in the streets?
 - The corrupt politicians?
- *Yes, the 'Eye of God' does see this. All of it. He also sees His people looking more like the world than they do the Church.*
 - There are roughly 102 occurrences of the phrase 'The Eyes of God' or 'The Eyes of the Lord'.
 - *But the idea and concept of the Lord watching us is a regular theme in Scripture.*
 - *This is a great reminder to us that God sees the evil in the world. The evil done by others and the person evils (sin) that we commit in our own lives.*
- But we must not forget that God has already put together a redemption plan, that we might be saved through Jesus Christ.

- *The Eyes of God are watching over us, and this should bring us immense comfort.*

Read Ezra 5:1-5

Question to Ask:

How does this passage show us that God is watching over us?

Truth #1: *The Authorization of God. (v. 1)*

- 'Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them.'
- Work on the temple had been non-existent for 15-16 years at this point.
- *The dust had settled on the foundation, the stones may have started to show a little age.*
 - *The foundation of the temple was in the center of Jerusalem so everyone would have seen the foundation of the temple quite regularly. They passed by, and went on to their paneled homes.*
- *But Ezra 5:1 tells us that God used preachers to come and speak to the Jews. To come and let them know, the time to act was now.*
 - We live in a society that seems to constantly downgrade preachers.
 - Yes, there have been many preachers who don't preach God's Words but

opinions, many with moral failings and narcissistic behaviors.

- ***But there are still good Godly men out there who God uses and will use to seek to call our nation out of our stagnant ways.***

- ‘How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?[a] And how are they to hear without someone preaching?’ Romans 10:14
 - ***One of the reasons that America is in the spot she’s in is because many have been called to preach but have never answered the call.***
 - ***Those who have answered the call are cowards and not courageous warriors for the Gospel.***
 - We worry about the keyboard warriors in the world, the cliques in the halls of the Church and the crazies who seek to tear us down.
 - ***But when God calls a man to share His Word, like Haggai and Zechariah here, He authorizes them to go and tell. To go and share.***

- There are **2** things to remember here about how God used Haggai and Zechariah...

- ***Divine Inspiration of Prophets.***

- When God gave Prophets in the Bible words to proclaim and messages to share, they were Divine, straight from God to man.
 - ***When God gave Jonah the 8 word sermon, it was from God though Jonah did not even want to deliver it.***
 - When God gave Jeremiah, Isaiah, Malachi, Micah, and so many others messages, there were from Him.
- ***In Haggai’s book, which we briefly looked at last Sunday and I preached through 3 years ago, we see that Haggai told the Jews to consider their ways and not to neglect the temple or the things of God!***
 - Life had been hard for them, there was a drought, crops were few and far between and the people were frustrated.
- ***God used Zechariah in addition to Haggai.***
 - Zechariah began his prophecy, a message from God with this in **[Zechariah 1:3](#)**.
 - ‘Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.’

- Then, God announces His intentions to show mercy to Jerusalem in [Zechariah 4:9](#).
 - “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.’
- I’m sure that Haggai’s message specifically hurt and stung a little bit.
 - *But, it was needed, it was necessary.*
- *Now, I’m not saying that EVERYTHING a preacher says is from God and is divine.*
 - *In the age of the New Covenant we now have the Bible. So, a preacher is divinely inspired by God when He preaches straight from the text. Straight from God’s Word directly to us.*
 - *To not preach from the Bible and call yourself a preacher is diabolical. A man who doesn’t preach the word is not a preacher, but a human pacifier.*
- *Divine Inspiration of Scripture Writers.*
 - Look carefully at verse 1, ‘in the Name of the God of Israel who was over them’.

- *These stories that we read in Scripture and truths that we glean are because God moved in 40+ male human authors to write the Scriptures.*
 - *They were Divinely inspired by God to record what He told them to write down.*
 - *That simple phrase in Ezra 5:1 in this case is the authorization of the messages of Haggai and Zechariah.*
 - The fact that God Himself allowed it to be recorded in the Scriptures further shows the Divinity of the Scriptures.
 - Remember what Paul told the young preacher by the name of Timothy?
 - ‘All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God[a] may be complete, equipped for every good work.’ 2nd Timothy 3:16-17
 - Not only did the preachers preach, but the people responded...
- Truth #2: *The Adherence to the Call of God. (v. 2)***
- ‘Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.’ Ezra 5:2

- *Zerubbabel and Jeshua are the men who are mentioned many times in Haggai and Zechariah, as well as here.*
 - Obviously these are the leaders of Israel at the time.
- *Now, it was not often in the history of the OT that when prophets spoke, that the leaders of Israel would listen...*
 - Just look at Moses and how the leaders treated him...
- *Notice that phrase at the end of verse 2, 'supporting them'.*
 - The leaders here didn't just verbally affirm the preachers, their actions backed it up with their support.
 - *They had been inactive for 15 years, but now that the prophets came with a controversial message, they decided to adhere to the call of God through Haggai and Zechariah.*
- When you read through the Scriptures (especially Jeremiah) you see more defiance to God and His messengers than you do of obedience.
 - There's **I** important thing to point out here.
- **Evidence of Repentance.**
 - The fact that Zerubbabel and Jeshua decide to get up after 15 years and continue the work,

shows that repentance had occurred in their hearts.

- *When leaders (who are not Pastors) choose to repent of their lazy self-indulgence, they trust God's Word through the Pastors (prophets in this context), and then obey what God says, anything can happen.*
 - Awakenings can occur, revivals sprout up and ultimately countless lives will be changed.
- *Preachers can't do it alone, leaders must step out and step up.*

Truth #3: The Analysis of the Governor. (vv. 3-4)

- After a 15 year time of inactivity in rebuilding the Lord's temple, the preachers preached, the people listened and things were moving.
 - *But, not so fast.*
 - Tattenai is the governor of this land where the Jews are and he is made aware (remember there are spies everywhere at this time) that the Jews had started building and he goes to check it out.
 - *How do they know that the Jews are rebuilding?*
 - Some scholars believe that it is possible that the Samaritans made another complaint against the Jews.
 - We can't be sure about this theory, but it is possible and would make sense with

the hostilities between the Samaritans and Jews.

- *Persian history books tell us that the first two years of King Darius's reign were full of numerous revolts.*

- So it would be natural that once the governor of the land got wind that building was taking place, he needed to go and investigate.

- There are **2** important things to look at regarding this.

- *Neutral, but still probing. (v. 3)*

- 'At the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus: "Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?"'

- *Tattenai and his associates were doing their jobs.*

- *It was routine for inspections to be made whenever building had begun.*

- So we don't want to incorrectly infer that the Jews were targeted.

- The question they asked, would have been a routine question for any group of people.

- *The government authorities simply needed legal proof that there had been a decree at some point saying they could build there.*

- The word 'associates' that is mentioned to describe the people who came with Tattenai to check on the Jews, is a title that would have been synonymous with 'inspectors'.

- *The Persian empire, and other ancient societies, had employees whose jobs were to do periodic checks throughout the empire on behalf of the king. They were spies, but they were spies who were visible, not hidden spies.*

- The question they ask is common and needed for their job: "*Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?*"

- They are still neutral, but there is no doubt some probing here.

- *This question is simply saying who gave you the legal right to start building again.*

- I'm sure the Jews who were on the job site that day may have looked at one another and said, '*Here we go again!*'

- Or, '*It was the Samaritans who told on us... again... wasn't it?*'

- Either way, when we obey God, we must expect people to probe. Whether innocently like here, or probing to conspire against.

- *Names are needed for Legal Justification. (v. 4)*

- ‘They also asked them this:[a] “What are the names of the men who are building this building?”’
- *Ever heard the phrase take a picture or it didn’t happen?*
 - *In this context of persia and the ancient world it was give me names or it didn’t happen.*
- *The governor and his crew have to have names for what is occurring for legal justification.*
 - When Tattenai writes his letter to King Darius (a copy of the letter is in Ezra 5:6-17), he’s got to have names so that the King will take him seriously.
 - A letter without names of who was doing the building would simply be disregarded.

Truth #4: *The Authority of God. (v. 5)*

- ‘But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it.’
- God has the final say, no matter what political inquiries (though not as hostile as those in Ezra 4:8-10) are made.
- *These verses show us that the outcome of Tattenai’s visit did not result in the stoppage of the work on the temple.*

- This is interpreted (and I believe correctly) as the Lord moving for His people and His Authority on display.
- *The ‘eye of God’ that is mentioned here, is a direct reference to the watchful providence and nature of our God.*
 - During this time in the ancient world while Kings didn’t have the secret service, CIA, FBI and all of those organizations.
 - *But they were known to have spies in all over the place. Especially in caves and places that a person could easily hide.*
- In ancient Persian literature from this time period specifically, Persians would refer to this as ‘The King’s Eye’ or the ‘King’s Ear’.
 - *Ezra probably knew that, so he makes it clear to the Israelites, our God is watching us and He’s greater than any human spy!*
 - *This is a consistent theme in the books of Ezra-Nehemiah, that’s the reestablishment of the covenant community was a result of God’s providential acts.*
- The second part of verse 5, ‘and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius

and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it.’

- This simply means that the Jews did not have to stop working while the letter was in transit, as was normally and previously in the book of Ezra the case.
- ***Tattenai is waiting to receive an official document from the new Persian King, (because he sent a letter and we have a copy of that letter in Ezra 5:6-17) on whether or not the Jews can continue in this rebuilding effort.***
 - While this may not seem like a big deal, it’s huge that the Jews were allowed to keep building even though a letter was in transit.
 - As Scholar, Mervin Brenham pointed out in his commentary: *‘The whole transaction of sending this report to Darius, searching for the records, and sending back a reply would have taken four or five months.’*
 - Tattenai could have stopped this work, easily, but He did not because there was a Higher Power, who we know is our God!
 - *Even in the small details, God lets us know that He sees us and that we must continue on.*

- I believe there are **2** simple yet profound theological themes in verse 5.

- ***God’s Protection.***

- While Darius had his inspectors and investigators all over the land, it was the God of the Hebrews who was ultimately in control.
- ***In order for God to fulfill His purpose and continue on in the redemption plan that started way back in Genesis, God used and coordinated in this passage of scripture the preaching of the prophets, work of the leaders, the determination of the community and the decisions of ‘pgan’ government leaders.***

■ ***Where God Leads, He will protect and that was evident here in Ezra 5:5.***

- ***God’s Providence.***

- The author (Ezra) uses the ‘Eyes of God’ metaphor as a means of highlighting the providence of God.
- God has a plan. His plan may not align with our plan but His plan should always trump our plans.
 - ***God has a providential plan for His honor and Glory for the saints here at FBCG. We must be faithful and obedient, like these Jews here.***
- ***They kept working on the rebuilding, knowing that a letter could come any day letting them***

know they had to stop and then their efforts would have been in vain.

- I wish we would adopt this attitude. No matter what happens we are going to give, serve and love so that more people in Gaston SC hear the name of Jesus, and believe.

Conclusion:

- *Now when we get to passages of Scripture like our focal text this morning, we can be tempted to think that 'it's not as significant' as other texts. Or perhaps not as entertaining.*
 - *But even in passages like this one, that we may feel are 'short' and 'insignificant' we see God's hand moving the human heart so that His redemption plan on our behalf, we couldn't save ourselves, would go through...*
 - As much as humans throughout history tried to distort God's plans to allow salvation through Jesus, God saw it through.
 - ***Even though our land is certainly hurting today.***
 - We can pray that God will hear our cries and hear our land.
 - We know He sees.
 - We know what He's capable of doing.

- The distortion and discrepancies in our world are appalling and many are unapologetic about it.

○ *God can do the impossible, we must pray to Him, serve Him and be faithful to Him no matter what's happening in this world.*

- 'Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love,' Psalms 33:18
 - ***Who/what are you hoping in?***
 - It can't be a presidential party.
 - A certain person.
 - A job.
 - Or a piece of land.
 - The only thing that we can hope for in this country is that we will repent and turn back to God. Thankfully for those of us who are saved, we're going to a new country...