



### **Biblical Building**

#### **Sermon #4**

#### ***'The Essentials of Worship While Building!'***

#### ***Ezra 3:1-7***

Sunday, May 25th, 2025 at FBCG

#### **The Last Time in our 'Biblical Building' Sermon Series:**

- Last week I faced what felt like a daunting task of preaching 70 verses full of names. Many of which were foreign to me and hard to pronounce.
  - *Looking back on that text and the privilege of preaching it, I couldn't be more thankful to God for allowing that to be in the canon of Scripture not just once but twice (also in Nehemiah 7).*
- Last Sunday I preached a sermon entitled ***'A List of the Faithful!'*** from ***Ezra 2:1-70***.
  - I asked the question: *What can 70 verses of names show us of the Faithfulness of the*

*Israelites and what group of people are identified as coming 'home' to Jerusalem?*

- We looked at 9 different groups of people and or categories of people that were mentioned.

- ***In this sermon, we were able to see the faithfulness of God's people and the faithfulness of God Himself to call the Jews out of Babylonian exile.***

- You can watch that sermon at this link:  
<https://youtu.be/H2Gw39kTkmE?si=PuMflboWejVe2vkc>

#### ***'The Essentials of Worship While Building!'***

#### ***Ezra 3:1-7***

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

***In Ezra 3:1-7 we find the Essentials of continuing to Worship, even in the middle of a building project. In this text these essentials are that Unity must be Present, Undershepherds must Preside, and Unwavering Obedience must be put into Practice.***

#### **Intro:**

- As we begin to near the 20% mark of our study through the book of Ezra, let me give a short summary of what has led to the events that we will discover in Ezra 3.
  - ***Earlier in the Old Testament, we clearly see that God put Israel in the land of Canaan so that they could fill the earth with and for His Glory.***

- After all, they were His chosen people.
  - *In Deuteronomy 4:25-31 God had promised through Moses, that they'd have to experience exile.*
  - *By now, the 70 years in exile that Jeremiah prophesied in Jeremiah 25:11-12, have passed.*
    - In Ezra 1:1, God stirred in the heart of Cyrus just as Isaiah 44:28-45:1 had predicted.
    - *Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets had pointed forward to a new exodus after Exile.*
  - This morning we walk into the first part of Ezra's installment of the New Exodus with the rebuilding of the altar.
- *Now I don't want you to glance at this morning's sermon title and think that I am in any way insinuating that we can only worship if we have a building.*
  - *According to Matthew 18:20, we know that the Church is where two or more believers in Christ are gathered together.*
    - *So, I am in no way implying that we have to build this building in order to worship, that's not the point of today's sermon.*
    - *The point of today's sermon and what we find in this text, is that we don't build a building of any kind for curb*

*appeal, design, community attraction, or any of that.*

- As the great preacher of yesteryear (Alexander Maclaren) stated '*No doubt the tone of the whole is somewhat prosaic, and indicative of an age in which the externals of worship bulked largely.*'
- *This is a time period in the ancient world where the outside of a building was paramount.*
  - In some Churches today this still rings true.
- But, this morning we see that the altar was built and then the temple not to be as GRAND as Solomon's Temple, but so they can renew their worship.
  - *As the congregation at FBCG, we are building across the street so that more and more people in our growing community can come to a safe place and hear the Gospel.*
- But we must not forget that in the context of the Old Testament, there were rules and regulations (the Torah), for the buildings that were to be constructed and for the items that would then be in those buildings, the Temple.

- *In keeping with the Biblical guidelines, these Jews keep in tact what they were supposed to Biblically.*

### **Question to Ask:**

*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)***

- ‘When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem.’
  - *Whether it’s a company, a family, or a Church, unity is often one of the core values that organizations highly value.*
    - In fact, the Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Church at Ephesus in the New Testament.
      - *‘I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ Ephesians 4:1-3*

- *A Person who is truly saved and walking with the Lord, will do whatever possible to maintain/keep the peace.*

- Between Ezra 3:1 and Ezra 2:70, we know that some time has passed, how much, we can’t be sure of.
  - But the information that is revealed in just this one verse, shows FBC Gaston some important things today:
    - *#1: If we are going to Build, we must come together.*
    - *#2: If we are going to Build, it must be of one accord.*
      - Now the time is certainly going to come in this narrative of Ezra where different opinions will come out. But for now, the people are one.
  - *When God leads a group of people to build, in order to worship God with our fullest and greatest potential as a collective body, we must be unified.*
    - Let’s look at **2** things that are going on in verse 1 that further prove the unity that existed among the ‘Remnant’.
- **Timing. (v. 1a)**
  - ‘When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns,’

- Timing is a big topic among scholars when looking at verse 1.

- *Some hold to the belief that the rebuilding of the temple happened early in the exiles return, while others believe the people had lived in the area for some time.*

- While we don't know this for sure, I do believe that it had only been a few months, personally.
    - *I say this because the sole reason that the people made the 503 mile journey across the dry desert was so that they could once again Worship the God of their Fathers.*

- They wanted to get this done, and they needed to do the Altar, first.

- When we left off last week in verse 70 of Ezra chapter 2, we were told this:

- 'Now the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns and all the rest of Israel in their towns.
  - *Verse 1, reaffirms this fact.*

- *Looking at the end of verse 1, they all gathered to Jerusalem the time had come.*

- *'When the seventh month came'*

- *The 7th month would've occurred in the fall, and was known in the Jewish culture as 'Tishri'. This time would have been between September-October.*
  - This information that is given is significant, because the obedience of the people follows God's timeline of worship activities according to the Torah.

- *While this phrase in verse 1, 'the seventh month came' may not mean much to us, here's what it meant to the Jews:*

- There were three mandatory celebrations of worship that took place in the seventh month.

- *According to Leviticus 23:23-25 and Numbers 29:1, on the first day of the seventh month was the New Year and festival of the Trumpets.*

- This was to kick off and commence the important events of the seventh month that would follow.

- *According to Leviticus 23:32 on the ninth day of the month, the people were to keep their sabbath.*

- *According to Leviticus 23:26-32, the tenth day was the Day of Atonement.*
- *According to Leviticus 23:33-43 was the fifteenth day and was the Festival of Tabernacles.*
  - This one would last for seven days and sacrifice were needed and altar.
- *The reason the timing is significant, is because it kicks off the need that in order to start and then continue worshipping the Lord, they had to have an altar to offer sacrifices.*
  - *Not necessarily a temple, for now.*
  - The seventh month for the Jews was a time of deep reflection and spiritual enthusiasm.
- *Together. (v. 1b)*
  - ‘the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem.’
  - I’m sure among the 42,000 plus, that there were individuals among this group who didn’t like each other.
    - *Individuals who had an argument or facebook battle years, days, or months prior.*
  - *But the phrase ‘one man to Jerusalem’ is so significant here.*
    - They left their home towns, the lands of their ancestors, and went to the Holy City for the purpose of Worship. After all, it was the seventh month!
- Scholar Mervin Brenham wrote, ‘*They had a common bond of faith in God and a common purpose to worship and obey Him. Even in times when it is difficult or dangerous to assemble, God is honored and his work is accomplished when his people unite to worship and obey Him. As God’s people have discovered repeatedly, united worship is a necessary means of dealing with difficult or dangerous situations.*’
  - The text doesn’t tell us that they put their differences aside, but in order to be one people, they had too.
- *The seventh month shows that they rallied and came together as one, simply for the sake of Worship.*
  - This language in this portion of verse 1 is reminiscent of the people of God who gathered years before this group in a unified voice for various occasions. Such as Judges 20:1, 8 and 11.
- *They were one man, one people, a unified people. Which is why they were able to build the altar so that they could offer sacrifices, despite the dangers that the coming verses indicate that they were facing.*
  - So if the people of God at this time, who were under the Old Covenant, did not have the Holy Spirit residing in their

hearts, were able to come together to BUILD so that they could all worship together on the most important month of their spiritual year, then why can't we?

- *Why can't we get over what someone said to you in this sanctuary twenty years ago or even two weeks ago?*
- *Why can't we get over that the Pastor or staff forgot to announce your particular ministry after the service?*
- *Why can't we get over that Jesus is the main epicenter of our worship and not you?*
- *Why can't we get over that no one in this Church owns a ministry, so we shouldn't be offended when others try to come alongside and help?*
- *Why can't we get over that just because a particular piece of furniture or portrait has someone's name on it means we have to use it?*
- *Why can't we get over that 'the way we've always done it' means we have to still do it that way?*

- *For this Church to be able to accomplish what I know God has in store with the Field of Dreams, we've got to have more unity present. We've got to stop letting the devil get a foothold, and it means that some of us really need to **reflect**, and **repent**.*

**Truth #2: Undershepherds must Preside. (vv. 2-3)**

- In order for a Church to continue to be able to Worship While Building and even after, the undershepherds of the congregation, the Pastors, must step up, and preside.
  - *Now, don't hear the wrong thing here. I'm not saying the Pastor is a dictator or that he is to do everything in the building project or in the Church and general, he can't and he shouldn't.*
    - *But for a Building Project to be Biblical according to what we're about to read in verses 2-3, the undershepherds of the Church are to cast the vision, lead, and be respected.*
  - A year and a half ago now is when God came to me and told me it was time to start this. When God told me that while I was on retreat in December of 23, I came back told some key lay leaders, and then we go to work.
    - *All of this was contingent on the Lord telling me as the Leader and*

*Undershepherd of the congregation, 'it's time'.*

- *The Leaders in this Church understood that and have respected my leadership in this the whole way.*

- I know the plans, but I didn't write the plans. God didn't gift me in that but He did equip others in this Church to do that. My job, as you see these leaders in Ezra 3, was to cast the vision, lead the people, based on what God is and has been telling me.

■ *I don't mean any of this in a cocky or prideful way, but if you trust me to rightly divide the Word of God twice each and every week, to be there for you in your darkest moments, to answer your deep theological questions, then you also have to trust that when God gives me, the undershepherd of this flock a vision, that it comes from Him, and we must follow King Jesus.*

- A Church will not build Biblical if the undershepherd is not leading and presiding.
  - Again, I don't say that to puff up my ego, but based on what we see in these verses.

- There are 2 things here that Godly undershepherds will do to help to keep the Church unified during a building project.

- *An Undershepherd will Pray. (v. 2)*

- 'Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.' Ezra 3:2
- From the unified group, two main leaders step up.

■ *In order for the Altar to be built, and our Field of Dreams, leaders have to step up and immerse. Here, and in most cases, it's God called men.*

- *Jeshua was the High priest, which is why he is mentioned first. He was the High priest because he came from the line of Josadak, the last High priest.*

■ *The fact that the High Priest in Israel at the time, came forward that they may build the altar of God in order to worship, gives divine confirmation for the actions of building and dedicating this altar.*

- It doesn't mean that Jeshua or Zerubbabel, or any Pastor or leader is perfect, but when it's a

God Called man, like Jeshu a in this case, as long as he is earnestly following after God and seeking Him, we must trust.

- *In our culture, specifically in the last 50 years, the actions of few have hurt the reputation of many when it comes to the Pulpit.*

- Our text this morning doesn't state this, but I believe it goes without being said, that Jeshua had prayed over this before he stepped forward, and, God had made it even more clear with Cyrus's edict.

- *As we know in our own Building Initiative, sometimes the hardest part, is getting started.*

- Jeshua, the man of God, stepped up, and got it going.

- *Why did they build the altar first?*

- The historical preceded set by King David, another man of God called by God, may be the reason.
- In 2nd Samuel 24:25, David built an altar right in this spot before there was a temple.

- *The text is clear that they followed the instructions of Moses in the law.*

- They were not going to cut biblical corners! Neither should we!

- According to Exodus 20:25 and Deuteronomy 27:6 they used field stones that had not been chiseled, therefore were not as pretty as those who had been chiseled.

- *One reason I believe God led Moses to implement this law was to keep the people as far away from any potential form of idolatry.*

- *Ezra 4:2 and Jereimah 41:5 seem to allude to the possibility that there may have been a previous altar on this spot.*

- This could be true, but I feel the Jews would have viewed that as defiled if it was there, and wanted to rebuild it in order to do what was Biblically write, according 'to what has been written'.

- *An Undershepherd will Protect. (v. 3)*

- 'They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, burnt offerings morning and evening.' Ezra 3:3
- *Just as God will give an undershepherd of a congregation vision of the future plans for ministry, I believe God can also give undershepherds the discernment to know when it's time to protect the flock.*



- *There are times that Pastors will seek to protect a sheep when at the time, the sheep just feels they are being bullied. When in reality, at least for me in my heart, if I have to tell you a hard truth, make a hard decision that affects or, you put my foot down, it's not because I'm trying to be mean or I'm 'out for you', it's because I want to protect you from what you don't yet see.*
- Verse 3 is clear that they were experiencing fear, but why? Cyrus, the political ruler of this area said they could do this?
  - *Cyrus gave the edict, King Cyrus and his authority were over 500 miles away in Persia, and they didn't leave the 'royal guard' to stay back and help them...*
- *Once the remnant arrived in the Judean region and in Jerusalem together, tension arose between the various people groups of the region who had moved in over the last 70 years while the Jews were in babylon.*
  - While this was indeed still a consequence of their ancestors for disobeying God, they still had the fear that they would be overtaken. They were a small nation compared to the size they once were (over 1 Million).

- *The non-Jewish groups that would've inhabited the land would have been most likely the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and others.*
- *Throughout Ezra-Nehemiah we see a growing animosity between these people and the Jewish community returning from exile.*
  - The believing community was not without outside hostility.
- Let's think about that for just a moment:
  - *As believers in this Church, we have enough hate, animosity and threats from the outside non-Christian world. So why would we make our job as a body of believers harder by starting to turn on one another? WE are not the enemy, and THEY are not the enemy. Satan is.*

**Truth #3: Unwavering Obedience must be Practiced. (vv. 4-7)**

- So far in our text this morning we've seen strong undertones of great obedience.
  - The people left the towns of their ancestors, came back to Jerusalem, listened to Jeshua, and came together.
  - *They did things not according to their liking, but to the law of Moses as written in the Torah.*
    - *If we as God's people are going to build this building, then we must do so God's way, and be fully obedient to Him.*

- Truly an unwavering obedience. Not just preached, but practiced.
  - In verses 4-7, we move from the start and reimplantation of worship by these Jews once again in the seventh month to the regular obedience and practice of sacrificial worship. I believe there are **3** quick things to point out here.
- ***Excuses were not made. (vv. 4-5)***
  - ‘And they kept the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the rule, as each day required, **5** and after that the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the LORD, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the LORD.’
  - ***Not only did they start on the right track with the rebuilding of the altar, they stayed on the right track after the altar was built.***
    - ***It didn’t go in the spiritual trophy case, but a daily spiritual treasure.***
    - ***They didn’t make excuses that they had already built the altar, so why do anything else?***
      - Oftentimes today, in every Church, a person will take the new members class, walk the aisle, join the Church, be

baptized, come for a month and never come back, answer texts, etc.

#### ■ ***Why?***

- ***Excuses were continually made, to the point where they became a truth that was used to cope with that person’s own personal disobedience towards God.***
- ***The regular daily burnt offerings would have been the daily sin offerings and sabbath sacrifices.***
  - So, they weren’t making excuses, they did their timek gave their money, etc. Nope. They dealt with their daily sin, and walked with God.
- We don’t build this building and stop reaching people for Christ, no, we continue.
- ***Everyday Worship continues. (v. 6)***
  - ‘From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.’
  - The point of verse 6 here is that while the sacrificial system was back in place, and had been reinstituted, does not mean that there was still not a lot of work to be done.
    - ***That’s like having many of the ministries in a Church improved and***

*healthy, great music, great teaching,  
and saying, ah, we're good! We're  
comfortable, we're in control, let us be!*

- *Complacency due to control and or comfortability should never be an excuse for not improving in our own spiritual growth to expand the Kingdom of God.*

- *The Jews could have said, why spend all our money building a temple when we can do our sacrifices just fine with this altar?*

- *Because that would not have been obedient to God. There's ALWAYS more we can and should do for the kingdom.*

- And if we are leading a particular ministry and not giving all we can or all that it can be, it's best we let someone who can take the torch, and lead it further for God's Glory.

- *Don't let a ministry suffer, because you care more about your ego.*

- *Expectations were high. (v. 7)*

- 'So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to

the grant that they had from Cyrus king of Persia.'

- When Solomon built the first temple, he hired the Phoenicians of Tyre with Wheat, barley, olive oil and wine according to 2nd Chronicles 2:10, 15, to send cedar pine and logs from Lebanon to Joppa, according to 2nd Chronicles 2:8, 16.
- *This Jewish community was poor, but they had high standards, because they had a HUGE God.*

- This Jewish community was small and poor, but they set high standards of themselves in doing God's Work.

- *In our discussion in our building planning team, we have discussed not doing certain things that may be cheaper, simply because we want this to be the best it can be.*

- *We don't want the community to say 'well they cut corners just to get it built', no, we want them to say 'they were patient, trusted God, and did the best that they could possibly do while having total faith and surrender in God'.*

- *Whether buildings or ministry, we should seek to do our absolute best for God.*

**Conclusion:**

- A heavy message for sure. But I believe that what we find in Ezra 3:1-7, are the essentials for ministry when building.
  - We must keep these in mind as we go forward with what and where God is leading us.
- ***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)***