

## EZRA PREPARED HIS HEART

*Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.*

Ezra was a captive in Babylon. His people were in exile because they rebelled against God in the days of Jeremiah. Now, however, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, the seventy years of judgement in Babylon were about to be over. “For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10). In fact, the prophet Daniel already realized that the time had come for this prophecy to be fulfilled. “In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:2). It doesn’t matter what the circumstances of our lives are – captive, president etc. What matters is whether we know what the word of God says about the time we live in. To be ignorant of the prophetic clock of God is the most dangerous kind of ignorance.

*Deut 28:13 And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:*

Ezra knew the time for deliverance was at hand; the time to no longer be a hated foreigner in the land of the Babylonians. One of the most painful experiences for a foreigner is to be told “Go back to your country”. In exile, the children of Israel understood the great blessings which they took for granted and lost. How often were their souls vexed when they saw the idols of the land of Babylon? Who would want to listen to their stories about Abraham, David and Hezekiah? They must have been spat upon, verbally and physically abused. What do you do in such circumstances? Complaining and grieving is useless; hopelessness and pessimism is not an option. The answer is to prepare our hearts to seek the law of God, do it and teach it to others. That is the way to prepare to leave Babylon and come back to the land of God – and, most importantly, stay there forever. Let us begin with the first one: prepare to seek the word of God.

*Isaiah 26:9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

Why seek the word of God? Simply because the gifts of God can only be understood and enjoyed through a knowledge of God's word. The Land of Canaan was God's gift to Israel. There was a condition to the land, though: "Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt" (Deut 29: 24,25). Ezra knew fully well why his people were cast out, so he prepared his heart to seek the Lord of the land and never experience this again. Ezra also knew fully well why only two individuals, Caleb and Joshua, entered the Holy Land: they had prepared their hearts to seek the Lord of the Land of Canaan. In the same way, saints of God, do you not think that only those who prepare their hearts for heaven will enter heaven? "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Ezra not only prepared his heart but did what he learned from the word of God. There are many people who know the word of God well, but they feel no burden to implement the word of God in their lives. The biggest problem with many of the generation in the days of the Lord was that they did not love God. "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you" (John 5:42). Without loving God it is impossible to live for him and obey his word. Ezra determined to obey the word of God in Babylon. If one can obey the word of God in a hostile country such as Babylon, then it should be easy to do so in God's own country, Israel.

Finally, Ezra was determined to teach the word of God to Israel. To teach is a calling. It is a calling of sacrifice, love and labor. A teacher not only loves knowledge but rejoices to see others appreciate and grow in knowledge. What is better than to see other people grow in the knowledge and grace of the Lord? "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19). To be a teacher is to be patient with all, adjust and adapt to all and pray for all always. But it also means to challenge the rebellious and fight for the truth, as Ezra did. "Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore" (Ezra 10:1). Ezra did not leave them until they obeyed the word of God. May the spirit of Ezra grip our hearts and minds!