

Renewed In Purpose

Series: Renewal

Ezra 1 – 3

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Sermon Outline

INTRODUCTION

- Give historical background to the setting of Ezra
- In this book, the story is told of a people, who forgot who they were and what they were made for and needed to learn again what means to live as God's holy people, set apart for His purpose and His glory.
- We are going to consider what it meant for God's people of old to live for God's big vision and for God's purposes in their generation, in prayerful expectation that God will renew in us in our passion to live for God's purposes in our generation!

I. WHAT WAS THEIR PURPOSE?

- In short, their big vision, their purpose was to live lives of worship for the glory of God.
- The temple was the place God prescribed in the law of Moses for His people to come and worship Him and enjoy fellowship with Him. They were to go, and rebuild not a monument, but Cyrus said they were to go (chapter 1 verse 3), to rebuild the "house of the LORD."
- In their generation, it was God's will that His chosen people rebuild the temple in order that they might worship God according to his Word. Passion to worship and glorify God in this way consumed their hearts. In the same way, that passion should consume us.
- Our "big vision", our "big dream" or you could say our big purpose in life must be to exalt and worship God with our lives, to give ourselves see Christ exalted and the church built. Lesser dreams lead to wasted lives, as Israel's own history confirms. That's why, if we want our lives to count, this theme and this passion to glorify God in His way and in His place must set the course for everything that we do.

- One way to apply this might be to ask yourself, “like the OT saints in our story, is my heart taken with the big dream, the big vision of exalting God with my life”? In other words, “when I go to work, when I serve my spouse or my kids, or when I serve in the church – what drives me? Is it a passionate longing for God to be exalted in my life and in the lives of those I relate to? Or am I driven by other good desires – but desires that don’t connect in my heart to God and His glory?”
- You can parent your child with biblical principles because you want them to be model American citizens. However, that is not the primary goal and purpose of parenting! The primary goal of Christian parenting is that our children might bring glory to God with their lives.
- Consider your involvement in the local church. Its not uncommon for people and even pastors to serve faithfully in the church and yet, in the midst of the labor, to lose sight of the big picture. Our goal is to worship God in the way and in the place that he has specified. Its to be transformed by Christ-exalting worship, to be filled with the Spirit in that worship, and from that place and in that power, to see the knowledge of God reach the world. In other words, our aim is to be a people transformed by the gospel, empowered by God’s Spirit, reaching our world.
- The goal is to make a contribution to seeing God exalted in the lives of your fellow church-members, in those who visit, and in those unbelievers we reach out to with the love of Christ.
- The point is this: Our purpose in life must be to worship and bring glory to God with our lives. This theme and this passion must motivate us in every aspect of life.

II. WHAT DID IT TAKE TO FULFILL GOD’S PURPOSE?

- In this story we discover that rebuilding the temple required from the people at least three things: generous giving, obedience and hard work.

III. WHAT DID THEY GAIN?

- Or you could say, what did living for God’s purpose get them? Here’s the surprising answer: A mixture of joy and sorrow.
- At the end of our chapter, God’s people finish laying the foundation of the temple. We might expect that this only brought happiness and joy. But

that's not the case. The completion of the foundation brought both joy and sorrow.

- Many praise God with song and rejoicing, for we see the people singing in verse 11 "For he is good for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." But in verse 12 surprisingly, we find some of the old men weeping.
- Weeping? God acts. God moves. God restores. And what do we find? Joy and weeping. "Why weeping" we might ask? Well because some of the old men, who remembered Solomon's temple, realized that this temple, that this new temple would probably not be nearly as glorious as the old temple they left behind when they were taken away.
- In living for the worship of God – there is not only great joy (though there is great joy), but there is at times weeping as well. In a fallen world, sometimes the dreams we have for our lives, even good dreams, only go partially fulfilled or not fulfilled at all.

CONCLUSION

- A passion for God to be exalted must give direction to everything you do. In joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health you must not forget your ultimate, your primary purpose in life and settle for less - because God has created you for so much more! "What is the chief end of man?" The Westminster Catechism asks, and we respond "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever."
- May God cause you to dream dreams with His glory in view; and may Christ, in ever increasing measure, be exalted in your lives individually, in your families, and in our shared life together as a local church.

Take It Home Questions

- 1) What did living for God's glory involve for the people in our story?
- 2) What desires / dreams do you have for you and/or your family?
- 3) Is it possible to apply biblical principles *for selfish reasons* - with little or no regard for God and His glory? Explain.
- 4) If good desires somehow become disconnected from a greater desire to see God glorified – what's the danger?
- 5) What one desire/dream in your own life needs to become more strongly connected in your own heart to God's glory? This could be something related to your employment, family life etc...
- 6) Spend a few moments praying and asking that God would help you to live more passionately for God's glory.

