

RETURNING TO THE HOUSE OF GOD

Study of the Remnant Return from Babylon

August 13, 2008

Andrew Dennison

I. INTRODUCTION:

Readings: Gen 28:13, 16-17
Exd 25:8-9
II Chronicles 5:14
Ezra 1:1-5, 3:8, 4:1-5,24, 5:1-2, 6:14-15
Haggai 1:1-5, 13
Zechariah 4:6
Matthew 18:20
I Timothy 3:14-15

Obvious connection of O.T. House of God and the N.T Assembly
Worship is integral to the topic, but excluded as it was covered in a previous meeting.

II. WHAT IS THE HOUSE OF GOD?

Returning to What?

A. First Mention: Gen 28: 10-22 – Jacob says *“this is none other than the House of God”*
House implies a household or dwelling place

Divine Revelation: In a dream = apart from the will of man

1. Person Revealed: (v13)

A Name = *“I am the Lord God of Abraham and Isaac”*

Matt 18:20 – *“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I...”*

The person of Christ is central!

2. Promises Given: (vs. 13-15)

Property = specific physical location - *“There am I”* (Mt 18:20)

People = innumerable people and blessing to all people

Protection = I am with thee and will keep thee

Promises are trustworthy because it's the Word of God

3. Praise Produced: Jacob's Reaction (vs. 16-17)

Acknowledges the Lord's Presence – *“Surely the Lord is in this Place”*

I Cor 14:25 – one in the seat of the unlearned says *“God is in you of a truth”*

Afraid - *“How dreadful is this place”* – Awesome, fear, and reverence

Administration and Authority - Gate of Heaven

Matt 18:18 *“Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven...”*

4. Pillar Raised: (v.18)

Set up Pillar = memorial

I Tim 3:15 *“...the house of God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth”*

B. The Tabernacle

Exd 23:19 and 34:26 First fruits to be brought to the “House of the Lord”

1. Presence of the Lord:

Exd 25:8 *“... that I may dwell among them”*

Matt 18:20 *“...there am I in the midst...”* – reference the Shechinah cloud

2. Pattern Followed:

Exd 25:9 *“according to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle...”*

Exd 36:1, Ch 39 & 40 *“According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses”*

The House of God is a Positive Pattern in the Word of God

Positive: Break Bread 1st day of the week using bread and wine

Seat of the “unlearned” – I Cor. 14

Covered heads of sisters (uncovered of brothers) – I Cor. 11

Negative: No mention of musical instruments – so we have none

No mention of priest, robes – so we have none

No mention of altar calls – so we have none

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C. The Temple

1. Preoccupation with the House of God – David

I Ch. 22:7 “...it was in my mind to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God”

Ps 27:4 “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

2. Preparations for building the House of God – I Ch. 22 David gathers the materials

3,750 tons of gold = \$100 Billion & 37,500 tons of silver = \$20 Billion

Brass and iron without weight plus timbers and stones

3. Passing the Plans of the House of God - to Solomon

I Ch 28:11-12 Solomon was carefully instructed to follow the pattern

No room for human imagination – it was a type of Christ

No room for human ingenuity – It was the place to meet God

4. Precision in building the House of God – II Ch 3 and 4

5. Presence Fills the House of God – II Ch. 5:13-14

Cloud of Glory filled the House of God

6. Peril of the House of God - 586 B.C.

Destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem - II Ch. 36:11-23

Why?

- Leaders (King Zedekiah) did evil in the sight of the Lord his God
- Respect lacking (no humbling) before the Word of God – Jeremiah
- Rebellion against authority – God’s controls governments
- Repentance rejected: Stiffened necks and hardened hearts
- Priest transgressions (Overstepped the Law)
and abominations (Outsourced the Lord) – a rival
- Polluted the House of God – unclean were brought in to the holy
- Rejected God’s kindness (should have lead to repentance)
Mocked the messengers
Despised the message
Misused the prophets

What? Fulfill the prophecy of Jeremiah = Wrath of God

- Slew the young men
- No compassion on anybody (Men/Women, Young/Old)
- All the treasures are taken
- Burnt the House of God
- Broke down the walls of Jerusalem
- Those left alive carried away captive to Babylon
- Land got its Sabbaths – Jer. 29:10, II Ch. 36:21
490 years of sin, 1 in 7 Sabbaths, therefore 70 years of rest
70 Year of rule “FOR” Babylon, not at Babylon
Only 51 years out of the land completely (587 BC to 536 BC)

D. CONCLUSION

1. Testimony/Witness/Memorial to a Person/Name:

Jacob: Pillar set up and a person recognized

Tabernacle: Dwelling place and presence of the Lord

Temple: Presence filled the place

I Tim 3:15 “...the House of God, which is the pillar...” – Memorial

His Name is the center of gathering

2. Truth/Promises/Pattern of the Word of God

Jacob: Given great promises

Tabernacle: Based on the pattern given to Moses

Temple: Passing of the pattern and its eventual rejection

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I Tim 3:25 "...the House of God, which is the...ground of truth"

Ground = bulwark, support of The Truth

III. HOW WILL RETURN HAPPEN?

A. Supernatural Circumstances: (Ezra 1:1-4)

1. The Proclamation of Cyrus king of Persia
The Proclamation: II Ch. 36:22-23 = Ezra 1:1-3a
Cyrus specifically prophesied by name Isa. 44:28, 45:1 (150 yrs)
2. Jeremiah's prophecy fulfilled = Word of the Lord Jer. 25:10-14
3. The Lord Stirred up Cyrus – Heathen Gentile king
4. "Charged me to build him a House at Jerusalem" (Notice 4x at Jerusalem)
Revival is going to require and act of God! Are we praying for revival?

B. Sensitivity to the Spirit: (Ezra 1:5-6)

1. Who will Go! – There is a cost
Journey 700 to 900 miles, 4 or 5 months
Leave prosperity of Babylon
Purpose = Build the House of the Lord God at Jerusalem
2. Who will Give! – silver, gold, goods, livestock + freewill offerings
Some say they plundered Babylon like they did Egypt
Freewill offerings implies at least some were Jews who didn't go
3. Who Went?
Chief fathers of Judah and Benjamin – Governmental Leaders
Priest and Levites – Religious Leaders
All them whose spirit God raised up
"Remnant" = 50,000 people
People denoted by where they live – Jericho, Bethlehem, Ai
People denoted by their families – Joshua, Joab,
People denoted by their occupations
– Levites, Singers, Gatekeepers, outsiders, Priests (some excluded)
Are we willing? Are we listening and sensitive to the Spirit's call?

C. Sacrifices of Worship: (Ezra 3:1-7)

Build the Alter (Bronze alter of the courtyard)

1. To offer burnt offerings
2. Daily (am & pm) sacrifices
3. Feast of Tabernacles
4. Seasonal feasts (new moons)
5. All the feasts of the Lord
6. Freewill offerings
7. "As it is written in the Law of Moses"

D. Setting the Cornerstone: (Ezra 3: 8-13)

Laying the Foundation of the House of God at Jerusalem

When: 2nd Year of king Cyrus, 2nd Month

Who: Leaders: Zerubbabal and Joshua

Priests and Levites - (age 20+) were appointed to serve

All who came out of the captivity

Reaction: Old men wept – because they remember former glory

Young men shouted for joy

E. Succumbing to Opposition - Ezra 4

1. **Infiltration:** (ecumenicalism) – "Let us build together with you"
We seek the same God – Same faith? Blasphemy!

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We sacrifice to the same God – Same worship? Blasphemy!

Do we serve the same God as Islam, JW, Mormons, or “Christians”?

Solution: Total outright refusal!

2. **Frustration:** Discourage – No details given
Weakened their hands
 - Are we slack in our work because of our smallness? “Be Strong” - Haggai
 - Troubled them in building
 - Are we anxious or uneasy because of our enemies? “Fear Not” - Haggai
 - Counselors to frustrate them – Are we listening to Truth that encourages, or “truth that divides?” – “I am with you” & “According to the Word” - Haggai
 3. **Accusation:** (Could be out of sequence – Nehemiah’s day)
 - False motives assigned: They will rebel and not pay taxes
 - False exaggerations: They are rebuilding the walls
 - False self aggrandizement: Writers are looking to protect the king
 - Drudge up the past
 4. **Cessation:**
Successful in stopping the building the House of God for 16 years
- F. Submission to the Scriptures:** (Ezra 5:1 – 6:15)
Resumption of the Rebuilding of the House of God triggered by a Word from God
Then it was Prophets. Today it reading and hearing God’s Word
1. **Ministry of God’s Messengers:** (Ezra 5:1)
Two Prophets: Haggai – Stir up to practical holiness today
Zechariah – Stir up in light of coming glory
- Haggai:**
Duration of Prophecy: 4 Prophecies in 4 months
Key Verse: Ch 1:13 “Came the Word of the Lord” – Divine instruction x25
- a. **Challenges Their Condition:** Ch 1:1-15
 - The Condition of their Living Quarters:
Peoples homes vs. The House of God
Paneled (roof or luxury) vs. Ruin (burnt with fire)
 - The Condition of their Lives:
 - Get the people to think – “Consider”
 - Get them to think personally – “Your”
 - Get them to think practically – “Ways”
 - The Condition of their Livelihoods
No satisfaction in sowing, eating, drinking, clothing or wages
 - Response: Rare rapid obedience to a prophet
Obedience of Zerubbabal, Joshua, and all the remnant
 - b. **Challenges Their Courage:** (Ch 2:1-9)
Question: Compare New House to Old House
Encourages in the face of discouragement
 - “Be strong three times (each worker above)
 - I am with you
 - According to the word
 - Spirit among you
 - Do not fear
 - Promise of greater glory in the future
 - c. **Challenges Their Consecration:** (Ch 2:10-19)
Question: What makes things Holy or Defiled?
The Holy imparts NO holiness to anything unclean
The defiled imparts defilement to everything holy.
Work and Worship don’t sanctify sin, but sin ruins work and worship!
 - d. **Challenges Their Coming Christ (Messiah):** (Ch 2:20-23)

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Promise of Future rule and dominion over the earth
Ruler – signet ring – seal of royal authority and ownership
Zerubbabal, my servant, “I have chosen you

Zechariah:

Duration at least 2 years, probably more – contemporary of Haggai

Motivates based on the future:

Immediate fulfillment Zerubbabal will finish the House of God

Christ 1st Advent fulfillment – King coming on a donkey

Christ 2nd Advent fulfillment – Lord’s coming to the Mount of Olives

Very Messianic with 41 quotations in the NT

Dated Prophecies: Ch 1–7

Visions (7 to 10): Horse, Horns, Measuring Line, High Priest, Lampstand,

(Flying scroll, Ephah, Woman in basket, Four Chariots

Undated Prophecies: Ch 8-14

- God is zealous for Jerusalem

- God is angry with the nations

- God promises “My Servant the Branch”

2. Motivation of God’s Men: (Ezra 5:2, 6:14)

Those who responded to the Word of God

a. Zerubbabal – Governor

Descendant of David – I Ch. 3:19

In the lineage of Christ! - Matt 1:12

b. Jeshua, - The High Priest

Descendant of Aaron

c. All the remnant – “children of the captivity”

d. Prophets join the project

3. Maturation of God’s Mansion: (Ezra 6:15)

What: The House of God was finished: Ezra 6:15

When: 6th Year of Darius, 12th Month (Adar), 3rd Day

How: According to the command of God (and the help of kings)

Why: They built and prospered under the ministry of Haggai & Zechariah

G. Sainly Activities: (Ezra 6:16-22)

1. Sacrifice: Sin offering for all Israel
2. Sanctification: Setting apart priest and Levites for service:
3. Consecration: For the service of God
4. Salvation: The children of the captivity kept the Passover
5. Separation: From the filthiness of the heathen of the land

VI. CONCLUSION

A. Rebuilding of God’s House:

- Presence and Name of God – “In my name, there am I in the midst”
- Truth of God (Word of God) – “Pillar and ground of the truth”

B. Revival of God’s People:

- God must act – supernatural circumstances
- People must listen – sensitive to the Spirit
- Others must be ignored – succumbing to opposition can’t happen
- Word of God must have priority – submission to the scriptures