

Outline

I. Review of Last Week's Teaching

- A. Church returning from exile to renewal
- B. Three big takeaways from Ezra Part 1
 - 1. God uses men and women anchored in His Word
 - 2. Holiness still matters
 - 3. Renewal begins with repentance

II. Introduction to Today's Focus

- A. Looking inward at the heart rather than outward at the world
- B. Genuine holiness starts with the Word changing hearts
- C. Big idea: God uses people whose hearts are re-aligned around His Word

III. Who Ezra Really Was (Ezra 7:1-6, 10)

- A. More than a logistics coordinator
- B. Priestly lineage traced back to Aaron
- C. "A scribe skilled in the Law of Moses" (sopher mahir)
- D. Living a Word-ordered life in an idol-ordered culture
- E. Only 50,000 of 1,000,000 exiled Jews chose to return

IV. The Foundation: Ezra's Prepared Heart (Ezra 7:10)

- A. Hebrew meaning of "prepared" - fixed, firm, established
- B. Heart as inner control center (mind, will, affections, conscience)
- C. Ezra placed Torah at the center of his being
- D. Result: "the gracious hand of the Lord his God was upon him"

V. Three-Fold Pattern of Devotion (Ezra 7:10)

A. Study the Word (lidrosh)

1. Prophetic inquiry and serious investigation
2. Not casual browsing but deep digging
3. Contrast with modern superficial engagement

B. Practice the Word (la'asot)

1. Order is crucial: seek then do
2. Obeying and carrying out commandments
3. Modern church stalls at study without obedience

C. Teach the Word

1. Only after seeking and doing
2. Teaching what has been lived through obedience
3. Exposing the idol of giftedness over character

VI. The Real Problem: Idol-Shaped Hearts in Temple-Shaped Lives

A. External revival without internal transformation

B. Prophets exposing divided hearts (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

C. God sends a scribe, not a general

D. Modern parallel: Sunday worship vs. Monday living

E. Common idols today

1. Idol of comfort
2. Idol of image
3. Idol of control

VII. Moving from Symbolic Worship to Substantive Holiness

A. Word is read clearly (Ezra chapters 7-10, Nehemiah 8)

1. Emphasis on clarity, not cleverness

B. Word pierces deeply

1. People weep when sin is exposed
2. Scripture contradicts and convicts

C. Word practically reorders lives

1. Concrete reforms
2. Rearranged calendars, bank accounts, relationships, habits

VIII. Speaking Plainly to the American Church

A. Sunday as "religious service" vs. real life

B. Jesus as Savior but not Lord

C. Modern golden calves

1. Jesus who never disagrees
2. Gospel that forgives but never transforms
3. Worship that entertains but never confronts

D. Question: Are we more Babylonian than we realize?

IX. Life Change Challenge

A. Set a fixed daily time to read Scripture

1. Slowly read one chapter
2. Write one sentence of personal obedience

B. Obey one concrete command within 24 hours

C. Share learning with one person before next Sunday

X. Closing Call

A. Move from attending temple to preparing hearts like Ezra

B. Commitment to seek, do, and teach His Word