

Lent 2020 - Part 3
Wrestling with Ezra
Ezra 7-10
March 15th, 2020

I. UNDERSTANDING the FLOW of “Ezra-Nehemiah.”

- A. Rebuild the TEMPLE. (Ezra 1-6)**
- B. Rebuild the TORAH COMMUNITY (Ezra 7-10)**
- C. Rebuild the CITY of JERUSALEM. (Nehemiah)**

To grasp the heart of the message today it is important to start by locating it within the larger context. Ezra and Nehemiah are really two parts of one book. And this “one book” tells the story of the exile through the lens of three main characters: Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

1. Kid’s question: When have you had to completely start something over? How did you feel when you had to do that?
2. What areas of your own life feel like you have to start over from scratch? Is that hard to do? How do you feel about it?

II. Ezra, the LAW, and the COMMUNITY. (Ezra 7-10)

- A. A NEW MOSES. (Ezra 7-8)**
- B. An ATTEMPT to return to the LAW. (7:13-14,25-26)**
- C. An UNCOMFORTABLE course of ACTION. (Ezra 9-10)**

Ezra’s return happens around 60 years after the temple is built. Artaxerxes sends him back to make sure the Jewish law was being taught and followed. This was a pretty typical practice of the Persians who allowed for religious freedom of those that they ruled over. But the story is a little complicated.

3. What stands out to you the most from the text of Ezra 7-10? What parts do you like? What parts are difficult?
4. What role does “the law of God” play in your day to day life? How do you feel about the “law”?

III. A DIFFERENT take on these PASSAGES. (2 Tim. 2:15)

- A. The VISION of the PROPHETS. (Zech 2:10-13; 6:15; 8:20-23; Mal. 2:16)**
- B. The TEACHING of the LAW. (Ex. 34:15,16; Dt. 7:3-4)**
- C. The ACTIONS of those RETURNING. (4:1-3; 10:3-44)**
- D. Is this DESCRIPTIVE or PRESCRIPTIVE? (Remember Samson)**

This is where we cover some challenging ground. What if we have been reading these passages from the wrong perspective? How do they stack up with the words of the prophets who were speaking for God around the same time? What we find might surprise you.

5. Jeff presents a different take on Ezra than you may have had in the past. Do you agree or disagree? What difference does your interpretation of these stories make?
6. Does the idea that some passages are descriptive rather than prescriptive change how you view other texts? If so, which ones?

IV. What this might be SAYING to us TODAY. (2 Tim. 2:15)

- A. Read the WHOLE of SCRIPTURE. (2 Peter 3:15-16)**
- B. God's HEART is for the WORLD. (Zech 2:10-11; Jn 3:16)**
- C. External CONTROL doesn't bring inward CHANGE. (Col. 2:22-23)**

The challenge is taking these ideas and applying them to where we are today. Scripture is not just a historical document that we seek to understand. It is the living word of God that speaks into our lives and echoes the call of Jesus - "Follow Me!" How does that look today?

7. How does the challenge "Read the whole of Scripture" strike you? Are you excited by it or intimidated? What are your concerns?
8. If external control doesn't bring inward change what does? How can you surrender to that?