

May 29, 2011



Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Restoration & Reformation A Study of Ezra

Date	Lesson	Text
04/10	Introduction	
04/17	God's Way Of Renewal	1:1-11
04/24	Evidences of the Resurrection	
05/01	Lessons From A List	2:1-70
05/08	New Beginning With God	3:1-13
05/15	Spiritual Setbacks	4:1-24
05/22	Discouragement	5:1-17
05/29	God - Cause of our Joy	6:1-22
06/05	The Life that God Blesses	7:1-28
06/12	Work that God Blesses	8:1-36
06/19	Godly Reaction to Sin	9:1-15
06/26	Genuine Repentance	10:1-44
07/03	Summary and Review	

Food for Thought

The Power Of Praise

If you find yourself wearing a spirit of heaviness, try on a garment of praise. Praise, my soul, the King of heaven, To His feet your tribute bring; Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, Evermore His praises sing.

The Lord has anointed Me . . . to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning
(Isa 61:1, 3 NKJV)

(From "Our Daily Bread", Apr 05, 2010)

GOD - THE CAUSE OF OUR JOY

Ezra 6:1-22

KEY THEME:

God's aim is to give us great joy in Him and His sovereign ways

COMMENTARY:

How high is the pursuit of joy on your priority list? Many Christians view the Christian life primarily in terms of duty and obedience, and those are not minor themes in the Bible. John Piper has helpfully modified the classic sentence: "The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever" Thus if glorifying God is our highest aim, then finding joy and satisfaction in God must be our deliberate, lifelong, consuming pursuit. To the degree that we fall short of fullness of joy in God, we fail to glorify Him as He deserves. The joy that God imparts to His people is the theme of Ezra 6. Joy and gladness in the Lord are not minor themes in the Bible. Joy in the Lord is not an optional or secondary matter for the believer. Rather, it is the very essence of the Christian faith (Ps 43:4; Ps 32:11; Ps 5:11; Ps 16:11; Phil 4:4).

Our text unfolds five strands of the joy that God wants us to have as His people. (1) **God wants us to know the joy of His providential care for us.** God's remarkable providential care for His people underlies this entire account. God's providence is seen in the very fact of the king finding the decree of Cyrus from some 18 years before, in Darius telling Tattenai to keep away from the project (6:6), in funding the project out of his tax revenues (6:8-9), and in the fact that the building was completed according to God's command, and also "the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes" (6:14). Do you see and rejoice in God's providential care for you in every little as well as major thing that happens to you? Jesus told us that not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from the Father, and that He even knows the number of the hairs on our heads. Therefore, we should not fear, but should trust in God (Matt. 10:29-31). (2) **God wants us to know the joy of His provision for us.** The Lord does not usually use pagan governments as the main source of material support for His church. God is the one who provides for His church as we wait upon Him through faith and prayer. And when we see God's provision, we should be filled with joy. We should rejoice daily not only in how God provides for the work of His church, but also in how He provides for our personal needs. (3) **God wants us to know the joy of productivity in our service for Him.** The temple was finally finished, about 20 years after the foundation was laid, and just over four years after the rebuilding began again under the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah. While we can and should rejoice at the completion of a building project, we should find much greater joy when we see the Lord using us in the building of His spiritual temple, the church. (4) **God wants us to know the joy of praising Him corporately.** When the temple was completed, the people gathered and "celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy" (6:16). Sincere and heartfelt joy must accompany our praise in order for the praise to be genuine. Spontaneous praise is good when you're alone, but it's better when you share the experience with others. (5) **God wants us to know the joy of purity and obedience to Him.** For there to be true joy in our worship, there must be holiness in our lives. We must separate ourselves from the impurity of the nations. Purity and obedience are at the heart of true joy. Sin gives brief pleasure but lasting scars and pain.

C. S. Lewis said, "The ultimate purpose of God in all his work is to increase joy" (source unknown). God's aim is to give us great joy in Him and His sovereign ways. Only when we have true joy in God will we glorify Him as we should.

(Adapted from "Sermons on Ezra" by Steven Cole)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

God wants us to know the joy of His providential care for us

Providential care over life (Job 34:14-15)
Providential care over of all destiny (Ps 135:6-7)
Providential care over creation (Amos 4:13)
Providential care over all authority (Matt 28:18)
Providential care over time and places (1 Cor 12:18)

God wants us to know the joy of His provision for us

Provisions through God using others (2 Cor 8:14)
Provisions through God's supplying directly (2 Cor 9:10)
Provisions of faith (1 Thess 3:10)
Provisions that should evoke thanksgiving to God (2 Cor 9:12)
Provisions through God's glorious riches (Phil 4:19)

God wants us to know the joy of productivity in our service for Him

Productivity because of fearing God (Ps 128:1-2)
Productivity that results in rewards from God (1 Cor 3:8)
Productivity through giving all of one's strength to the work of God (1 Cor 15:58)
Productivity through work produced in love and faith (1 Thess 1:3)
Productivity from God because He is the one who establishes the work of man's hands (Ps 90:17)

God wants us to know the joy of praising Him corporately

Corporate worship before God (Ps 22:27-28)
Corporate worship so that we may give thanks, and praise to God (Ps 106:47)
Corporate worship full of joy and thanksgiving (Ps 100:2-5)
Corporate worship where Jesus' presence is found (Matt 18:19-20)
Corporate worship where the power of Jesus is displayed (1 Cor 5:4)
Corporate worship signifying that saints haven't forgotten to assemble (Heb 10:25)

God wants us to know the joy of purity and obedience to Him

Purity that leads us to help others (James 1:27)
Purity that comes from the hope and trust in God (1 John 3:3)
Purity that comes from obedience (1 Peter 1:22)
Obedience that is consistent with God's will (Isa 58:6-9)
Obedience that delights God (1 Sam 15:22)
Obedience that is from humble, praying, repentant people of God (2 Chron 7:14)
Obedience that is bold and steadfast (Dan 3:16-18)