

Ezra 3—Restored to Worship

• Intro

- Mulligans
 - Wouldn't it be great to get a mulligan for LIFE—job, a night, a decision, a semester, a month, etc.
 - The God of the Bible loves to give mulligans...do-overs. He ALWAYS does so by his GRACE and MERCY (all the way from the Garden)!!
 - You feel like you are looking for a 2nd chance; a fresh start; a new lease on life.
 - Something happens in your life and you start really thinking about your life and priorities and values and you are wanting to reshape the rest of your life.
 - This is where these returned exiles are—their SUFFERING in captivity in Babylon has caused them to think and consider their priorities as they get this SECOND CHANCE.
 - We have a do-over...What are we going to be about as a people!?
 - 2 Kings 17:7-18—And this [exile] occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God...and walked in the customs of the nations...they served idols, of which the Lord said to them, “you shall not do this.”...They went after false idols and became false...And they abandoned all the commandments of the Lord their God.
 - At the core of their do-over is a passion for WORSHIP—it was ULTIMATELY IDOLATRY (MISPLACED WORSHIP) THAT SENT THEM TO CAPTIVITY and it is worship that is at the core of their return.

• True Worship is Rooted in Obedience (v.2,4,10)

- v.2—“as it is written”...v.4—“as it is written”...v.10—“according to the directions of David”
 - They are INTENT on walking according to the Word of God
- Identity—v.1—“children of Israel”—all that comes in the rest of this chapter is the overflow of the reality that God has made Israel his children! Our obedience is always a RESPONSE to our identity!
- May we not get so sophisticated that we stop caring about what the Book says!
- Restoration in our lives STARTS with us returning to a heart for obedience—for at the core of obedience is COMMUNION with the Lord.
- The question of the Word is NOT in “knowing” but in DOING what we know!
- Deep Desire for Obedience:
 - v.3—“in its place”—2 Chronicles 3
 - Seventh Month—Leviticus—most important month for the Israelites
 - “Burnt offerings”—Leviticus 1—all about being set apart/consecrated to the Lord
 - v.7—1 Kings 5/2 Chron. 2—they are building and acting in the exact same way!
- Application:
 - No question—the authority for these people is the Word...is it our authority?
 - Are YOU supreme and thus you call your shots, or is God supreme?

• True Worship Begins with Atonement (v.1-7)

- v.2—Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.
- The rhythm of the Bible and the gospel is that believers are set free FROM sin and set free TO worship!
 - Exodus 8:1—they were ABLE to serve/worship since they were OUT of slavery

- These Israelites, in Babylon with no land and no altars, COULD NOT worship and now, because of deliverance, they are free to worship!
- Very interesting—you can have an altar with no temple but no temple w/o an altar
- Hebrews 9:22—without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin.
- Application:
 - What slavery, sin, exile are you in the midst of that is preventing worship?
 - Are you walking in the freedom of forgiveness?
- True Worship Celebrates God's Presence (v.8-13)
 - Be invited INTO this narrative—you've been exiled, far from God, hopeless and destitute; you return to your land and resume offering sacrifices for the sake of enjoying the atoning work of God; the foundation of the temple gets laid, where you can meet with God...in light of all that, PRAISE erupts! These people GET God's grace and are RESPONDING in worship!
 - Their worship was a LIFESTYLE of worship, not just an EVENT of worship
 - Feasts, daily sacrifices, public services...they are re-engaging a LIFE of worship to their God!
 - They now know what matters and what doesn't and they just want to worship!
 - v.10—BUT, they also recognize the beauty and value of coming together to CELEBRATE!
 - Paul Tripp—corporate worship is designed to once again clear up our confusion as to what is truly important in life
 - v.11—Content of their worship—God's Character and God's Covenant
 - Who God is and what he has done for us in Christ, because of his covenant love, is what produces this type of worship!
 - This is so much deeper than merely responding to circumstances!
 - God's promises and character anchor their worship—this is a group of people gathered around a concrete slab!
 - v.12-13—there is already a realization that this moment is NOT the ultimate fulfillment... something more and better is yet to come!
 - Zechariah 3:10—whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.
 - Weeping = longing for a new and better, more glorious temple
 - Jesus is that new and lasting temple, yet like this temple, he would come in obscurity yet would live, die and rise again to become our mediator!
 - Application:
 - How significant is gathered worship to you?
 - Are you rightly responding in worship to the fact that God has delivered you from destruction and saved us? If these people get so excited about the shadow, certainly we can get excited in worship because of what Christ has done for us!
 - Are you IN this narrative? Are you still in exile or have you been rescued by grace?
- Conclusion
 - Desperately want a mulligan—wish you could have a do-over and undo your past?
 - Gospel Invitation—Christ, who never needed a mulligan, became fully exiled from the Father for us.
 - In the gospel, Christ's death and resurrection are your defining past, not your sin/failure!
 - Only in Christ, do we really get a do-over! Ultimately, Jesus is both the sacrifice on the altar, making a way for atonement, AND the new Temple, the place for people to meet with and enjoy the presence of God.