

# Ezra - A Heart Awakened!

**Those who build walls** (in a good way): NEHEMIAH

Walls are necessary to protect and regulate a city so it can prosper. Nehemiah was tasked with rebuilding the city walls and gates. But first, it was God's plan to refocus the people upon rebuilding the temple - because God Himself was the heart of the nation of Israel.

**Those who build hearts** (in a strong way): EZRA

"Now when the seventh month came, and the sons of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as **one man** to Jerusalem. Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brothers arose and 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."

"So they set up the altar on its foundation, for they were **terrified because of the peoples of the lands**; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, burnt offerings morning and evening. They celebrated the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the fixed number of burnt offerings daily, according to the ordinance, as each day required; and afterward there was a **continual burnt offering**, also for the new moons and for all the fixed festivals of the LORD that were consecrated, and from everyone who offered a freewill offering to the LORD." - Ezra 3.1-5

- How long had it been since Solomon's temple had been destroyed? (70-80 years) What makes you afraid?
- What did the priests and builders do even before commencing their rebuilding work? Why did they do it?
- Why is God so interested in the heart over and above our actions of obedience?
- A festival is like a huge party - only better - it is a celebration/more like a party for something special.

**Why was the Temple important to the life of the Jews in Jerusalem and around the world?**

- honoring God together was good for the people's hearts/why were their neighbors so terrifying?
- the Hebrews from around the world were held together by the great feasts, their offerings, and their God-identity
- adopting the identity of the other idolatrous nations would mean they would eventually lose their own

**The power of putting God first...**

Re-building the Temple was a big deal for some of the reasons listed above. But "putting God first" is the most important part of what it means for us to worship and honor God. **We put God first when we...**

- decide to do what is right and reject what is wrong (we need to know what God says to do this!)
- build our lives around God rather than our self interests (self-interest can feel good but leave us empty)

**What do these verses tell us about Ezra's and our qualifications to be God's builder?!**

"Ezra had **committed** himself to **studying** the Revelation of GOD, to **living** it, and to **teaching** Israel to live its truths and ways." - Ezra 7:10

"For I delight in **loyalty** rather than sacrifice, And in the **knowledge of God** rather than burnt offerings." - Hosea 6.6  
Haggai - Zechariah - Malachi were the prophets who spoke during the return and rebuilding of Jerusalem.



## EZRA

## Return/Reform

### RECONSTRUCTION under Zerubbabel

1:3,5; 2:1,2  
Return...2:1,2,68  
Rebuilt...6:15

1-6

### REFORMATION under Ezra

7:25-28  
Return...7:6; 8:31,32  
Reform...10:19

7-10

"For Ezra had set his heart." 7:10