

Gifts for the Temple

Lesson Text: **Ezra 8:24-30**

Bible Background: **Ezra 8:24-30**

Devotional Reading: **Mark 12:38-44**

Keep in Mind: *And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers. (Ezra 8:28 NKJV)*

Aim for Change

“By the end of the lesson, we will: **KNOW** that as an act of worship, we should be willing to give generously of our time and talents to the Lord; **FEEL** that we should give to the Lord; and **GIVE** to the Lord.”

In Focus

“In today’s lesson, we see how Ezra prepared gifts of precious metals that were to be carried by the priests and the Levites to the House of God.”

Lesson Text

Ezra 8:24-30~KJV

24 Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them,

25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered:

26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents;

27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.

28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers.

29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord.

30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

The Lesson

The People, Places and Times

The Exile. The exile was the period when the inhabitants of the land of Israel were taken into captivity. The people of Israel consisted of the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribes of Judah. The land of Israel was in what is known as *the Fertile Crescent which includes modern-day Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Iran*. Led by Moses, the people of Israel fled Egyptian slavery and the people settled in southern Palestine. Generations later, the northern tribes of Israel formed a coalition separately from the Judean king. The southern kingdom of Judah was the counterpart to the northern kingdom of Israel.

Ezra. A priest who descended from Aaron's son Phinehas by way of Zadok (Ezra 7:1–5) and the author of the book of Ezra and probably also of Nehemiah and 1–2 Chronicles. He returned from the exile with Zerubbabel and was practiced in the Law of Moses.”

Background:

The first six chapters of the book of Ezra trace how the exiled people of the southern tribe of Judah returned to Jerusalem. “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, and he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given “me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (He is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. whosoever remained in any place where he sojourned, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. Then rose the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:1–5).”

Fifty-eight years had passed between the dedication of the Temple in 516 B.C. and the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem. “Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra ... went up from Babylon” (7:1, 6). The words “after these” connect the completion of the

building of the Temple with the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem. Because of his skill with the Law of Moses, Ezra came to Jerusalem to deal with questions related to the Law.”

After discovering no Levites were traveling with them, Ezra stopped at the Ahava Canal, sent leaders of his traveling party to approach Iddo,* and made a request of Iddo that he permit some of his ministers to travel with them. Ezra then proclaimed a fast to seek protection from God while they traveled because he had refused the protection of the king. After the fast, they departed, going toward Jerusalem.”

**(This Iddo is whom Ezra refers to when he calls the prophet Zechariah a "son of Iddo" in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. Ezra requested assistance from Iddo to bring servants for the Temple.. The Book of Zechariah 1:1 and 1:7 mention Iddo as the paternal grandfather of Zechariah.)*

Traveling with the money given by the Persian people and the remaining Babylonian exiles, Ezra declared the money they were traveling with as holy to God. “And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers” (8:28). The declaration to call the men and the money they carried holy transferred them from secular to divine service.

I. In Depth

1. Doing Service (Ezra 8:24–27) Ezra led a second group of exiles back to Judah and Jerusalem approximately 80 years after the first group had returned. Even though he knew God promised to protect His people, Ezra still led the people in praying and fasting before such a monumental undertaking; asking God to be with them on the journey (Ezra 8:21–23). As a priest, Ezra “knew God’s blessings are appropriated through prayer” (Life Application Study Bible, NLT, 735).”

Now that they had done their preparatory work, it was time to carry out the service of the Lord, to get the job done. Therefore, Ezra appointed 12 leaders of the priests (Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and 10 other priests) to oversee transporting all the cargo; the silver, the gold, the gold bowls, and the other items, that the king, his council, his leaders, and the people of Israel had presented for the Temple (vv. 24–26). They oversaw a vast treasury that equaled “24 tons of silver, 7,500 pounds of silver utensils, 7,500 pounds of gold, 20 gold bowls, equal in value to 1,000 gold coins, 2 fine articles of polished bronze, as precious as gold” (Life Application Study Bible, NLT, 736). God was with Ezra (a godly leader) and this group of exiles, who traveled the dangerous route back to Judah and Jerusalem, without military escort (8:22). They arrived at their destination after several months without harm.”

2. Consecrated for Service (Ezra 8: 28–30) With his declaration, “Ye are holy unto the Lord: the vessels are holy also” (Ezra 8:28), Ezra commissioned the leaders of the priests and the offerings they carried into service for God. To consecrate simply means to be set apart for the sole purpose of service to God. Every object used in Temple service, therefore, was dedicated to God.

Ezra 1:1 demonstrates how the king of Persia obeyed and then served God. With his statement describing how the Lord stirred up his spirit, the king was being placed into position by God to set the stage for Ezra’s return to Jerusalem. The king continued his declaration of obedience to God by saying, “The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charge me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah” (1:2).”

II. Take Aways

III. Closing Prayer



Our Read-Ahead for: 30 July 2023

Gifts for the Temple

Monday: A single Offering for all Time (**Hebrews 10:1-14**)

Tuesday: Stirred Hearts and Willing Spirits (**Exodus 35:20-29**)

Wednesday: Bring Offerings before the Lord (**Numbers 7:1-6**)

Thursday: Contributing Tithes and Offerings (**2nd Chronicles 31:2-10**)

Friday: More Important Than Offerings and Sacrifices (**Mark 12:28-34**)

Saturday: The Gift of the Poor Widow (**Mark 12:28-34**)

Sunday: The Offering for God's House (**Ezra 8:24-30**)