

Community Group Study Guide

Ezra: A Look Back

Main Idea

The Holy God is Providentially acting to bring about Restoration to His people that they may worship Him

Overview

I. We see the Holiness of God

- A. In the covenant people of God & the manner in which they worship
- B. In the places the Covenant people worshiped – Temple
- C. In the sacrifices they offered
- D. In the people of God's repentance and pursuit of purity
- E. In Judgment and wrath poured out (eventually exhausted on the Cross of Christ)

II. God providentially moves to bring about His good purposes

- A. Stirs in the heart of pagan King Cyrus; Stirs in the heart of ~50K Israelites
- B. He keeps & provides the vessels to adorn and people to rebuild the Temple
- C. He gives the Israelites protection in their travels
- G. He gives them enormous sums of money and animals for sacrifices
- H. He gives them safe harbor and leadership to finally complete the building of Temple
- I. Gives them the Word of God by the provision of Ezra, a man who was "skilled" at Law
 - 1. Ezra knew, taught, and did the Word, thus he had favor of God upon him

III. God is a missionary God

- A. Ezekiel 36.23: God is acting in order to have the nations "know that I am the Lord"
 - 1. God is acting in order to vindicate His holiness among the nations
- B. He is doing so by ushering in the New Covenant (Ezekiel 36.24-27)
 - 1. Take away heart of stone and give a heart of flesh; God will put Spirit of God within them
- C. Ezra opens with the same language
 - 1. "To fulfill prophecies of Jeremiah" (Return from exile & start the process of ushering in the New Covenant)
- D. God is Holy and is Providentially acting through the Israelites to bring about Restoration of His Holy name to the nations through His Son, the Messiah, Jesus Christ

Questions

1. What is meant by the 'Holiness of God'? Think through and discuss. What view does our culture at large have of God? Why?
2. How does the Holiness of God have a bearing upon our lives? How can it cultivate a more fervent life before God?
3. How can the Word of God bring about repentance and a pursuit of purity as it did for the Israelites?
4. What is mean by the 'providence of God'? Is God providentially acting today? If so, how? Why?
5. What is God's mission? What are some ways we can join God on his mission?