

The Meeting at the River

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- [0 : 0 0] Go to Ezra chapter 8. Ezra chapter 8. Ezra's Find Psalm and Back Up, about 4 or 5. Ezra chapter 8. Ezra chapter 8. You can give this a couple of different titles. The requirements for revival or meeting at the river. Those are two very different titles. So, everybody listening? So, alright. Alright. We're going to get to Ezra chapter 8 in just a minute. Let me give you a few other verses first. Ezra and Nehemiah lived at the same time. And Nehemiah writes in his book, Nehemiah chapter 9 verses 5 and 6. Then the Levites, and he names a bunch of them, said, Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever.
- [1 : 2 0] And blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art Lord alone. Thou hast made heaven the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts. The earth and all things that are therein. The seas and all that is therein. Thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshipeth thee. Thou hast made heaven the heaven of heaven. Those verses come at the beginning of a chapter that is a long chapter of praise and confession before the Lord that Nehemiah is writing. And it comes as a result of a revival that has been taking place in Israel. And in Nehemiah chapter 8, Ezra's leading the people. He's showing them things from the word of God and teaching them. And there's a revival that starts. And it's not something that's like, you know, today, if there's going to be a revival, you've got to have a lot of things to get people energized and people, you know, kind of all wound up and stuff and get them going.
- [2 : 2 5] So, Ezra did not do that. Ezra got up and read the word of God to them. You know, contrary to what most people think today, that idea of trying to work people up is not what a revival is. Revival is actually repentance and renewal in our relationship with God. And what it comes down to is instead of us working things up, the revival is God-centered, God-started, God-sustained, God-does-the-work-in-people-s-hearts. And it starts with the word of God being preached and the study of the word of God continuing on. And the proclamation of the word of God to those around us. It all comes back to the word of God. In Nehemiah chapter 8, beginning in verse 1, it says, And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate. And they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

[3 : 45] And he read therein before the street that is before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women and all those that could understand. And the ears of the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood, and he names about seven people on his right hand and seven people on his left hand.

And then in verse 5, it says, And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above the people. And when he opened it, all the people stood up.

And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen. After lifting up their hands, they bowed their heads, and they worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

And he listened to those people again, and it says, And those people caused the people to understand the law, and the people stood in their place. So they read the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sins, and caused them to understand the reading.

[4 : 51] Sure. I'm reading from Nehemiah. I'm coming to Ezra in a minute. Okay. No, I'm coming there. And this is Nehemiah's version of what Ezra did.

And again, did you notice what he did? He read from the book of the law. Where was the praise team?

Where was the, you know, the guest soloists? Where were the, all of those people? How did Ezra get them so emotional about what they were hearing?

It was because they were listening to the word of God. He opened the book up. He started at Genesis 1-1 and read until about Deuteronomy 34. He might have read more than that, but he read at least that much.

And did you notice what it said in verse 6 when I was reading it? Nehemiah 8-6. It said this. Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands.

[5 : 51] And they bowed their heads and they worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. All the emotion came from the reading of the word of God in their hearing.

Think about that. Now, they may not have heard it in a while because it had been lost. But all he is doing is reading to them.

And they're excited about what they're hearing. And then, notice there were people there who says they read it, they interpreted it, they explained it, they told how to apply it to their lives, they gave the sense of it.

That's what revival meetings are all about. We're about to have Mike here starting Sunday. Sunday through next Wednesday. He's going to come in, he's going to preach the word of God.

Are we ready for what he's going to say? Are we ready to hear the things that he's going to do? Probably, yep.

[7 : 10] Yep. Because they're going to read it with a sense of understanding and a sense of urgency and, yeah, probably. Yep.

We'll talk about that more in a minute. So, yep. So, they're hearing the word of God, they're getting at all this. And I can't imagine me standing up here reading Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy to you and having you get all excited about it.

Especially about the time I get to Leviticus, you're going to be all going, I have something to do that already, whether I'm in Leviticus or not. Now, you know, I can't picture you doing that, but they were so excited to hear the word of God.

You know, he got them prepared for what they were going to hear as well. He got them prepared for what they were about to do. So, I want us tonight, I've got a short time, to be prepared for what's going to happen starting Sunday and going through next Wednesday.

When Mike comes in, he's going to take the word of God, he's going to preach it to us, he's going to give us the understanding, he's going to give us the interpretation, he's going to give us the picture so that we can see a picture of who God is.

[8 : 31] And I want us to picture, what is it for a revival to break out amongst a people, amongst the people of God, when the word of God goes out. But, you know, I want us here at the church to understand it's not some sort of man-made thing that we get all, it's the word of God going out.

Ezra, chapter 8. Look with me beginning at verse 21. Ezra, chapter 8, verse 21. Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him.

But his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this, and he was entreated of us.

Notice the first thing they did. Fasted. They fasted. You know, maybe we need to do that this week as we get ready for what's coming up.

[9 : 55] Maybe just taking some time. What is fasting? Well, usually, you know, you think, I don't eat. But it's not just not eating. Okay, I'm just not going to eat this week, or I'm not going to miss this meal or that meal for the purpose, because I want God to do a work.

No, it's a matter of missing those meals, and replacing with time and prayer alone with God. I'm going to miss this meal so that I can spend time with God and pray about what's about to happen.

Pray about what we're about to do. Pray about the way that God's going to lead. See, that's where Ezra was at this point. He wanted the people to be with him, ready to get ready to go to Jerusalem and to take the word of God and take it to the people there.

Sincere communication? Yeah. Yeah. Okay. They're about to embark on a thousand-mile journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.

It's a thousand miles. You would think you're about to walk a thousand miles. So what we need to do is do a carb upload and protein and get ourselves ready to go on this walk, you know, to pump it up and get ready, because it's going to be a long journey.

[11 : 16] Ezra says, no, fast and pray. And do you know one of the things he said? Do you notice one of the things he said there? He said, we're about to go on this journey to go to Jerusalem because God wants us to.

And we've told the king, we believe God wants us to do this. And so therefore, he said, I'm a little embarrassed to ask the king for soldiers and guards to go with us because we said God's going to take care of us.

God's going to meet the need. We kind of have a situation here. We need God to meet the needs. We need God to help us with the things that are taking place in our lives and in our church.

He says, look, go to fasting. Can you imagine taking a group of men, women, and little children on a thousand mile walk?

And then add to that, they're going to add some stuff to take with them. They're going to add some gold and some silver and some other things that are going to weigh them down. But they're going to go and do what they need to do because God has called them to do it.

[12 : 29] And they have a very real understanding. They're going to be vulnerable. They're going to be kind of helpless. They're going to be kind of totally dependent on God, which is not a bad place to be when we're totally dependent on him.

Psalms said, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and son of man that thou visitest him? Have you reached a place where you're totally dependent on God? I have to trust God for everything in my life.

And Ezra understood that when you did that, you come before God and you rely on him. He will take care of you and meet your need. Second thing, besides fasting, look at verse 24.

Then I separated 12 of the chief priests. He mentions those guys and 10 others. Verse 25. And we 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 counselors and his lords and all Israel there had offered.

I even weighed unto their hands 650 talents of silver and silver vessels, 100 talents, and of gold, 100 talents, and also 20 basins of gold of 1,000 drams, two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.

[13 : 46] And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord, and the vessels are holy also, and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of our fathers.

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

So he took the priests and the Levites and weighed the silver and the gold vessels to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of the Lord. He had fasting. The second thing they had was faith. Did you notice how he worded that?

He said, We're going to do this, and we're going to bring them unto the chief priests, the Levites, the chief of the fathers of Israel at Jerusalem. We're about to take a thousand mile journey and we're going to complete that thousand mile journey and we are going to take these things to them at Jerusalem.

He had faith that they weren't going to be sidetracked. He had faith they weren't going to be taken over by thieves and bandits. We're going to go and we're going to be able to do what God has asked us to do.

[14 : 52] We have faith that God is going to take care of us. Faith is required for revival as well. The whole purpose was to go back to Jerusalem and basically re-teach them the law.

When Nehemiah had gone back, they had started rebuilding the temple in the city. They had rebuilt the foundation of the temple and then they kind of got sidetracked for about 16 years.

And then they started building again. And now Ezra and this group of people going back to help them with the finishing touches and to get the ceremonial things going again.

Now again, when they're going back to preach the word of God and to teach them the law of God, what if they won't listen to me? What if they don't want to leave home?

What if they get robbed along the way? What if, what if, what if? One thing when you read through Ezra, you will never see a what if. He had faith. God's going to help us.

[15 : 54] God's going to help us meet this and do what he has asked us to do. He knew that God was going to get them there safely. It takes faith to do that.

I want us to be praying, fasting and praying what God's going to do this coming Sunday through Wednesday.

God's going to work in people's lives. Hopefully you're inviting people. Hopefully people are going to come. Hopefully people are going to get saved because of what's going to happen here.

And not hopefully, prayerfully as God works. Look at verse 31. Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month to go unto Jerusalem.

And the hand of our God was upon us and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and of such as lay in wait by the way. He said, look, I want you to fast.

[16 : 58] I want you to have faith. I want you to pray. And then the last thing about having a revival, follow through. What if they'd said, yes, we're with you, Ezra.

We are going to fast. We're going to pray. We're going to do everything you've asked us to do. And we're going to do it right here by this river. This is a nice place to do all those things. And here we are. We're going to pray and pray and pray and pray but they had never left.

What would have happened? Nothing. There had to be the follow through. There had to be the fact that, you know what?

Yes, there's a thousand mile journey coming up. You want to know how far a thousand miles is? I am told, I have not seen it myself, but I am told, that when you drive from Louisiana into Texas, there's a sign.

You know those big green interstate signs? On I-10, come through Louisiana, I-10, the first sign you see in Texas, says, El Paso, 999 miles.

[18 : 13] That's a thousand miles. That's how far they were going to walk. That's how far they were going to go. Yep. It took them four months.

Actually, it took them four months. Oh, it did? Yep. You read here. I'll show you. Flip back to chapter 7.

Flip back to chapter 7 and look at verse 9. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month, came he to Jerusalem.

It took them four months. Here they are. They're going. They're on their way. Walking. They go. Think about when we do it in a car.

How long does that take in a car? And think about it. They're taking men, women, and little kids. Daddy, are we there yet? I've got to go to the bathroom.

[19 : 18] Do we have any snacks? Yeah. So that's why it took them four months probably. Do all that stuff. Yeah. So. They probably did. Yeah. Good stuff. Ten miles a day would have been good.

So. I want some great things to happen here in our church as we come up here with Mike coming. Ezra.

Ezra had prepared his heart. Yep. I want to see some great things happening. To do that it's going to take some work on our part. Now, it's starting Sunday.

There's not a lot of time to do things. And I know a lot of those cards and things are gone. But make sure you're inviting people, asking them. That's part of the follow through. I can pray about it but am I inviting people?

I can pray about it but am I planning to be here myself? I can pray about it but, you know, there's a lot of different things that we can do to encourage. Inviting the lost.

[20 : 21] You know, inviting our friends and family. I had a chance today. I was in Ramada and checking on reservations for Mike and stuff and taking care.

I had a chance to talk to the lady there. And we're talking about things and I went out to the car and came back in with one of those cards and said, this is the guy you're looking for. And I said, and he's going to be at our church and told her about what was going on and stuff.

So, make sure you're inviting people and planning to be here because God, I believe, wants to do something here in our church. Are we ready for it?

Fasting, do we have faith? Are we ready to follow through with what God wants us to do? It's on one, it's on that side over there.

No, it's on this side. It's on this side over here. Easter's on that side, Mike's on this side. So, it's there. Yep. Yeah. Yeah.

[21 : 35] Yeah, sometimes fasting, yeah, don't spend as much time on your phone. Don't spend as much time, spend that time praying. Yep. Yep. Okay, prayer request, which, I left my...