

Life Group Questions w/b Sunday 17 January 2021

Ezra – a Story of Rebuilding Week 3

Chapter 3

Historical Background

The first phase of the rebuilding project was to rebuild the place where the Jewish people worshipped together. They were building on the foundations of the temple built by King Solomon in the days before the Exile to Babylon.

Read: Ezra 3:1-13

- What is your understanding of the word 'worship'?
- Do you think it is true to say that worship is the primary calling of the people of God? Why?
- What might this mean in practical terms for us today?
- What might hinder our meeting together for worship? See verse 3, for instance, and also Haggai 1:3-5. (Notice that the altar is always 'the altar of the Lord'. God is central to their worship.)
- How did they plan their worship? See verses 2-6. Are there any useful tips here that can help us in our worship today? How important were the seasons in their worship? How important is celebration? See verse 11.
- In John 4:23-24 Jesus called us to worship God 'in Spirit and in truth'. What do you think he meant by this?
- Over the centuries different Christian traditions have interpreted this call to worship in different ways. What ones have you experienced? What have you really valued in the different worship traditions you have known, and consider why you have appreciated them.
- There were some people who either remembered the first temple, or had heard of its magnificence. What was their response to the rebuilding? See verses 10-13. Do you think it is good to look back or not? See Zechariah 4:8-10. See also Haggai 2:5-9 and Zechariah 2:3-11. In the end, it was all about God, and his presence with his people; not the building.

Prayer Focus Suggestion

In addition to sharing your prayer needs, spend some time worshipping God together.

Further Material – only if time!

The Temple at Jerusalem represented the Presence of God amongst his people. The altar inside the temple was the central place of worship because it was there that sacrifices were made on behalf of the people for the forgiveness of their sins. Only if you were clean, free of sin, were you able to enter into the presence of God.

Read Hebrews 10:1-18

The shedding of the blood of Jesus guarantees the forgiveness of our sins, because ‘without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins’. (Hebrews 9:22)

- What are the differences between the Old Covenant of the Temple and the new Covenant of the Spirit as outlined in Hebrews 10?
- Why is the death of Jesus central to the Christian faith? How does it help us to have fellowship with God? See verses 14-16.
- What is the importance of Holy Communion to Christian people?
- What aspects of this service do you find the most meaningful and why?
- What do you think we have lost recently in only being able to share in Communion in a very limited way?

For Prayer

Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Give thanks for our salvation, and claim the promise of God here – that he ‘is faithful’ (10:23). Remembering all that Christ has done for us, pray for all of God’s people to be encouraged at this time as we seek to persevere.