

“Yet now there is hope in Israel”

Introduction:

I have heard it said that we really do not need to study the Old Testament books. Look at what the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 10:11

1 Corinthians 10:11 (NKJV)

Romans 15:4 (NKJV)

This morning we are going to look at an event in the book of Ezra and see that there was “hope in Israel” and also determine that we have that same hope today.

1. The condition of the Israelites in the days of Ezra.

The Jews spent 70 years in Babylonian captivity.

605 – 1st carrying away (Daniel Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah)

597 – 2nd carrying away (Ezekiel)

586 – 3rd carrying away (Jeremiah)

536 – 1st group returned (Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Haggai, Zechariah) Ezra 1

520-516 – Rebuilding of the temple

458 – 2nd group returned (Ezra) Ezra 7

444 – Nehemiah rebuilds the city walls

When Ezra comes to Jerusalem it has been about 78 years since the first group arrived with Zerubbabel. Notice what leaders came and said to Ezra:

Ezra 9:1-3 (NKJV)

One would think that the children of Israel would remember the reason those before them were sent into captivity. But it has been about 78 years since they returned and what has happened, they drifted away.

Sadly, we see this today. I have seen this in my lifetime. Entertainment world, acceptance of homosexuality, immodesty, foul language.

Ways Christians drift away:

- Misplaced affections – 1 John 2:15 “Do not love the world...”
- Discouragement – The trials of life can discourage us
- Abundance – 1 Timothy 6:10 “some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith”
- Parasitic sins – Hebrews 12:1 Sins in our lives that cause us to feel guilt when we come to the church building. Instead of praying, studying God’s word, and confessing our sins...we drift away.
- Ignoring, even forgetting that Christ forgave us our sins 2 Peter 1:3-11

Remember Alan’s lesson on 10/11/2020 titled Hope: The Anchor of the Soul? What happens when a boat loses its anchor...it drifts.

Hebrews 2:1-3 (NKJV)

Philippians 3:12 (NKJV)

We are either Pressing On or we are Drifting Away. One or the other.

2. The response to sin:

Astonishment: Ezra 9:4 (NKJV)

Prayer: Ezra 9:5-6 (NKJV)

Acknowledgement of sin: Ezra 10:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly.

2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is **hope in Israel in spite of this**.

This hope was there in the days of Moses:

Exodus 34:6-7 (NKJV)

And this hope is here for us today:

Acts 28:20

For this reason, therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

1 John 1:7-9 (NKJV)

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. Lesson for us today:

- Are we pressing on toward Jesus or are we drifting away from Jesus? Danger lies ahead if we drift, "...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,..." (Hebrews 2:3)
- What is our response or reaction to sin? Are we astonished like Ezra? Do we pray to God regarding our sins? And do we acknowledge, confess our sins?
- Similar repentance is required today as it was in the days of Ezra. The word of God is clear, it demands repentance as a condition for forgiveness today, even as it did then; whether the sin was committed before conversion or afterward. In Acts 8 we are introduced to Simon, the Sorcerer. After he was baptized, he sinned and Peter told him, "Repent therefore of this your wickedness"
- Repentance requires giving up, putting away the sin. In Ezra, it was putting away the unscriptural wives.
- No matter the sin, if we confess, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins. 1 John 1:7-9; Exodus 34:6-7

No matter the sin Exodus 34:6-7 (NKJV)

6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,
7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,

This HOPE is in Christ:

1 Timothy 1:1; Colossians 1:27;

Condition of those without Christ: Ephesians 2:11-13