



## THE CROSS FOR OUR JOURNEY, OUR ARRIVAL AND OUR STAY

Mike Blume

---

Ezra was used by God to return the people of Israel to their land in Canaan, after being bound in Babylon for 70 years.

Notice the three points noted in this return.

### ***JOURNEY TO ISRAEL:***

These are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king.

(Ezra 8:1)

And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and ***there abode we in tents three days:*** and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi.

(Ezra 8:15)

### ***ARRIVAL AT ISRAEL:***

And ***we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.***

(Ezra 8:32)

### ***LIFE IN ISRAEL:***

Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; And that whosoever would not come ***within three days,*** according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.

(Ezra 10:6-8)

---

I've spoken much about the significance of THREE DAYS in the Bible.

- The period that spanned Christ's death on the cross, through His burial and until His resurrection from the dead, to the day He ascended and presented His blood to the Father to save our souls.
- And I realize that many of you may get getting part of that concept, but not enough to have a full confidence that you really have a handle on it.

- Not enough to perhaps fully live by the truth of the work of the cross when you face situations and battles.

Israel would take a three days' journey into the wilderness, leaving Egypt, to serve the Lord, Moses said.

Joshua stayed with the people in a town named Shittim for three days at the end of their wilderness journey to the land of Canaan.

Gideon experienced three days of testing and proving before He came against the Midianites and defeated them.

So let's look at the story of Ezra, the man who led Israel out of captivity in Babylon, whose story mentions THREE DAYS in three different points of the book.

Israel had been in Babylon for 70 years.

- This represents how the church world can be bound up and not where God wants it to be in regards to reaching people and ministering in real ministry.
- When Ezra led Israel out of Babylon back to their land, we see a picture of God taking His church to the place He wants it to be in.
- So let us study what God wants to do in our church world, in YOUR church world, with YOU.

A Three day period of time was first noted when Ezra told the people who were leaving Babylon for Jerusalem to meet him at the river that flows to Ahava.

- They dwelt in tents there for three days.
- During those three days, Ezra noticed that there were priests present amongst the people, but none of the other sons of Levi.

## JOURNEY BEGINS

And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi.

**(Ezra 8:15)**

Priests who were Levites were there, but no people who were simply Levites.

- They were going to reconvene the temple operations once they returned to Jerusalem.
- Ezra 3:8 says there was a very small number of Levites called a remnant who were scheduled to see the temple work go ahead.

Once there we read:

And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God.

**(Ezra 8:17)**

There were Levite priests and then simply Levites who were supposed to be ministers for the temple.

And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you they are given as a gift for the LORD, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

**(Num 18:6)**

The journey began with a period of three days.

- In those three days, Ezra realized they required people who would work for the Lord.
- Priests were there, but none of the Levites who would also work for the Lord in other areas.

We need to understand that all of us are like the Levites.

- Originally God wanted all tribes to be priests.

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

**(Exodus 19:5-6)**

A nation of priests.

- When God gets His church back to where it should be, the people of the congregation will be ministering in the Spirit, too.
- Not just in preaching.
- That is the preachers' jobs.
- But there are many ministries.
- Some sang in the temple.
- Others here will work with Sunday school, ladies groups, ways and means functions, men's groups, interceding in prayer at home, SOMETHING FOR EACH OF YOU.
- If you are sitting on church pews for years and doing nothing more than waiting for what else I am going to preach, then you are not where God wants you to be.
- You're in Babylon.
- RELIGIOUS BONDAGE.

Wanting a NATION of priests, only a tribe of Priests and ministers were chosen because when God gave the ten commandments, only the Levites chose to come to Moses' side and depart from the golden calf Israel had erected at the bottom of the Mount Sinai.

Israel was returning to the place God wanted them.

God wants us in a certain place, also, but a place in the spirit.

- A place of dedication and ministry.

When we spend a spiritual period of three days, we will realize who we are and what we can do for God.

- We'll realize that we are supposed to be ministers.
- Some think the pastor does everything.
- Priests are present, but no Levites.
- No congregation members who should be ministering in other areas aside from the preaching ministry.

Israel lost the advantage of being a nation of priests to only having a tribe of priests, but God has said this of the Church.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

**(1 Peter 2:9)**

Three days at this river caused Ezra to realize there are supposed to be people who will minister aside from the preachers.

Let me explain more of the significance of the three days again.

The full work for all our salvation and victory we will need as Christians was provided in one fell swoop of God's work through the cross.

- The significance of the DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION are called the GOSPEL in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

- It took three days and nights for the work of the death, burial and resurrection to occur.
- Therefore, that period of times represents the work of the cross.

Mark it down:

- Every story in the Bible is intended to tell you something about God's way of salvation through that cross.
- ...through that death, burial and resurrection, and what it means to people who believe that it was the way of salvation.
- Especially whenever something took three days to occur.
- Whenever anything took three days, there is going to be a message underneath it that God wants you to be able to relate to your similar situation in that story, and how the work of the cross is the answer!

The manner in which they waited for three days at this river to Ahava, represents us getting an understanding and full appreciation -- A REVELATION -- of how the work of the cross is our answer for our particular situation that is represented by and is similar to their's.

The river speaks of the moving of the Holy Ghost.

- Jesus said the Holy Ghost is "rivers" of living water.
- Get your life to the place where the Spirit is moving, and appreciate the work of the cross and the change God made in you, and you will realize you should be ministering for the Lord.
- They spent three days there and noticed MINISTRIES were missing.
- If you can sit week after week and never start to see a ministry in your life, you are not where the river of the Spirit is moving, and neither are you getting the message of what change the cross made in your life to be able to minister!

We must come to the realization that our acceptance of the salvation of God through the death, burial and resurrection QUALIFIES us for everything God can give to us.

- It QUALIFIES us for the blessings of God.
- It is because our faith in the work of the cross caused God to redeem us from darkness of sinful living into light of righteousness.
- It changed our lives from being members of Adam's human race to being members of Christ's new human race.
- It made us new creatures!
- It wiped out God's memory of all that we did before we involved ourselves in the cross.
- Realizing what this feat of God accomplished gives us great confidence!
- And it puts things into proper perspective and prods us to realize some things.

In Ezra's case of seeing lack of ministries in the camp, the three days signifies to us we have been made priests of God, everyone of us, and must start ministering!

God does not want us twiddling our thumbs and watching someone else do something for the kingdom of God while we simply take in something from someone else all the time.

- He wants us to give of our ministries, too.
- And if you do not think there is anything for you to do, then you have not taken a "three day rest", or in other words you have not realized how the cross made such a difference in you that you have something by way of a GIFT MINISTRY to give to this world.

Church, this understanding of how much of a change the cross made in our lives takes years to appreciate.

- There is so much that happened by Jesus for all who would accept that cross, that our Bible is as thick as it is to deal with it all, whether by analogies of stories like this, or explicit teachings.
- Not only that, but any spiritual understanding we gain about who we are in Christ is easily dissolved away in our minds since we walk around in a world that constantly bombards us with the material things, and in no way assists us in keeping the spiritual truths of the cross in our hearts.

Church is actually a form of having you spend those THREE DAYS over again and again, and opportunity to teach you more and more of what the cross did for you.

I am here to clarify to you the truths of what God does for us and provided through the cross.

- We need maintenance.
- We require a means of maintaining our faith and confidence in who we are in Jesus.
- And that is what church is supposed to provide.
- It maintains your faith and awareness of the things of the Spirit, but is not maintenance in simply maintaining what you got and never getting any more.
- It also teaches you MORE truths that you will not know just because you spent 30 years living for God.
- **THERE IS NEVER A PLACE WHERE WE CANNOT LEARN MORE** of God's will and His truths.

There is never a place where you do not need someone to pray for you at the altar any more, for example.

- Some think that being prayed for at the altar in church after the sermon is only for folks who are new.
- That sort of thinking goes hand in hand with the FALSE idea that you've arrived, and there is nothing more that God has for you.
- And that is a spirit of religious pride that achieves the same thing in your life as outright sin -- not growing in the Lord.

Every church service is a three day period of truths from the cross to the grave to the sky!

Ezra also called a FAST after those three days.

- They fasted for the following reason:

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.  
**(Ezra 8:21-23)**

This tells us more!

When we decide to get to where we need to be in God, and we experience those three days of taking in what God did in the cross, we will realize that we need to stop saying what God can do for us, and start experiencing what God can do for us.

Ezra was ready for travel through terrain peppered with marauders and bandits and murderers, who laid in wait to attack anyone who would pass through.

- He told the King that God's hand is upon all who seek Him.
- But now he had to put his money where his mouth was.

The enemy is going to be there to ensure you do not get to the place God wants you to dwell in.

- And you do not need a herd of body guards around you.
- You need to "walk" the things you "talk".

You might think you cannot have faith for that.

- If you take in those three days and realize what God did for you through the cross, you will have all the faith you need to experience the safety God will give you.
- You need faith in order for God to work in your life.
- You cannot please Him without faith.
- And if you are ready to face enemies when you begin to return to the place God has for you, then you can have faith that GOD IS WITH YOU.

- Realize that the cross took you from being an enemy of God to becoming one of HIS OWN CHILDREN!

- He said He'd never leave you nor forsake you, so what can man do to you?

...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

**(Heb 13:5-6)**

The Spirit is moving by the river!

- Beside the river of Chebar we read that Ezekiel saw visions!
- Get in the moving of the Spirit.
- Get into the truths of the cross.
- We need SPIRIT AND TRUTH both!

They fasted for direction!

- They were not just going to go the way that seemed right to them.
- It's not always the QUICKEST way God wants you to travel.
- We have to go God's way.

We have got to operate in the Spirit and stop operating in the flesh!

Eventually they arrived in Jerusalem safe and sound!

If you allow other people to successfully cause you to stop serving God faithfully, you have not stirred up your faith in the work of the cross and kept it in your heart that God is with you!

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. And we came to Jerusalem, **and abode there three days.**

**(Ezra 8:31-32)**

Three more days after they were delivered from enemies.

After this, Ezra began business with getting the temple prepared and everyone offered sacrifices of thanks for returning home, and being kept safe on the journey.

Once you get to the place where you must minister now, you must once again experience the three days.

- Just because you find your ministry, does not mean you can go at it in the way you THINK it should be done.
- You need direction in your ministry as well as direction in getting to your ministry.
- People lead songs without faith for it in prayer.
- They prepare sermons without faith.
- They have no concept of getting the mind of God by praying and having faith you'll actually get inspiration and feel what to do because you experienced the cross!

We must realize that only by virtue of what God did for us on the cross, can we be used for His kingdom!

- Your singing talent is useless if you are not using it for God.

Then another problem arose.

- Some princes or leaders of the people came to Ezra after some time, and indicated that many of the people had broken the very Law God gave to Moses for how they should live in the land once they arrive.

When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many

nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

(Deu 7:1-4)

We read:

Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.

(Ezra 9:1-3)

All of chapter nine is Ezra grieving and realizing Israel had no defense for this sin, since it was in plain black and white in the Law.

- He prayed and called for God's mercy lest He destroy Israel and wipe them out for this great sin.

And Ezra called for everyone to come back to Jerusalem again.

Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.

(Ezra 10:6-8)

Every step of dealings here involved a three day period.

Every facet of your life must involve the cross.

- You thought the cross was only some info on how to first get saved.
- In fact some of you thought these sermons about the cross are only for newcomers who never heard truth before.
- But we are learning the cross has so much involved, that even those who engage in ministry still have much to learn about the cross for their lives after many years of service.

These people overlooked things they knew God spoke about.

- And as time went by they may have figured God was overlooking those sins as well.
- I just heard this week that a prominent minister was arrested for sexual violations in a public place in propositioning other men for sex.
- People can be in ministry and sin and figure they are getting by with it.
- But Ezra gathered them altogether and gave a three day period, after which, if they had not come, they would lose all their substance and would be cut off from Israel.
- And then Ezra laid out the law about marrying heathen people.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

**(Ecc 8:11)**

Many think sins that they can get by with for months or even years without getting dealt with by God means they can continue in sin.

All arrived and there was a heavy rain occurring that shook the people.

Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain.

**(Ezra 10:9)**

The heavy rains were like a sign from God that he was angry.

- The heavy rains should have ended a month before in what was called the latter rain.
- But this unusual rain seemed to show God's anger.

It took three days to gather the wrongs amongst them together.

- It takes us a good time appreciating the work of the cross in order to gather all that may be in our lives that is wrong and deal with it all.
- If we fail to experience this revelation of the work of the cross -- this period of three days to gather the sinful people -- then we will lose our substance and be cut off.
- Failure to get hold of the truth of the cross when there is sin in your life, causes you to forfeit all the blessings God gave to you.
- The PLACE in the ministry is represented by BEING IN THE LAND.
- That is the reason they came to Jerusalem -- to be where God wanted them to be.
- And all of this is lost.

Truths of the cross get you on your way to where you need to be.

Truths of the cross start you into ministry.

Truths of the cross clean your life to continue in ministry.

If there were transgressors, gather the sins up and deal with them through the cross.

- No sin can bind you so strong that the cross cannot deal with it.
  - Simply claim the same work God did on the cross, the same blood Jesus shed there for our sins, and deal with the problems you have long after you first had anything to do with the cross.
  - The cross is for everything and for your entire Christian life.
-