

that when faced with this difficult proposition—hundreds of men and women in unbiblical marriages—Ezra didn't equivocate. The message may not have been a happy one, the choice may not have been an easy one, but He refused to rewrite the word of God. Instead, he simply preached it, and notice the response of the people!

EZ 10.1-4 ~ *While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly. And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: "We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. Therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the Law. Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do it."*

AP: Christianity will always lead to sacrifice. It is not a stagnant religion. For this reason, when and where it is preached, the hard choices will need to be made. Often, a Christian will need to choose between his job, his family, his hobbies, or his God. The Jews were willing to make the hard choice; I wonder, are we?

V. Conclusion

Some of us are blessed with a natural sense of direction, and that helps incredibly when you're lost in the country or the city. But when you're traveling through the world toward eternity, **mapquest** and **google local** aren't going to be able to help you! Only the law of the Lord can provide that! Only when we follow the example of Ezra and *set our heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules* are we able to confidently know that God's supporting hand is on our shoulder.

VI. Invitation

There may be someone here this morning who has been moved by the Scriptures to come closer to God. The Bible tells us that we obey the gospel by turning away from sin, by confessing the name of Jesus, and by being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. Turning away from sin may be something as simple as repaying an unpaid debt...or it may involve something as gut-wrenching as that which the Jews underwent in **EZ 10**. If you have any questions, we hope you will meet with us right away. But if you are ready to do whatever it takes right now, you can let us know by coming to the front as we sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...

TRN 2 EZ 7

I. Introduction

ILL—Google Local (directionally challenged; address, business—specific or general; map w/ pushpins & directions; even I can find my way!) Good thing, because nothing's more frustrating than being lost!

BKGRND: Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC, with her people brought into Babylonian captivity due to their rebellion against God. Having spent many years in captivity, they were ready to travel back. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a secular leader, they began the reconstructing of the temple, with 50,000 Jews to follow a few years later under the leadership of Ezra, a scribe and descendant of Aaron and the religious leader of Israel.

EZ 7.7-10 ~ *And there went up also to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king, some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.*

The book of **EZ** is rather short—only 10 chapters long. But in this short book, we find a rather unusual statement that is repeated a number of times: *the hand of the LORD his God was on him.* (**EZ 7.6**) *I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.* (**EZ 7.28**) *And by the good hand of our God on us, they brought us a man of discretion,* (**EZ 8.18a**)

PS 37.23-24 ~ *The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand.* Ezra was a man upheld and protected by the hand of God. We can certainly sympathize with his desire to restore Himself, and God's people, to the Lord. We're going to take note of **vs. 10** ~ *For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.*

II. Study the Law of the Lord

CHRISTIANITY/Priorities/Sports

You can learn so much of a person by looking at where they place their heart! Ezra placed his heart—his priorities—in studying the Law

of the Lord—the Bible. Our society doesn't have a great fondness for law. A lot of time when we hear someone refer to God's law, it is negatively way. But God's law is an expression of God's love. In **"Give Me the Bible,"** we sing **"Law and love combining."** It's true! The Bible is God's law and love; two ideas which can't be separated.

ILL—Parents & Children (not play rifle; padlocks; ammo in separate location; cruel?) No, but because we love our children!

ILL—Turning on red (some laws bring freedom; right on red; can't always be green, but allows to turn safely).

When we are not doing right, the law of God can also seem quite harsh. *Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?* (**JR 23.29**)

ILL—Jackhammer (work on road; hit it all day, nothing; right tool, right force, crumbles into dust) God says that His word is like a jack-hammer. As God said in **IS 55.11**, *so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

Ezra did not treat the Lord's word lightly, but with respect. Ezra was already a brilliant man; a Scribe—an expert in God's law—but Ezra made a commitment to keep on studying the Law of God.

AP: Ezra did not set his heart to study God's law once a week, nor to listen to an hour-long Bible class, nor to hear God's law for half an hour every Sunday. Ezra set his heart to study the Law of God.

AC 2.42 ~ *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

As a result of their reliance upon the Word of God, the church grew and grew! What an example for us today!

III. Obey the Law of the Lord

ILL—Professional Student (love college; keep taking classes, never graduating) *always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.* (**2TM 3.7**) Studying will only go so far. There comes a point when you don't just **study it**, but you **obey it** as well!

B.ILL—Saul (king; knew the Word, just chose to disobey it)

ISM 13.13-14 ~ *And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."*

AP: Many people today who are just like King Saul. They know the word of God, they know what they need to do, but they never get around to doing it...or perhaps they twist it to fit their own desires. *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.* (**JN 5.39-40**) Like the Pharisees before them, they are students of the Word, but they are never practicers of it.

JM 1.22-25 ~ *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.* Ezra understood the importance of being more than mere hearers of the word, and so ought we.

IV. Proclaim the Law of the Lord

EVANGELISM/Obligation/Sharing Inventions

When we are truly dedicated to **studying and obeying the Law of the Lord**, then—by necessity—we'll also share that Law with others!

SUM—NH 8.1-8 (people who hadn't studied or heard word of God for years or ever; gathers all the people together; reads the Pentateuch to all the people; imagine standing for that long a scripture reading!)

EX: When it says in **EZ 7.10** that Ezra set his heart to **"teach"** in Israel, the word used there literally means to **"goad"** or **"incite."** Ezra, then, had to encourage the people or prod them along—he had to convince them to obey as they should.

HB 10:23-25 ~ *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

AP: This is not always going to be easy! Ezra's teaching of the Law had serious implications. Many of the men and women had, during the captivity, married people they had no right to marry. Notice, however,