

**THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION**  
**Ezra: Encouraging God's People Unto Spiritual Renewal**  
**III. Functioning Effectively Amid Fear Of Ungodly Foes**  
**(Ezra 3:1-13)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

A number of people today fear ungodly foes who function with unbiblical ideology:

(1) Michael Barone, a senior political analyst for the Washington Examiner, in his piece, "The problems with polls" (Republican-American, November 16, 2020, p. 8A) reported that due to fear, "white college graduates, women as well as men," voted "much more Republican than indicated in pre-election polling." He explained, citing Eric Kaufmann's 2019 book, "'White-shift'" that claimed, "'Republican supporters with degrees tend to work in graduate-dominated environments, where organizations and peers are more likely to enforce norms of political correctness . . . As a result, it is highly-educated Republican supporters who are most shy about revealing their beliefs at work.'"

Mr. Barone added, "The greatest threat to free speech today comes from campuses with speech codes; from the social-media monopolies where recent graduates stamp out information that, while accurate, may be (as a Biden press aide put it) 'misleading'; from the corporate human resource departments that discipline and fire employees whose choice of words make anyone else 'uncomfortable.'" (Ibid.)

(2) Various editors and op-ed writers express this fear: Veronique de Rugy's piece, "Biden and bipartisanship" (Ibid., November 14, 2020, p. 8A) worried about "President-elect Biden" and "a radical left-wing agenda featuring the Green New Deal, a \$4 trillion tax hike, \$11 trillion in new spending and court packing," and that even "Republicans in Congress (or in the White House) always have worked with Democrats to expand the role of government." The last line in her piece concluded that one day, "there may be little left to cheer about" in the nation's government, Ibid.

(3) This fear exists at the international level: Clifford May's op-ed, "World order being hijacked" (Ibid., November 19, 2020, p. 10A) claimed, "(T)he U. N. and most other international organizations have become bloated and corrupt bureaucracies, increasingly serving the interests and expressing the values of the world's despots . . . (I)f America's leaders take no effective actions over the years ahead," our country will either have to yield its "sovereignty to what China's rulers delight in calling 'the will of the global community,' or become the global odd man out."

*Need:* *So, we ask, "How can we effectively function for the Lord in an era marked by fear of ungodly foes?!"*

- I. Israel's returned exiles dreaded possible Gentile military reprisals if they rebuilt the temple, Ezra 3:3b:**
  - A. The Assyrian Empire had deported foreign Gentiles to Israel's former lands, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 658.
  - B. If the returned Hebrews then rebuilt their temple, they implied that they would also restore their nation to its initial borders, challenging the land holdings of the deported Gentiles and making them hostile toward Israel.
  - C. Also, Jerusalem's walls had been broken down by the Babylonians (2 Chronicles 36:19), so the returned Hebrew exiles were left defenseless from attacks by hostile Gentile peoples from every direction around them.
  - D. When the Hebrews then began to rebuild the temple altar, they naturally feared Gentile retaliation, Ezra 3:3a.
- II. However, God in Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10 in Scripture had promised Israel national restoration, and in Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 7, He had promised them protection from Gentile foes if they obeyed His Word.**
- III. Thus, regardless of their fear, the Hebrews chose to trust God's Word and began their restoration work:**
  - A. Though afraid, the Hebrews by faith rebuilt the temple altar, heeding Scriptural precedents, Ezra 3:1-6:
    1. Regardless of their dread of area Gentiles, the Hebrews began to rebuild the temple altar, Ezra 3:3:
      - a. The word "fear" translates *eymah*, "dread, terror," B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 33-34.
      - b. The KJV word "for" in the phrase, "for fear was upon them" translates the conjunction *ki* that in this context carries the unusual intensive force of "Yea, indeed . . ." (Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1288; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 472) to indicate that despite their great dread of area Gentiles, the Hebrews rebuilt the temple altar!
    2. In doing the work, the exiles followed Zerubbabel from David's line and Jeshua ["Joshua" in the book of Nehemiah] from Aaron's line, Israel's Biblical civil and religious leaders, Ezra 3:2; B. K. C., O. T., p. 658.
    3. The exiles aligned with God's Biblical will regarding the location and use of the altar, Ezra 3:3a:
      - a. Moses had commanded that Israel worship God only at the place God had chosen, Deuteronomy 12:1-8.
      - b. 2 Chronicles 7:12 reveals that God had chosen the temple site where Solomon built the temple in his era.
      - c. The exiles thus used the very altar base Solomon had used for the temple altar in line with God's will!
      - d. The exiles also obeyed Scripture on what sacrifices to offer: they rebuilt the altar in the 7th month (Ezra 3:1), so the Hebrews observed the Biblical sacrifices for that month along with all the others, Ezra 3:3b-6.

- B. Though afraid, the Hebrews by faith rebuilt the temple foundation, heeding Scriptural precedents, Ezra 3:7-9:
1. They transported logs from Lebanon by sea down to Joppa before hauling them overland east and uphill to Jerusalem much as Solomon had done in building the first temple, Ez. 3:7; 2 Chron. 2:1-16; Ibid., p. 659.
  2. The returned Hebrew exiles began rebuilding the temple foundation in the 2nd month of the Hebrew calendar, the same month Solomon had begun to build the temple in his era, Ezra 3:8a; 1 Kings 6:1; Ibid.
  3. The Hebrew Levites supervised the temple construction much as the Levites had been involved in the construction and care of the original tabernacle under Moses, Ezra 3:8b; Numbers 1:50-51; 3:21-37; Ibid.
  4. When the Hebrews dedicated the foundation, they used the ceremonial precedents of David's moving the ark to Jerusalem and Solomon's moving it to the temple, Ez. 3:9-11; 1 Chr. 16:5-6; 2 Chr. 5:12-13; Ibid.

**IV. For heeding Scripture, God protected the exiles in their work, what they testified in their dedication of the temple foundation: they sang of God's "mercy" enduring forever, the word "mercy" translating the Hebrew noun *hesed*, God's protective, covenant, loyal love being expressed to Israel, Ezra 3:10-11; Ibid.**

***Lesson:*** *Though the returning Hebrew exiles dreaded dangerous military attacks from potentially hostile surrounding Gentiles if they began to rebuild the temple, they trusted God's protection by Biblically starting the reconstruction, and God gave them the protection they needed to fulfill His assignment for them.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) To handle fear of opposing, unbiblical people, (a) may we trust God's Biblical leading and (b) function in His Biblical will (c) to enjoy the protection we need to do His will.*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the message . . . )

(1) Where God called Israel's returning exiles to rebuild His earthly temple (Ezra 1:1-4; Isaiah 44:24-28), God calls us today to be used of Him in His building of His spiritual temple, the Church (Ephesians 2:19-22; Matthew 16:18), what occurs as we heed our roles in the Great Commission to disciple people worldwide (Matthew 28:19-20).

(2) First, we must understand the spiritual dynamics involved (as follows): (a) We learned in our last message in this series that Matthew 13:1-52 reveals that we are in a spiritual war between God and Satan over the discipling of people. (b) Also, 2 Corinthians 4:4 claims that Satan is the god of this world, (c) but 1 John 4:4b asserts that God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4) Who in us is greater than Satan who is in the world. (d) In addition, the Holy Spirit has given us believers supernatural spiritual gifts for effective service (1 Corinthians 12:1-11), (e) and relying on the Holy Spirit in using one's gift equips him not to fear, but to enjoy God's power, love and self control, 2 Timothy 1:6-7 ESV.

(4) We thus list and describe the spiritual gifts that believers have **today**: (a) **Evangelist**: Ephesians 4:11 with Acts 21:8; 8:5-40. Philip led people to Christ. (b) **Pastor-Teacher**: Ephesians 4:11, described in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus and Matthew 13:1-52. (c) **Teacher**: 1 Corinthians 12:28, described in parts of the Pastoral Epistles and Matthew 13:1-52. (d) **Word of Wisdom**: 1 Corinthians 12:8a, teaching that excels in applying Scripture. (e) **Word of Knowledge**: 1 Corinthians 12:8b, teaching that excels in Bible knowledge. (f) **Leadership; Administration**: Romans 12:8b and 1 Corinthians 12:28 respectively. Both (similar) gifts require those who use them to exercise them with diligence, Romans 12:8c. (g) **Discerning Spirits**: 1 Corinthians 12:10c; this gift equips the believer to have an unusual degree of discernment for the spiritual protection of other believers, cf. 1 John 2:18-27. (h) **Giving**: Romans 12:8b; to be exercised with liberality, Romans 12:8b. (i) **Faith**: 1 Corinthians 12:9a; the ability to trust God to an unusual degree for blessing, Hebrews 11:1-40. (j) **Encouraging**: Romans 12:8a NIV. (k) **Helps**: 1 Corinthians 12:28; one with this gift can help any other believer use His spiritual gift for effective ministry. (l) **Showing Mercy**: Romans 12:8d; like Barnabas administered to a faltering John Mark in Acts 15:36-40, which gift is to be used with cheerfulness.

(5) On identifying one's spiritual gift, Scripture nowhere calls us to discover our gift, but implies that it is already known by other believers, 1 Corinthians 12:29-30. So, to identify our spiritual gift that 1 Peter 4:10 claims we each have, we should heed feedback from fellow **godly** believers on how they are blessed by our ministries and pay attention to how the Lord makes us effectively edify the Church and what we find joyful in performing for Him.

(6) Each spiritual gift is to be used by relying by faith on the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:16; 2 Timothy 1:6-7.

(7) As we then use our spiritual gift to serve God, He will provide victory over fear of opposing foes and the power, love and self control (2 Timothy 1:6-7 ESV) we need to fulfill His ministry assignment for us regardless what we face from foes, 2 Timothy 4:6, 16-17. ***In other words, we are protected by God to the extent that we do His will!***

**May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we function effectively in an era marked by fear of opposing, unbiblical people by trusting God's Biblical leading and functioning in His Biblical will, using His Biblical gifting for effective ministry.**