

EZRA: STARTING OVER WELL AFTER GROUP FAILURE

Part V: Overcoming Worldliness To Fulfill God's Will

(Ezra 3:7-13 with Haggai 1:1-2:9)

I. Introduction

- A. Of the Christian's three spiritual enemies, the world, the sin nature and the Devil, the world is the most subtle enemy he faces. The sinful nature blares out its lusts, the Devil comes on like a roaring lion or an impressive angel of light, but the world is always there, just gradually alluring us to depart from the Lord.
- B. Israel faced a stall in its spiritual renewal even after the altar had been rebuilt and instituted, its sacrificial system for worldliness (the lusts of the flesh, the eyes and the pride of this life in this world's system, cf. 1 John 1:15-16) encroached on the people to hinder their continuing reconstruction effort on the temple.
- C. How this was overcome is seen in Ezra 3:7-13 and Haggai 1:1-2:9 with important lessons for us:

II. Overcoming Worldliness To Progress In God's Will, Ezra 3:7-13 with Haggai 1:1-2:9.

- A. After the sacrificial system had been instituted and following the rebuilding of the temple altar, the returned Hebrew exiles began to rebuild the temple's foundation, Ezra 3:7-11.
 1. Similar to the construction of the great temple under Solomon, the returned exiles contributed money to hire workers from Tyre and Sidon and to bring cedars from Lebanon to start rebuilding the temple, Ezra 3:7 with 1 Kings 5:7-12; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. To Ezra 3:7.
 2. Israel's religious leader in Jeshua and its governor in Zerubbabel with the priests, Levites and the people arranged for the Levites 20 years of age and upward to supervise the temple work, Ezra 3:8 NIV.
 3. When the foundation was laid, they held a great celebration to God's glory, Ezra 3:9-11.
- B. Yet, along with the rejoicing, some of the older men who had seen Solomon's former temple in its great glory grieved at the sight of this lesser temple from the **worldly** perspective, Ezra 3:12-13.
- C. This **worldliness** became a problem that **IN PART** led to the decline of the temple work, Haggai 1:1-11:
 1. Haggai who prophesied as a contemporary of Ezra reported the people eventually stopped work on the temple reconstruction **in part** (as we will see in a future lesson) due to **worldliness** :
 - a. The people eventually came to say that it was not the proper time to rebuild the temple, Hag. 1:1-2.
 - b. In reality, as we see from God's critique of this saying through the prophet Haggai, the desire to pump money into their own homes versus rebuilding the Lord's temple had led to this demise in the work of the temple, Haggai 1:3-4. Apparently, the worldliness expressed in those who had grieved at the dedication of the rebuilt temple foundation had blossomed into the people wanting to make their homes luxurious to counter the gloom they thus felt over the ruined Solomon temple.
 2. Thus, God claimed He had hurt the business endeavors of the people in discipline, Haggai 1:5-6, 9-11.
 3. He thus urged them to repent, and begin working on the temple again to see God bless, Haggai 1:7-8.
- D. Thus reprimanded by the Lord, Zerubbabel and Joshua led the people to finish the temple, Hag. 1:12-15.
- E. Yet, once the work was done, those who had seen Solomon's temple disliked this newer one since it was aesthetically less appealing (lust of the eyes and the pride of this life) than Solomon's temple, Hag. 2:1-3.
- F. So, again, God countered this **worldliness**, establishing a godly value system to counter worldliness:
 1. God made a reference to "the desire of all nations," an ambiguous expression referring to Messiah **and** the gold and silver of the Gentiles, claiming He would cause **both** to come unto this temple, Hag. 2:6-8.
 2. Thus, God called the people to return to the temple reconstruction work in faith in God's help, 2:4-5, 9.

Lesson: Because of **WORLDLINESS** in allowing the lust of the **EYES** to cause them to think lightly of their **REBUILDING** efforts, the returned exiles came to **CEASE** their **INITIAL** efforts to rebuild the temple. Thus, God worked to **COUNTER** this **FALSE** value system: He said if the people went back to **REBUILDING** the temple, **GOD** would **BLESS** their effort in the **END** by **NOT ONLY** providing their needed **FINANCIAL** resources from the Gentiles, but **ALSO** send the desired **MESSIAH** to this temple.

Application: Ministry efforts that cater to the lusts of the body, the aesthetic appeal of the eyes and the pride of this earthly life instead of catering to the will of God are **WORLDLY**, and they **CURB** the work of God in truth. We must **COUNTER** such worldliness in our personal lives and ministries to do what pleases **GOD** according to **SCRIPTURE**, and then **HE** will supply the material needs we have in return!