

“Bowing Before Launching”

Ezra 8:15-23

August 6, 2017

INTRO... a Life Full of Things that Matter

What do you have coming up in your life that's really important?

- SCHOOL
- CAREER
- MOVE or NEW HOME
- EXPANDING FAMILY
- NEW HEALTH CONDITION

What in your life is continuing that you would deem really important?

- MARRIAGE
- PARENTING
- EMPLOYMENT
- SCHOOL
- FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
- LINGERING HEALTH PROBLEM

LCC - we have **New Things and Continuing Things** (Activities, Ministries) that we are **LAUNCHING in August...**

When was the last time you paused and looked to God in FAITH for these things?...When was the last time you took these things 'Off of AUTO-PILOT'??

Ezra 8 ...An Intriguing Lesson about Prayer and the Will of God in Our Lives

- SETTING: it is ~458 BC in the Land of Babylon (EXILE Chapter) ...The 2nd Wave of Exiles are about to return to Jerusalem—

Ezra 8:15-23 ...*Why is this an Intriguing Lesson?*

The (Favorable) Circumstances Leading Up to Ezra 8

- Jeremiah's clearly understood prophecy (70 yrs)

Jer 29:10-11 "For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.
- The 1st Wave of Return under Zerubbabel (The restoration of the Temple)
- The Ongoing Favor of the Persian Gov't (First Cyrus, now Artaxerxes letter, the commendation to Ezra given at the end of Ezra 7:11ff— gives permission and finances that included the king's treasury)
- The O.T. Guiding Storyline of God's Dwelling Place (Temple) and Life in a Promised Land!
- **Ezra 8:22** ...They Already Knew God's Favor was On Their Lives!!

Pausing at Ahava! ("Bowing Before Launching")...Ezra 8:15, 21, 23

- The story of 'return from exile' is not just some random story or random circumstances that we draw moralistic stories from or find moments of inspiration for our own story... No, this episode sits under the larger dealings of a Sovereign God's Plan for His People!
 - They went into exile according to His plan and purpose
 - They are now returning to the land of promise and the city/temple at the center of their lives.
- *Although they are clearly taking steps of faith in agreement with God's will for them, they stop at Ahava and draw our attention to 2 things—PRAYER and APPOINTED LEADERS.*

- ***Walking in God's will for life, doesn't mean you get to do it anyway you want!***

Josh 1:2-4 "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.

Josh 7:4-5 So about 3,000 men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, ⁵ and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

Josh 8:3-7 So Joshua and all the fighting men arose to go up to Ai. And Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor and sent them out by night. ⁴ And he commanded them, "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you remain ready. ⁵ And I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out against us just as before, we shall flee before them. ⁶ And they will come out after us, until we have drawn them away from the city. For they will say, 'They are fleeing from us, just as before.' So we will flee before them. ⁷ Then you shall rise up from the ambush and seize the city, for the Lord your God will give it into your hand.

- It can be God's will that you are married ...that you are in college ...that you are pursuing a career!Yet the manner in which you pursue God's will matters!

- **PRAYER INFUSED PURPOSES**

- It can be easy to assume that God can/will fulfill His purpose with or without my prayers!... This was not the case for the early church:

- Acts 2 is preceded by a prayer meeting
- Acts 6, 7 & 8 is preceded by prayers for miraculous boldness in Jerusalem (Acts 4:31)
- The 1st Missionary Journey was preceded by a prayer meeting (Acts 13:1ff)

○ **LEADER LED MISSIONS**

- It can be easy to assume that God can/will fulfill His purpose with or without my involvement!

v. 15, 16, 17 ... *"I gathered them to the river" "...Then I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, ...leading men" "...and for Jojarib and Elnathan, who were men of insight,¹⁷ and sent them to Iddo, the leading man at the place Casiphia" "...to send us ministers for the house of our God."*

"Personnel Matters in the Will of God"—This is Worth PAUSING FOR!!

Failure to Launch??What Ever Happened to Pausing at Ahava?

"Whatever Happened to Prayer Meeting"—by Ben Patterson