

Keys to Successful Spiritual Building

Building God's Way Series – Part 4

The Word, Praise and the Right Mindset

Nehemiah 7:5-8:18

2/27/21-2/28/21

Introduction

- **Building God's Way** - To build God's way is going to require knowing God and what He wants. We aren't building our kingdom, we are building His. We aren't building whatever we want, we are building whatever He wants. If we build our lives on the brilliance of man it can only withstand attacks from man, but if we build it according to the Will of God, it can withstand anything both natural and supernatural.
 - **Our Building Blocks during this series:** You are going to hear in this passage today the importance of all three elements of building that we've been having you do: 1.) Daily Bible Reading; 2.) Daily Gratitude; 3.) Commitment to Attendance.
 - **These are practical ways** we are getting you to sure up and build a solid foundation that founded in God-alone. Why is that so important?

GOD is at the CENTER of all Great Work

- **If we're going to build God's way we need to...Keep Him at the Center at ALL Times**

Lesson

- **Purity Check**
 - **Nehemiah checks the genealogical records** for purity sake (priesthood)
 - *Nehemiah 7:5-73 – “Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written in it: ⁶ These were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried into exile. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his town. ⁷ They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: ⁸ the sons of Parosh, 2,172. ⁹ The sons of Shephatiah, 372. ¹⁰ The sons of Arah, 652. ¹¹ The sons of Pahath-moab, namely the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818. ¹² The sons of Elam, 1,254. ¹³ The sons of Zattu, 845. ¹⁴ The sons of Zaccai, 760. ¹⁵ The sons of Binnui, 648. ¹⁶ The sons of Bebai, 628. ¹⁷ The sons of Azgad, 2,322. ¹⁸ The sons of Adonikam, 667. ¹⁹ The sons of Bigvai, 2,067. ²⁰ The sons of Adin, 655. ²¹ The sons of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, 98. ²² The sons of Hashum, 328. ²³ The sons of Bezai, 324. ²⁴ The sons of Hariph, 112. ²⁵ The sons of Gibeon, 95. ²⁶ The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188. ²⁷ The men of Anathoth, 128. ²⁸ The men of Beth-azmaveth, 42. ²⁹ The men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, 743. ³⁰ The men of Ramah and Geba, 621. ³¹ The men of Michmas, 122. ³² The men of Bethel and Ai, 123. ³³ The men of the other Nebo, 52. ³⁴ The sons of the other Elam, 1,254. ³⁵ The sons of Harim, 320. ³⁶ The sons of Jericho,*

345. ³⁷ The sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721. ³⁸ The sons of Senaah, 3,930. ³⁹ The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, namely the house of Jeshua, 973. ⁴⁰ The sons of Immer, 1,052. ⁴¹ The sons of Pashhur, 1,247. ⁴² The sons of Harim, 1,017. ⁴³ The Levites: the sons of Jeshua, namely of Kadmiel of the sons of Hodevah, 74. ⁴⁴ The singers: the sons of Asaph, 148. ⁴⁵ The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, 138. ⁴⁶ The temple servants: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth, ⁴⁷ the sons of Keros, the sons of Sia, the sons of Padon, ⁴⁸ the sons of Lebana, the sons of Hagaba, the sons of Shalmal, ⁴⁹ the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, ⁵⁰ the sons of Reaiah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, ⁵¹ the sons of Gazzam, the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, ⁵² the sons of Besai, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephushesim, ⁵³ the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur, ⁵⁴ the sons of Bazlith, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha, ⁵⁵ the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah, ⁵⁶ the sons of Nezhiah, the sons of Hatipha. ⁵⁷ The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth, the sons of Perida, ⁵⁸ the sons of Jaala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel, ⁵⁹ the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the sons of Amon. ⁶⁰ All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants were 392. ⁶¹ The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not prove their fathers' houses nor their descent, whether they belonged to Israel: ⁶² the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 642. ⁶³ Also, of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai (who had taken a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name). ⁶⁴ These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. ⁶⁵ The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food until a priest with Urim and Thummim should arise. ⁶⁶ The whole assembly together was 42,360, ⁶⁷ besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337. And they had 245 singers, male and female. ⁶⁸ Their horses were 736, their mules 245, ⁶⁹ their camels 435, and their donkeys 6,720. ⁷⁰ Now some of the heads of fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics of gold, 50 basins, 30 priests' garments and 500 minas of silver. ⁷¹ And some of the heads of fathers' houses gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 darics of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. ⁷² And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 darics of gold, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 priests' garments. ⁷³ So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel, lived in their towns."

- **Ezra's Old News** - All of the above is a direct Quote from the Book of Ezra Chapter 2 (although numbers differ but the total is the same). So that activity was in the past. Although I wonder if Nehemiah did a little adding since the last time (the money is very different and some folks seem dead by now – it is 93 years later).
 - **Original Population of 1st Wave (93 years earlier) = 50,000** people (42,360 general + 7337 servants + singers 245 = Total 49,942)

- **2 groups couldn't prove their lineage** – a general group of families (642 people) and some priests (2 families) – so they were marked out as non-Israelite until it could be proven (affects land ownership and civic provision), and the priests were denied serving until they could get a priest who could handle the Urim and Thummim (ancient way of asking God questions and getting an answer).
 - **The giving was in the Millions of Dollars in today's money.**
 - **Why did they give so much?** – They knew that with God at the center, everything else is right. They knew that as you lift Him high, He lifts you up. They knew that their lives couldn't be all about themselves. They knew that you build around God and His foundation.
- **Walk Through the Word**
 - **Ezra Reads the Word of God to the People**
 - Nehemiah 7:74-8:5 – “And when the seventh month had come, the people of Israel were in their towns. 8 And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. 2 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. 4 And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood.”
 - **The 7th Month** – This is the Fall in the Jewish calendar (like our Octoberish), the month of Tishri. This is the month of **3 major festivals: 1.) Feast of Trumpets** (new moon – 1st day of Tishri) where you rest, eat lots of food and blow trumpets throughout the day (calling out to God); **2.) Day of Atonement** (10th day of the month, sin cleansing, strict Sabbath, High Priest before Ark of the Covenant); **3.) Feast of Booths/Tabernacles** – (starts the 15th) live in handmade booths for a period of days to commemorate how God cared for the Israelites in the desert for 40 years. Party time and hospitality. See more about this at the end of the message.
 - **Everyone Came Together** – “all the people gathered as one man”...this was a community experience and that is very, very important. Both the festivals and the connection pieces were to be done TOGETHER. It was a public display reminding one another with all the senses that God is important and that He cares for His people.
 - **The Importance of Attendance and Fellowship** – at no time in recent history has it become so abundantly clear that we suffer when we are separated (COVID). Church is so important because it creates a dynamic that you can't get alone. I'll

give you **7 reasons we need to be together in church consistently**, off the top of my head:

1. **Intensified Presence of God** – God does different things in corporate settings than He does in private ones.
 2. **Use of the Gifts of the Spirit** – they were built for community and make everyone better. Can't do it alone.
 3. **Corporate Praise and Worship** – we give a collective, powerful offering to the Lord
 4. **Kingdom Buying Power** – we can accomplish more when we put our money together than we ever would separately.
 5. **Group Dynamic Ministry** – laying on of hands; praying for one another in person, someone to listen and look you in the eyes, etc.
 6. **Good Peer Pressure** – you can tell in a crowd of believers what they are thinking and what is good that's being said. It spurs you to do better and to stretch your mind.
 7. **Human interaction** – that's being able to meet new people, talk with friends, laugh together, experience together, debrief together, etc.
- **Ezra, the priest, comes to the Platform** – Ezra is a huge deal in this story. He is the religious leader of the Jews here, just like Nehemiah is the governor of the people. Ezra led the 2nd wave of exiles back to Jerusalem 13 years before this. His main focus was rebuilding the Temple and restoring worship. He had led extensive spiritual reforms during his time (he, like Nehemiah would travel back and forth from their hometown to here, but mostly were in Jerusalem getting stuff done). He's called a scribe since he was the expert in the Law of God. He was both a copyist and expert. He was a teacher and a priest (descended from Aaron, through Eleazar and Phinehas).
 - **Ezra Reads the Bible/Law (chp 8)** – On Feast of Trumpets Day, from early morning to midday Ezra read the Bible publicly aloud. Everyone stood while he read it and it was men and women of understanding age. What he read is likely portions of the Pentateuch (1st five books of the Bible – focusing on laws in Exodus and Leviticus). Everyone listened attentively.
 - **Why Consistently reading the Bible is important** – let me ask you a question: how do you know what God wants? If we are here on this planet to carry out His will and plans, how do you know what they are? Is your prayer life so strong that you can discern the voice of God and His Holy Spirit accurately in the moment? Are you certain that the people telling you what God wants are truthful and accurate themselves? You are held accountable by God to carry out His will. So how do you know that? The clearest and most foundational way is reading the Bible consistently. Let me share **4 practical reasons** we need to have a steady diet of the Word:
 1. **It tells you what God is thinking** – He wrote so much for us to know His heart and will. It's not exhaustive but it is extensive.

2. **It Transforms Your Mind** – it changes what you think about and what you think about changes your behavior and your behavior changes your lifestyle.
 3. **The Holy Spirit uses it to steer your life** – different parts of the Bible pop out to you in different days and different seasons. Those are God’s way of steering you specifically.
 4. **It keeps you anchored to Truth** – this world has billions of opinions flying around and incredibly powerful distraction and distortion. It’s very easy to get into the weeds and start believing and thinking some really weird stuff. The Bible keeps you grounded in accurate truth.
- **If we’re going to build God’s way we need to...Keep Him at the Center at ALL Times**
- **Holy, Holy, Holy**
 - **Ezra Led a Worship Service**
 - [Nehemiah 8:6 – “And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.”](#)
 - **3 Elements of this Worship Service:** each one is powerful
 1. **Public Blessing of God** – Amens and lifting up their hands – Praise
 2. **Bowing in Humility**
 3. **Worshipping** with their faces to the Ground
 - **There are many ways to Worship God. Let’s do them all...**
 - **The importance of the first part of Bridgeways Service (Worship)** – when we come together as a church and sing, we aren’t singing along like you would at a concert, as fun as that it. We are singing for a couple different reasons, but the fact that we are together, adjusts what we do.
 - **What are we doing?** – We are engaging with God together. We are celebrating, remembering and proclaiming that God is amazing. We are connecting our hearts to his. We are allowing our emotions to get stirred up toward Him. We are delivering a group offering of praise before His throne. If we only did this, it would be powerful and valuable. It’s not a warm up of the sermon.
 - 1. **Private vs. Corporate Worship** – private worship is between you and God alone, it’s prayer in song. His nature and how He’s interacted with you personally. Corporate worship is a group activity. It’s out loud and expressively spurring one another on to offer a full group of worship in song. It’s a bunch of hearts singing as one. Sometimes that requires us to pretend we are alone to get our hearts and minds right.
 - 2. **Private vs. Corporate Praise** – private praise is from you to God in front of Heavenly Beings proclaiming how good and amazing God is. Corporate praise is a group effort, proclaiming out loud to one another and anyone that will listen that God is amazing. The audience is one another. It’s never appropriate in a group to praise silently. It’s not what it was built for.

- **The Reason Amens are Valuable for live services.**
 - **If we're going to build God's way we need to...Keep Him at the Center at ALL Times**
- **Hush Little Baby, Don't You Cry**
 - **Levites Minister to the People & Call for Celebration**
 - *Nehemiah 8:7-12 – “Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. ⁸ They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. ⁹ And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. ¹⁰ Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” ¹¹ So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.” ¹² And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.”*
 - **The Ministry of the Levites** – The Levites were temple workers. They weren't the priests but they came from the holy tribe of Levi and were dedicated to full time ministry. In this service they did 3 important things:
 1. **Proclamation** - Read the Word of God where the people were – so they could hear.
 2. **Instruction** - Explained the Word of God – taught, so people could understand
 3. **Ministry** - Calmed the People – ministered to them to understand how they should engage with The Word and what they were feeling.
 - **The Command to Rejoice & Why the People were upset on Festival Day**
 - **God Conviction vs. Pastoral Conviction** – Conviction means that God moves on our heart and we feel bad about how we've been acting. A guilt trip from a pastor is when the leader points things out we are doing wrong. The one by the pastor is useful for culture shaping. The one from God is useful for life transformation. The point is never a guilt trip or shame, as much as it's a call to reflect on what's happening already and how it needs to change.
 - **Why Rejoicing Needs to be commanded** – Over and over the Bible talks about rejoicing and says it in a command, 'you must rejoice!' It sounds like someone barking, 'you need to be Happy, right now!' Odd. But when you realize that our bodies and brains tend to have a mind of their own and are easily distracted and tend to lean toward the negative, you understand that it's a call to get our minds back in gear and Give God

what He deserves. It's a catalyst to stop complaining and start Thanking the Lord.

- **The Joy of the Lord is Our Strength** – What does that practically mean? It means that when God moves in our lives with His care and compassion, it lifts our hearts and we feel joy. When we feel joy, it lifts our spirits and our spirits lift our bones and muscles and we feel energy. It means that when we focus on God and all the good things that He has done, even in the midst of terrible circumstances, we are filled with strength knowing that He can carry us through. It's like the power of Hope to boost our energy (the different is that Joy just comes and Hope needs to be cultivated).
 - **If we're going to build God's way we need to...Keep Him at the Center at ALL Times**
- **You Don't Say**
 - **The Leaders Find a Mandated Festival in the Word of God**
 - Nehemiah 8:13-18 – “On the second day the heads of fathers’ houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law. ¹⁴ And they found it written in the Law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, ¹⁵ and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, “Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.” ¹⁶ So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. ¹⁷ And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. ¹⁸ And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.”
 - **The Leaders Study the Law** – ‘the heads of fathers’ houses’...came together with Ezra...to study the words of the Law.’ The practical leadership of the people took the Bible seriously and came together to find out how they should lead, what God wanted. How amazing would it be if the leaders of our land met together with pastors to discern how they should lead our great nation? Wow.
 - **Feast of Booths¹** - On the 2nd day the leadership gathered to study the Word and found that God had instituted the Feast of Booths, so they did one (first one in a long time). It's 7 days of festival and on the 8th day a solemn assembly. Ezra read the word to them every day.
 - **It's a Big Deal** – the 3 great feasts of the Jewish calendar are Booths, Passover and Pentecost.

¹ Info from New Unger's Bible Dictionary

- **It celebrates God's fatherly care & protection for the Jewish people.** It's not remembering hardship but protection, provision and shelter.
- **What you did all day/week** – It began with a preparation day (14th) to get set up and then kicked off at Sundown with a Trumpet blast by the priests and start of Sabbath day (no work), then sacrifices & offerings. Every sabbatical year the law was read publicly. The 6 following days were half festivals. The point was having fun being together. The family lead/head was to extend hospitality especially to the poor and stranger. It was a 7-day festival, but an 8th day was added as a sabbatic rest and holy convocation. On the first full day you'd carry around a palm branch through the day as you visited the mourners and sick. The 2-6th days were half holy days. You can buy necessary food and do festival-only work. Sacrifices were offered and lots of singing by priests and temple workers. The last day of the feast (21st Great Hosannah day) was mostly about temple activities (marching around altar 7x's, shaking the branches apart, etc.). On day 7, you started breaking down your booth. That 7th day was a special day, one of 4 in the year, that were viewed as a special day that God judged the world. The 8th day was Sabbath again to rest and keep holy to wrap the whole process.
 - **Your Booth** - The booth had to be detached and temporary, only built for the festival. At least 3 walls. Can't be too big, have to see the sky and stars (thatched roof). Can't be under a tree or covered with cloth. Inside must only be the plainest and most necessary furniture. Live there for 7 days. The only time you could go back inside regular home was heavy rain. Only exempt people were those on 'pious missions', invalids, nurses, women and infants
- **The Lack of Ritual and Celebration in Mainstream Christianity** – One of the things that has broken down with the lessening of community in the most parts of the evangelical world (more white than black or Latino – community is stronger in some ethnicities) and mainstream Christianity is that corporate ritual, doesn't carry any value anymore and it's been dropped from the church docket. In other words, doing things together doesn't have as much value if we are disconnected in the first place. It's hard to have a seder meal together if we don't want to spend time together. It's difficult to have a festival if everyone just comes for the goodies and not for one another. It's useless to have a collective meaningful event if no one shows. For those personalities that crave ritual and tradition, this has been hard and driven some back to other denominations or faiths (i.e. Catholic, Episcopalian, Islam, etc.). Unfortunately, a lot of the Jewish traditions, rituals and festivals were centered around having fun together and connecting over food. So as the traditions were dropped so too was the mandated discipline of partying. So, we have less celebration.
 - **If we're going to build God's way we need to...Keep Him at the Center at ALL Times**

Conclusion

- **God is our Center; Church is our Hub** – whatever your life looks like it should be spreading out from the center of the Church, from Christ. The local church becomes an anchor for you to become fully what you were built to become.
 - **Here we lift up the Lord's name.**
 - **Here we study His word and seek His will.**
 - **Here we challenge you to be your best and encourage you when you are down.**
- **Encouragement and Reminder of What God's Word Says**
 - God's Word says that **King Jesus is on the Throne** and is the Name above all Names.
 - God's Word says that **one day Jesus will come** and make things right, but until then the Holy Spirit is dwelling among us to bring us through.
 - God's Word says that each of us is a **masterpiece** created by God to love us, and that we are precious to Him.
 - God's Word says that **all suffering is temporary.**
 - God's Word says that the **Holy Spirit** living in us **is greater than Satan** who's running around this world.
 - God's Word says that **He is with us always.** Nothing can separate us from His love.
 - God's Word says that **you are a child of God** and that means that you are **empowered** and given **authority** over darkness.
 - God's Word says that **prayer matters** and that it alters reality.
 - **God's Word says...**