

2 Chronicles 36:23

Sunday 8/15/2004

Last week, we studied the book of 2 Chronicles. We set aside 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles and showed you how they were really commentaries on 1st and 2nd Samuel and 1st and 2nd Kings. Don't go in the order of 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings. They go in an order: 1, 2, 3, 4 cover a period of time. But 1st and 2nd Chronicles cover the same period of time. We showed you how, from a Christian standpoint, it really, really, really shows you and I the aspect of ministry and the aspect of leadership.

Where 1st Chronicles really focuses on us inwardly—what we need to be to the Lord Jesus Christ—we saw some incredible, without a doubt, as far as I'm concerned, the greatest material in all the Bible on you and I building a relationship and understanding what that means. Then we get into 2 Chronicles, and it's focused outwardly. Basically, once you have built yourself to be what God wants you to be, it shows how you outwardly display that as far as ministry and what you're up against. So we covered that and really focused on how those two books really show you about leadership within God's system: how to be the leader. Back in those days, they called them David's mighty men of valor. But that translates to us as men and women who will take the Word of God seriously in these last days and decide for themselves that they are going to be that cut above the average person that is going to take a stand for God and really be all that God wants them to be.

Today, we're going to move into the book of Ezra. With the book of Ezra, we're going to have to stop for a moment and explain some things in the Bible. Up to this point, you've kind of been able to coast along. I know a lot of you have been studying and putting the Word of God together as we go through it weekly. You're going home and laying it out like you're supposed to, and that's how you're going to learn, and that's how we're building this thing. But in anything, you have to really stretch yourself to learn. It's true whatever you do. I talked about Thursday night how that when you exercise, there comes a point where the routine you normally do every day, your body just adjusts to it. If you don't constantly add more to what you're doing and vary what you're doing, it's really easy for this old flesh just to fall into a system.

I know in running, I can get to the place where I can run two, three miles, and I come home not even breaking a sweat because your body gets used to it. So you've got to run a little harder, run a little farther, run some stairs, whatever. Do something that burns it a little more, and it's true in whatever you do in life because we as human beings have a tendency to get satisfied with a status quo. So we've got to be constantly disciplining ourselves to exercise ourselves. In fact, the Bible uses that term in the book of Hebrews where he talks about the fact that there are some people that ought to be teachers, people that ought to be teaching the Word of God, but they have to be taught the first principles over again. He says later on down in those verses there that they've not exercised their senses. Learning the Bible is a lot like exercising.

I say that because today we're going to slap a little more weight on. Today, when you walk out of here, some of you are going to be scratching your head, and you're going to say, "Wow, that was way over my head." Well, I don't know what else to do. There has to come a point where we have to stop and go back and look and then really give you some material that helps you pull all the

other material together. If you're working through it and you're doing what you're supposed to be doing, you may not understand all of it, even though I'm going to try to break it down as easy as I can today and make it enjoyable for you as far as from an aspect of really seeing it and laying it out. It's going to come down to you having to do the work on it.

Bottom line is this: I can make the Bible as easy to understand, and I have an ability to do that. I have an ability to take complicated things and explain them very basically. I understand that; that's just the way God made me. But I can stand up here and take the Bible and break it down as palatable for you as I know how to, that you can say, "Wow, that's really good." But if you don't go home and do the work, it isn't going to do you any good. And that's what we're talking about today. So we're going to look at the book of Ezra today, and we're going to explain some things of where we're at now. I'm going to show you how your Old Testament divides itself out, and we're going to put some things to it. Today will be a valuable piece of information in your Bible study, whether you're here today or you're listening to this on a tape because you weren't here today, or you're 10 years from today and somebody's given you this tape. This is going to be a very important piece of information for you.

So let's go to the Lord this morning, ask His blessings on it, and then we'll have a good time in His word.

Father, we do thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you so much. Thank you for those that are here. Pray, Father, you continue to open up our hearts today and our ears and give us what we need. And Lord, allow us to really teach your word today with the freedom that only your spirit can give. And we'll thank you and praise in Jesus' name for a sake we ask it. Amen.

I. Historical Overview and Dispensational Shift

So far, we've come up from Genesis to 2nd Chronicles. What we have seen here, basically, even though I've shown you many practical things and I've shown you doctrinal things, remember now, you've got to remember those three applications. Three applications of Scripture are very basic:

1. The historical means it actually took place in history, and it's a way that you can trace God through history.
2. The prophetic always deals with the prophecy that always goes around the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ or the establishment of the kingdom of heaven at the second coming of Christ. All the prophecy, when I talk to you about something being a doctrinal application, I'm talking about a prophetic application. It has to do with the second coming of Christ and the establishment of that kingdom.
3. Then we talk about the inspirational application. That's something that strengthens you. It's something like we saw in 1st and 2nd Chronicles where you can take that and apply it to your own life. One book inwardly, one book outwardly.

Of course, that's how the Bible lays it all out. But up to this point, we have been focusing on the historical account. My job is to give you an overview understanding of the Bible. My job is to help you understand where you're at in the Word of God, whatever you hear somebody teach.

That comes because you're going to have to get a picture in your mind of the picture that the Bible paints. And that's what we're doing.

From Genesis to 2 Chronicles, we've seen the calling of the nation of Israel. We've seen the formation of the nation of Israel. We've seen the establishment of the nation of Israel. And we have seen the downfall of the nation of Israel. So far, from Genesis to 2 Chronicles, and that's where we're at right now, getting ready to jump into Ezra. But so far, from Genesis to 2 Chronicles, we've come through almost 2,400 years of history. I know that just seems like a few short books, but historically, that's almost 2,400 years, depending on how you count it.

What we've seen is the establishment—and we talked about this before we ever started our Bible study—I talked to you about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. What we're following here is the establishment of those two kingdoms. Sometimes one of them's here, sometimes none of them's here, sometimes the other one's here, sometimes they're both here. We have laid that out for you way before we started our Bible study. So, if you've got that material, then you know where we're at.

Now, when we come to the end of 2 Chronicles and begin to move into the book of Ezra, we're at that great major shift in the Bible that we've talked about a couple of weeks ago. We talked about the word dispensations. A couple of Thursday nights ago, Rebecca asked about the dispensations because I didn't go into it in detail. I told you there were 9 or 10 of them or 11, however you counted them, and she asked that question on Thursday night. So, I went through those dispensations, and those of you that were there, you now have that piece of information, which is going to be invaluable to you as you come on down. I want to say this again: that's why we have Thursday night the way we do. I'm giving you a lot of material. A lot of us are meeting one-on-one. On top of that, I want to have a place where you can come to grab the material that you need, that you can say, "Hey, man, you said this Sunday, I'm in the middle of studying this thing out. I don't understand this." That's what we have got to have.

So, right now, between 2 Chronicles and going into Ezra, we have a major shift. We are now in a dispensation change, and we now enter into the times of the Gentiles. This is a very important shift in your Bible. We talked about that a couple of weeks ago, spent the whole time on it.

II. The Three Categories of the Old Testament

Let me break down for you the complete Old Testament. This makes the Bible easy, and that's what we're after. We want to make the Bible as easy as God intended it to be. I want to break down the complete Old Testament, and when you begin to do that, you'll find that the Old Testament breaks down into three categories. It's real simple: three, because the order of pattern of things that God made, Romans 1:19-20, is always after Himself. He is a Trinity God, a Triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. So, everything that God makes, He's going to make after that pattern which was Himself. We've talked about that many, many times.

When we get into the New Testament, the New Testament also breaks down into three categories, but we don't need to worry about that right now. We're going to talk about the three categories in the Old Testament, and then put all of these books that we've been through and

where we're going into these categories. Because what I want to begin to do is paint for you how the Old Testament lays itself out. We're going to paint two pictures. We're going to paint a picture of the Old Testament. That's what we're doing right now. And later on, we're going to paint a picture of the New Testament. You're going to see that those two pictures are a composite. We're going to study them separately, but there's going to come a time that we're going to merge the two pictures, and the picture that God wants you to see is going to come about. That's exactly how you do it.

- The Historical Books
- The Prophetic Books
- The Wisdom Books

III. The Exile and Dispensational Periods

The historical books from 1 Samuel to 2 Chronicles, and the prophetic books that we've talked about, the 17, they break down around the time period of the captivity. Keep in mind, at the end of 2 Chronicles chapter 36, the nation of Israel goes into captivity. They are in captivity 70 years. During that 70 years, we see the times of the Gentiles where the world is completely run by the Gentiles. The times of the Gentiles don't end until the rapture of the church, as far technically speaking, and we're going to talk in technical terms and not get into the deep things of the Bible. We're just going to talk in a technical sense. That time of the Gentiles runs from 606 B.C. up to the rapture of the church. In other words, we are still in the times of the Gentiles technically speaking as we speak today, and we will be until the rapture of the church. In the rapture of the church, God takes out the Gentile church, and He again turns His attention to the nation of Israel, and that ends the time of the Gentiles and the re-establishment of the nation of Israel through the Tribulation period. If you can grasp that, then you're well on your way to understanding, and I'm trying to make it as easy and as palatable for you as I know how to today, because this is a very complicated subject. Men make it a lot more complicated than it really is. It's like telling a story to your kids. If you can just grasp the comprehension of the story, you don't have to worry about, I haven't given you one verse yet, you've got to remember. I haven't given you, all I've told you is a story, because the Bible is a story. The Bible is a picture, and all I'm trying to do is paint a picture. Once you get the picture, man, it's easy to go back and put the other material in.

The historical books and the prophetic books are built around this captivity of 70 years. When you would go to Bible college someplace, God forbid, or you would get a higher education of learning about the Bible, they would teach you this concept. They call it the exile. The exile means that Israel is exiled from the land. If you would pick up a book on the history of Israel, or you would take a Bible college course, you would find that they build this time period around this exile. They would have what they call the pre-exile, they would have what they call the exile period, and they would have what they call the post-exile period.

I don't know why they do this. I've never understood why some people have to take words. Have you ever heard a Campbellite or ever heard a Charismatic talk about the baptism of the Holy

Ghost in Acts 2? They didn't say Holy Ghost. It's always Holy Ghost. Have you ever seen the baptism of the Holy Ghost? It's like you get to the top of the stairs and start down and you run down the last five. Holy Ghost. Holy Ghost. I don't know why they do that. I don't know why you just can't say the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Why do you got to say the baptism of the Holy Ghost? I don't know. I've never understood it. But I know that men do that to draw attention to things.

For instance, if you would go... I mean, if I was teaching... Forget how I would teach it. But then you go there and I've heard them do it. When I studied my Bible and learned my Bible, I learned the Bible the right way first. I learned the Bible... Listen to me. I learned the Bible the right way first. Then I launched on an exhaustive study to learn it the wrong way. That's what I said. I learned it right first and then it launched on an extensive study, which I still am in, on learning it the wrong way. Once I was absolutely convinced about the Bible, and nobody could shake my faith in what I knew it said and what I knew it was, then I wanted to broaden my education by studying everything that was wrong out there. Because you don't learn just by studying what's right. But what you will do is because you learn the Bible right, you will be able to spot what's wrong. That is invaluable. It's just as important today as a child of God for you to know what's wrong as it is to know what's right. And you have to go through the process to do that.

Now, I don't recommend that for everybody. I'm very careful when I say that because the average person thinks that they're smarter than they are, and so they get out there and they haven't spent the time learning the Bible, so they jump into things that are wrong and then they find out they get confused and then they get swayed to another bad teaching because they really don't know the Bible to begin with. But when you firmly understand the Word of God, you realize what you've got, and nobody's going to shake your faith in it, and then you want to study what's wrong to emphasize what's right.

I remember ordering a set of tapes from some college that were teaching on courses that I wanted to learn what was being said on the other side of the fence. I'll never forget, this guy was talking about the captivity of Israel, and he was talking about this very same thing. Just like the Holy Ghost people, when he got up there and he talked about the... I mean, all you have to do is say, here we have before the exile, during the exile, and then after the exile. No, no, no, no, no, no, he's got to really impress them. He gets up there, and I don't know what he looked like, but he looked like he must... If I could have put a voice to the... he looked like he was about five foot four. He looked like he had big glasses. He looked like the nerd of your life. He looked like that he had a little mustache and a little beard goatee that he was trying to grow. That was the evidence of thing not seen in the... you know, it was just an incredible thing. And he was up there, and he was talking about the pre-exilic. Exilic sounded like a bullet going across the battlefield someplace. Pre-exilic, the exilic, and the post-exilic. I mean, he was putting the emphasis on the exilic, just like they put on the Holy Ghost. I could never understand that, but they do that to impress you.

Now, if you want the classical... and I could teach you either way, because you don't believe this, but I can be pretty high class when I have to be. You don't study what's wrong without learning how to teach what's wrong and learn how to play the game. And I can do it. I mean, if you want

the classical, that it's pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic. If you want it down where we can all understand it in the way I would teach it, it runs like this: Before God kicked the snot out of them, while God was kicking the snot out of them, and after God kicked the snot out of them. That is pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic. That's the way it works.

When you understand that all of these historical books from 1 Samuel to 2 Chronicles, and the prophetic books break down around this 70-year captivity—before the exile, during the exile, and after the exile—then you begin to see how it begins to come together. It's important because what God is doing here is God is establishing reference points. And you have to get those reference points down.

- Books Before the Exile (Pre-Exilic) 1 Samuel 1 Kings 1 Chronicles Isaiah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Jeremiah Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah These are the books that fit in the pre-exilic. Those books fit the historical, and then you have the prophetic guys or the prophets that preach during that time.
- Books During the Exile (Exilic) During the exile, there are three books: Ezekiel Daniel Lamentations That's during the 70 years.
- Books After the Exile (Post-Exilic) Haggai Zechariah Malachi Ezra Nehemiah Esther Those are the books after the captivity.

Now, here's what you have. The historical books are a record of the leaders of Israel and the establishment of the nation of Israel through a course of history that runs 2,400 years. They go into apostasy, and then God sends them prophets. Those prophets preach before they go into captivity, during the captivity, and then in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, they go back at the end of the captivity, and the prophets preach during that time. God does this to establish landmarks, reference points. It's Proverbs 22 that tells you this, and oh my, my, my, this is so important. The Bible talks about that we are not to remove the ancient landmarks. If you remove the ancient landmarks, the Bible says you enter into the fields of the fatherless and have no earthly idea where you are at. The fields of the fatherless is what you'll get today in secular education about the history of America, the history of the world, the history of Europe. However you want to study it, you will get a Gentile perspective of history that says nothing about God, says nothing about the nation of Israel. Therefore, they're like a fatherless child who doesn't know who his father is, don't know who his mother is, who's wandering through life, knocking on doors, saying, "Are you my dad? Are you my mom? You look like me. You could be my..." You have no idea where you come from, and that's where we're at today. You lose the Jew in history, and you lose history. It's as simple as that.

IV. The Two Captivities and Returns of Israel

I said all that to say this. Last week we saw 2 Chronicles 36. We saw the beginning of the times of the Gentiles. We saw the beginning of the captivity. Remember, the captivity and the times of the Gentiles are two different things. The times of the Gentiles is a period that runs from 606 B.C. in 2 Chronicles up to the rapture. The captivity is a 70-year period of time within the times of the Gentiles. It's when they are under the Nebuchadnezzar rule in Babylon, and we see that during this 70 years, that's when Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Some people don't put

Lamentations in there, but it's so close. We'll put it in there. It doesn't really make any difference, but it's right there.

The next book now we have is Ezra. The book of Ezra takes place after the 70 years of captivity. Let me tell you what happens. They go into captivity. Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon, takes them captive. During the 70-year captivity, Babylon gets taken over by Persia. All this material is in the book of Daniel for you. In fact, Daniel, the book written during the captivity, is one of the greatest books in the Bible that show you the times of the Gentiles and puts America, Russia, and Great Britain all in perspective for you at the end, right before the Lord comes back. We don't have time to get into that. We'll talk about that when we do come through the book of Daniel.

During this book of Ezra, we see that Cyrus, king of Persia, they have defeated Babylon. And now they take over running Jerusalem. Cyrus is an interesting guy. He's the king of Persia. He allows the Jew to go back at the end of the 70 years once Babylon has been destroyed. Cyrus allows them to go back. When he allows them to go back, he allows them to return. They never again become the great nation that they once were. The kingdom of heaven for all practical purposes is gone now. It will not be back till Christ shows up. There's never a time now for the next 400 years that the nation of Israel is not under Gentile bondage. She never regains her great status for the next 400 years. The kingdom of heaven is gone.

What we have during this period of time in these books, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, what we have during this time is God setting up the world and laying out the world system, preparing for the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, what you have during these 400 years, even though Israel goes back, even though Israel is back in the land, they never have the land to themselves. They're under the domination of some Gentile, and they never have the land back to themselves. During that time, God does his work to prepare people, nations, and everything for the coming of his son 400 years later, and the devil does his work to frustrate that plan, to cancel out that plan, and to do everything he can to wreck the first coming of Christ when the Lord shows up.

With this, what I've just mentioned to you, you have two great principles that I just got to touch on here for a second.

4. First of all, with Cyrus, King of Persia, you have a great illustration of how God uses unsaved nations to accomplish his purpose. Cyrus was not a believer. There's no indication anywhere, shape or form. He recognized who God was, but there's nowhere, shape or form, anywhere in history and not in the Bible that Cyrus ever adopted God as his God and did away with all the other things that was going on. No, no, no. What it shows you here is, and this is so important, because you see it today, and it's the answer to many things we don't understand today behind the scenes of history. What you have here is an establishment of a principle that God has a plan, and God is going to accomplish that plan, and you can either get on the bus and be part of the solution, or you can stay off the bus and be part of the problem, but God will use you to do what he wants to do. I think the Bible calls this in the New Testament, vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. God will use you either way, because the bottom line is God is going to establish his people, he's going to establish his

kingdom, and God is going to get the honor and glory out of that, whether you like it or not, and he's going to do it. Cyrus could choose to be a willing vessel or an unwilling vessel, but God used him. Once you see that fact, then you see history, God using nations to twist them and use them to bring his people right back where he wants them to be for what God is trying to accomplish.

5. The second thing we see, which is so vitally important, is the great principle of the cycle of Ecclesiastes chapter 1, that there's no new thing under the sun. This great concept is simply stated as this: history repeats itself. If you miss that, you will miss more in life. In fact, a great man said one time, the only thing man ever learns from history is the fact that man never learns anything from history. Therefore, he is bound to repeat the mistakes of history, and he surely does. I'm telling you, with those two pieces of information right there, you have enough to figure out 90% of what's going on throughout the Bible if you didn't get anything out. But boy, I'll tell you what, there's some incredible things that you see.

Now, what you see here, when they go back under Ezra, historically, you begin to see God setting up the nations and the land and the Jew for his son at the first coming of Christ, and you see the devil, during that 400 years, doing everything he can to destroy what God is going to do.

V. Understanding Millennial Views

Something else I have to show you here, and I told you there's going to be a lot today, and I'm doing my best to break it down for you. In fact, I'm working on a king-size headache right now because I'm like a 737 jet flying at 80 miles an hour trying to keep from stalling here. But you know me, this is not my mode in teaching. My mode is teaching. And you've got to run after me to catch it. Well, I'm in stall mode today, and I've got the throttles pushed back just about the engine's old stall trying to make this thing palatable. And I hope it's working for you because I hope I'm not getting this headache for nothing. But anyway, I've got to lay this out for you and something else you've got to see here.

As you investigate the Bible and you study the Bible and you learn more about the Bible and you start to put the meat on the bones, at some time in your life you're going to have to begin to really embrace some of the other teachings that are out there. You're going to find that the theme of the Bible, you should already know this, is the second coming of Christ. You should already know that that is the most crucial doctrine in all the Bible. That's the theme of the Bible. The whole Bible is written around that. I talked about putting the two pictures of the Old Testament and the New Testament together. When you put those pictures together, what you have is the picture of God establishing His kingdom with the nation of Israel and everybody fitting in where they fit in.

Through the course of history, man through theology has done everything that he can do to make the Bible harder than it is. So, unsaved men with other false religions come up with teachings or heresies about the second coming of Christ. When I just told you that that 400 years sets things up for the first coming of Christ, the first coming of Christ sets things up for the second coming of Christ, which you're going to see in a moment. But in time, as you flex your spiritual muscles and you begin to add weight to the bar and you begin to grow spiritually, you're going to bump

into three teachings about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they're called simply post-millennialism, A, or all-millennialism, and pre-millennialism.

Now, those are the three major teachings about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Two of those are false. Two of those are developed by man to get around the Bible because they rejected the Bible. Now, the word "mill," when I said post-millennial or mill, the word millennium comes from the word mill, which means 1000. When I'm talking about the millennium, I'm talking about the thousand year reign that takes place at the end of the tribulation period. This would be Revelation chapter 20. This would be Ezekiel chapter 40 through chapter 48 and a hundred other places in the Bible. When you get to that point, you're talking about the millennium, you're talking about when Christ comes back to establish his kingdom.

Now, man and man-made religions have come up with two distinct teachings that are against the Bible because they reject the Bible about the coming of the Lord. Because the coming of the Lord is the theme of the Bible. It's the picture that we're painting here.

- Post-Millennialism (Heresy)
- A-Millennialism (Heresy)
- Pre-Millennialism (Biblical View)

VI. The Order of Post-Captivity Books and Prophecy

I know that's a lot, but you must be getting it because my headache is getting more severe. Here we go. The order of these post-captivity books, Ezra, where we're at right now, Nehemiah, and Esther, they show you by the order of the books in your Bible. This is why I tell you that the Greek and the Hebrew is absolutely worthless. Some Thursday night, I'll give you the Hebrew Greek test to show you how that the Greek and the Hebrew is absolutely a worthless piece of trash of figuring out the Bible. Everything that I have ever given you, that you go home and you say, "Wow, I never saw that before," or "Wow," that you could not find going to the Greek and the Hebrew. You find by going to the English Bible that God gave you in the worldwide common language of the common man in the last days. But that's another study. But I'm going to show you here the order of the books in your Bible teach and support the hundred plus verses in the Bible that teach you the millennial view from the pre-millennial view, which is found in Revelation chapter 19, 20, 21, and 22.

You don't have to turn to this because I just want you to listen, but mark it down. You want to look it up later.

Isaiah 11:9-11

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

Those verses teach us that the Jews go into captivity and return from the captivity two times. In other words, there are two captivities in Israel's history, and there are two returns from that captivity in Israel's history. This is what he says in verse 11 when he says this, "And it shall come to pass in that day." That day, look at the back of your little card. That day, second coming of Christ right up there on top. I'll help you. You can write a check for these on the way out. I'll help you. "And it came to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people."

I'm telling you the first time that Jew goes into captivity in 606 B.C., he goes back 70 years later under Cyrus. He's in the land for the next 400 years, and then you have the first coming of Christ. All right. That's the first time out and the first time back. The second time when Christ shows up in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you know what happens. The Jews are in the land. They went back after the captivity. They've been there for 400 years. Christ comes back the second time, and he offers them the kingdom again. They reject him. So in 70 A.D., Titus comes down just like Nebuchadnezzar did in 606 B.C. And Titus destroys Jerusalem the same way, kicks the Jews out, and they're scattered again the same way. And they're out of that land completely. This time, they don't come back the second time until 1900 years later in 1918 A.D.

You say, "What happened in 1918 A.D.?" Well, we've studied it before. How did you know that during the great Philadelphian church age, the nation of England runs the world? It's a time when, as the saying would go back then, the sun never set on the British Empire. She had empires and provinces and colonies all around the world. Why? Because she was honoring a book, and God was blessing her because of that book. During that time, you don't have terrorism. Hey, you know what? When this thing got screwed up, I'll just drop the bomb on you. You know when this thing got screwed up? England was in every one of those Arab nations during that period of time. And there wasn't one revolt. There wasn't one terrorist. And they believed in Allah and all the stuff like they did now. You know why? Because that book ruled this world and there was no uprising when that book was on the throne. And everybody recognized it as the book. England had every place that we're having terrorism right now. England had colonies, and there was no terrorism during that time. You know why? Because that book reigned supreme. It's when England, America, and everybody else around the world dunked the book. That's why we got what we got today. England lost every one of those colonies in India, in Burma, in Saudi Arabia, in Iraq, which was in Iraq then, everywhere you want to go. She had a control over it and was teaching those people that book. And sure there was Muhammad, sure there was Allah, but there was no uprising because God had a control of this world through that book, through the nation of England. And there was none. That's another message too.

Anyway, in 1918, England has control of Jerusalem. Lord Wellington had just kicked the Arabs out, and she has complete control. They had just won World War I, and they got together in the British Parliament, and a Jew by the name of Weizmann. A Jew by the name of Weizmann had used his technology to develop a smokeless gunpowder that really helped the British win the war. And from that they said, "You know what?" They still believed the Bible back then, even though they were on their way out. They still believed it enough to know that that was still God's people's land and they were still God's people. So they said, "You know what? Let's do something for the nation of Israel. We now have kicked the Arabs out. We're in charge. Let's do something." And Lord Balfour, a born-again, blood-washed, saved man of God. Lord Balfour stood up in British Parliament and put forth what is commonly known today as the Balfour Declaration. The Balfour Declaration simply said that the Jew belonged to the land and the land belonged to the Jew based on a King James 1611 Authorized Version out of Amos chapter 9. He said, "Let's give the land back to them," and they passed out a decree called the Balfour Declaration that said, "Jews, that's your land." Now they reneged on it, but that's beside the point because God was in charge of nations and reason why they reneged on it is because Winston Churchill, who hated God and hated everything about God and the people of God said no. Because the Grand Mafia of Arabia came over and said, "Hey, look, you give the Jew back to them, you're not going to get any more oil." Oil is always the issue. Things don't change, but we ain't got time to get into that this morning.

So the second time we see them go back, they go out under Titus in 70 AD, and then they go back 1900 years later under England. And the second time they go back is going to lead to the second coming of Christ, just like the first time they went back, led to the first coming of Christ. You say, "Why did God do it that way?" Oh, the Bible is consistent. You must be born again. It's not your first time. It's your second time. Oh, yeah, it wasn't Abel. It was Seth. It wasn't Esau. It was Jacob. It wasn't Ishmael. It was Isaac. It wasn't Saul. It wasn't David. It won't be the first time they get born again as a nation. Romans chapter 11, it's going to be the second time. So the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 11 verse 9 that God recovers his people two times. Two times.

Now that you got that, I know we don't have seat belts on these chairs, but buckle them because here we go. In a Hebrew Bible, you know what the last book in his Bible is? You say, "What's Malachi?" No, that's the last book in your Bible. A Jewish Bible, Old Testament is not laid out like yours. The last book in his Bible is Second Chronicles. Oh, yeah. See, the last book in your Bible is Malachi in the Old Testament. But in a Hebrew Old Testament, the last book in his Bible is Second Chronicles. And in Second Chronicles chapter 36 verse 23, here's what that Jew reads. Every time he reads his Bible, every time he finishes his Bible for the last time, God fixed that thing. So the last thing that old rugged apostate God denying Christ hating, Christ killing, Christian hating self arrogant Jew would read is that he's to go back to that land. Because the last verse in his Bible is verse 23 of chapter 36, and it says this:

2 Chronicles 36:23

Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.

The last thing that Jew reads is he's to go back. He's to go back to that land. That's why you have two captivities and you have two returns. You have the first captivity in 606. They go back 70 years later. You have the next time they're kicked out 70 AD and they go back 1900 years later with the start of the Balfour Declaration in 1918. I'm telling you what, where the first one has to do with the first coming of Christ, the second one has to do with the second coming of Christ. I'm going to tell you something. If you never learned to study history and history repeats itself, you will never figure things out.

The reason why I believe the King James Bible is the absolute Word of God. I'm going to give you one of those reasons. I've got 9,443,000, but here is just one of them. This is why this book is superior to any Greek and any Hebrew manuscripts, Greek, New Testament, any scholar anywhere that tries to correct your Bible. All right, now watch. 2 Chronicles 36. They go back. They're told to go back. What do they do in the next book of Ezra? They go back. The Jew returns. That Jew goes back in the book of Ezra just like he went back in 1918. Say, "How so, Bob?" Oh, who sent him back? Persia. Persia. You ever study the book of Daniel? Persia is a nation over in the book of Daniel that matches up to England. You know what the crest of Persia was? It was a lion. You know what the crest of England is? One guess, first one doesn't count. It's a lion. In the book of Ezra, that Jew returns just like he did in 1918 under the Balfour Declaration by a nation, Persia, just like he goes back in 1918 with a nation, England.

Next book. All right, in the book of Ezra, the Jew returns. The next book is Nehemiah. We're going to study it. We'll go through all these things in great detail when we get there. I'm showing you something now to slap some more weight on the bar. Nehemiah. Where the Jew rebuilds in Ezra, or excuse me, returns in Ezra. You know what he does in Nehemiah? He rebuilds and he settles a land exactly like he did in 1948. On May the 14th, 1948, the Jew opened up that scroll and read before the world that they were declaring themselves as the state of Israel. You know what happened between World War I and 1948? World War II. You want to know how God deals with nations and the leaders of nations? History always repeats itself. He used Cyrus to take the turn of events and through the Gentile domination to bring about the first coming of Christ. He used the Gentile nations from 1918 right up to the day and age that we're living in to set up the events for the second coming of Christ. World War I got the land ready for the Jew because the land mass of Europe changed during that particular time and set up the corridor for the Jews to go back even though they wouldn't go back because they reneged on it. World War II got the Jew ready for the land and when that Jew was done with World War II with Auschwitz and Treblinka and Buchenwald and Mauthausen and all those places, he went back and on May the 14th, 1948, they opened up that scroll and they declared to a world something that hadn't happened for 1900 years. We are back and we're in the land and we now have established ourselves as a nation of Israel.

Well, the book of Nehemiah is a pretty good book. In Ezra they return. In Nehemiah they rebuild and they settle land. You ever studied Nehemiah chapter 1, 2, and 3? Here's what you got. Nehemiah goes out. He surveys Jerusalem in ruin. And they begin to rebuild. And they begin to rebuild by clearing it off and begin to rebuild Jerusalem. We've studied it before. We'll study it again when we get to that book next week. And they begin to study it. Oh yeah, 1st chapter 1,

chapter 2, chapter 3, they begin to rebuild and settle in the land. And you know what happened in chapter 4? A man by the name of Sanballat shows up. You know what Sanballat does? He doesn't like what they're doing and he's determined to stop it. Let me ask you a question. I don't know what you know about history, but I'm telling you right now, you better learn this fact. History repeats itself. You know what took place on May 14, 1948? The Israel became a nation. They declared the world. One day later, May 15, the Arab League attacked the Jews. Just like Nehemiah 1, 2 and 3, they're going to rebuild. And then Sanballat and Arab says, "No you're not." They no more held up that paper and give their press confidence in the United Nations and America. And everybody said, "Okay, we agree." And then the Arab League, made up of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Syria, all of those places, even though some of those nations weren't there then, they said, "No you're not." And they attacked them the next day to stop the rebuilding just like Sanballat did in the book of Nehemiah. And boy, I'll tell you what, you can take Nehemiah through the rest of that book and you can see them trying to stop the work. Sometimes they do, then they get going and it's just reading history from 1948 to the present.

You know what happened in 1967? The Six Days War. Saudi Arabia committed that thing and they got, Israelis got word of it. And they come into that thing and they were going to destroy them. They were going to destroy them. And the Israelis got a heads up on it and they took their jets off first and they destroyed the Arab and the Egyptian Air Force on the ground. They had, there was those, every Arab nation, just like back here in the book of Nehemiah, they all had the support of all the other nations. The Saudis, the Iraqis, they had T-34 Russian tanks. They were getting arms and ammunition. AK-47 from Russia to wipe those Jews. The Jews had tanks left over from World War II. There were sub tanks. But you know what they had? That the other one didn't have? They had a mandate from God that said that's your land. And them Jews took off and shot those MiGs out of the sky. Those tanks busted around the side and chased those Arabs out of there. And the United News and Newsweek and World Report all called it the Six Days War. You know why? Because in the beginning God worked six days and he rested the seventh and those Jews kicked that crap out of them in six days and rested on the seventh. You better learn some things about your Bible.

That book of Ezra, they returned just like they did in 1918. In the book of Nehemiah, they rebuilt in 1948 with all the same opposition. Oh, now here comes my book. Esther. Only book in the Bible where God is not mentioned. Only book in the Bible where God is not mentioned. Well, you know what you got in the book of Esther? Very quickly, you got a Gentile queen being dumped off the throne and a Jewish queen being set up on the throne. End of the times of the Gentiles. End of the times of the... You know what you got in Chapter 1, 2? You got a wedding in the king's garden with all the attendants, seven days and seven nights. Picture the rapture and the marriage supper of the Lamb. You know what you got in Chapter 3? You got a man by the name of Haman showing up. One of your 18 types of antichrist who tries to persecute the nation of Israel. You know what you got? Ezra is a picture of that Jew returning like he did in 1918. Nehemiah is a picture of him rebuilding like he did in 1948. Esther is a picture of the rapture of the church in the first three and a half years of the tribulation period. Because when Haman shows up, the first thing he does is try to blend in with everybody else and get along and be one of the boys.

What's your next book? Remember now, the tribulation is seven years. Three and a half years of peace and safety. Three and a half years of destruction. In Ezra, they return. In Nehemiah, they rebuild like they did in 1948. In the Book of Esther, you've got that wedding, a picture of the rapture of the church, the Jewish queen being put on, the Gentile queen being dumped off. You got everything going on. Then you come to the Book of Job. You know what Book of Job is? The name Job means one persecuted. You know where Job's at? He's in the land of Uz. You know what the land of Uz is? It's south of Sela, Petra down in the Dead Sea right where there's huge going to be in the tribulation period. You know what? Jews persecuted on the ground seven days and seven nights by the devil. Picture the seven years of the tribulation period. I mean, you know what? When you go over there in chapter 38, the Bible says God turned the captivity of Job, just like the Bible says that God turned the captivity of Israel at the end of the tribulation period. I mean, there's a resurrection in chapter 42, just like the end of the tribulation period. When you get back there at the end of the book, Job gets back double. Everything that he had, Isaiah chapter 61, Deuteronomy chapter 21 says at the end of the second coming of Christ, God gives Israel double back everything they had. You know how many chapters in the Book of Job? 42. You know how many months in the great tribulation period? You guessed it. 42. Esther's the first half, Job's the second half. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. I studied the Greek long to get that.

Ezra, he returned like 1918. Nehemiah, he rebuilds like it did in 1948. Esther, picture the rapture in the first three and a half years of the tribulation period. Job, second half of the tribulation period where Job is persecuted and gets all the boils and all the plagues. And then what happens in the next book? Psalms, Psalms, David on the throne, picture the millennium of Christ. You know what you got? By the order of the books in your King James 1611 Authorized Version, you got the pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ. No questions about it. That's all God establishes, a doctrine in the Bible. That's those, somebody said, "Well man just did that." Give me a break. You mean to tell me to somebody, sit out and figure that whole thing out way back and said, "Well, let's put this all together and let's make these guys this and this," oh, give me a break. I'll tell you what, there's a mind behind that book that's not too apparent to a Greek and Hebrew scholar. And that's God's mind. That's why I keep telling you over and over and over again, you better learn that book. Because when you learn that book, you learn the mind of Christ and that book will show you everything you ever wanted to know about what's gone. It paints a picture of what we've got. What we've got. While the order of the books in your Bible from those things, from Ezra right up to Psalms, show you the pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ with every event, every challenge, lining up with the two points in history because God recovers his people two times, and the first time it led to the first coming of Christ, and the second time it's going to lead to the second coming of Christ because he must be born again. My goodness, how could you miss that? Unless you're educated.

VII. Inspirational Application from Ezra

All right, inspirationally, here it comes. I'm going to give you some things about Nehemiah, give you the breakdown. Now, the breakdown is real simple.

- Ezra 1-6: External Problems

- Ezra 7-10: Internal Problems

You know what? What you've got in the book of Ezra from an inspirational application shows you what you're up against as a child of God. Because it's a picture, it's a picture, it's a picture of your return to Christ. Say, "What do you mean your return to Christ? How can a saved man return to Christ if he never..." What are you talking about? No, I'm talking about there was a day when you, in Adam, had Christ and you lost it. That's why the Bible calls it regeneration. Because there was a time when man was generated by God, he lost it, so you got to get it back in Christ. So when you see the rebuilding of the temple, you know what you got in a practical application. The temple was once glorious, it was destroyed by sin, now they got to come back and rebuild it. Your body once belonged to God, you were had to... In Adam, you had everything perfectly in the garden because of sin, you lost it, and now you got to get back in through Christ, and that's why the Bible calls it regeneration. You're regenerated by the Word of God, that's how you're saved.

So what do we have? In chapter 1, we have the decree from the King of Persia. That decree says, "Okay, it's a book that says, 'Okay, here's where you're at, here's what you can do,' and it lays out the plan." In chapter 2, they return. And it's a picture of you and I coming to the point, watch what follows, they return, and in chapter 3, what happens? The foundation gets laid. In chapter 3, they lay the foundation. They lay the foundation for the temple. And we know that your body is the temple, and the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 11, that no other foundation can come and lay that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Chapter 3 is the picture of the day you got saved. The day you got saved, you laid the foundation in your life just like they did of regeneration, just like they went back and rebuilt the temple. Their temple was literal, your temple was spiritual, it's your body. That's not all.

Chapter 3:11, you know what it says? The Bible says in verse 11, there was great joy in rejoicing when the foundation was laid. You know what my Bible says? My Bible says there's great joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. That's what you got a picture of the day you got saved. The day you laid the foundation in your life of trusting Christ and started to clean off the rubble of your life and rebuild. Every person that ever got saved went through that process. You read the decree, you decided to go back, and then you laid the foundation in your life, and you got saved. And everybody was happy about it.

Well, well, well, well, not just everybody, because look at this, and oh, you better learn it. Chapter 4, they return. They lay the foundation, picture of you getting saved. You're happy, I'm happy, we're all happy. You start getting in the book of life that will change your life. You start hearing messages that put you to a book instead of the world and education, and you're just so excited, and you go home and you tell your family, or you tell your friends, and you tell this, you tell that, and oh, my friend. Look at chapter 4, and this is what you want to look at.

Ezra 4:1-2

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel,

Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.

What starts here, my friend, is the adversaries, as the Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8, "your devil, the devil, your adversary, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." It's a picture of once you get saved, and you get in that book of everybody around you saying, "You know what, you know what, you've went off the deep end." Oh, my, my, look at it. Chapter 4, verse 1 says, as soon as the temple started to be built, the adversaries show up, and they show up for two purposes. First thing it says down there is they weaken their hands. Your hands is your strength spiritually. You notice it's your hands that you hold the Bible with. Your hands are very significant in the Bible because David talked about the hands being made to war. He talked about the arms and the hands, and in the Bible they're symbolic of your spiritual strength because it's your hand that you hold that blessed book and turn those blessed pages and study that blessed book. And they wanted to weaken those hands, and then the Bible says in verse 4, they wanted to trouble them in building.

How did they do it? How did they do it? How did they do it? I'm telling you, the moment you get saved and you plug into the Word of God, you're going to have conflict about that book in your life and what you believe simply because when Israel started to clear up the foundation and get saved and do what's right, the adversaries showed up and they were there for one reason. That was to discourage them in building their temple. Now, did you come down through here? Here's four ways that they do it.

- In verse 5, the Bible says that they hired counselors against them.
- Verse 6 says they made accusations against them.
- Verse 12 said that they out and out lied about them.
- The last thing in verse 2, they wanted to compromise. "Oh, we'll build with you."

I'm telling you, you're going to find that once you start getting into that book, the people that you thought were your friends, I don't care who they are. Sometimes it's family. Sometimes it's people that you go to church with. Sometimes it's other Christians. Sometimes it's people that you just thought you had a close relationship with. When they start to see the power of God in your life because of the blindness that they have, and I'm talking about saved people. I'm not talking about unsaved people. I'm talking about the adversaries that want to weaken your hands and they will discredit you. They'll discredit me. They'll discredit that book. They'll discredit everybody around it, just like they did to Jews, that they'll say, "Hey, you know what?" Accusations, lies, and they'll compromise. They'll try to get you to do everything in the world. They'll lose the greatest book the world has ever seen.

Now, that's chapter 4, chapter 5 and chapter 6. We see what the problem was with the adversaries. Oh, yeah. Ezra 5:9 simply says this:

Ezra 5:9

Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?

Here's the real problem. Then ask we, those elders, and said unto them thus, "Who commanded you to build this house and to make up these walls?" You know what the question is? It's the question that it always is. You know what the real bottom line is with the adversaries? It's the same bottom line with the adversaries in your life when you try to love that book. It's authority. They wanted to know by what authority are you doing, what you're doing. That's the issue. It will always be the issue. The bottom line will be people that are not mad at you. They don't hate you. They hate the authority by which you have. Sometimes they don't understand it. Sometimes they're ignorant. Sometimes they're not dishonest people. They've never been taught. All my life, man, I've run into people that thought they knew everything in the world and didn't know anything. All this time I found people all my life that hated that Bible, didn't know why. Anything associated with me. Oh, it couldn't be. If I would take what I just gave you and Ezra through Psalms there, they'd laugh that off the thing and they'd just blow that away. But you know what? You throw them an open Bible in their lap and say, "All right, show me what it is." They couldn't do it if their life depended on it. You know why? The bottom line today is the same bottom line down through history, which was the same bottom line with the scribes and Pharisees, which was the same bottom line down here in the book of Ezra. It was an authority. Men don't want you to have an authority. You know why? Because men want to be your authority. Oh, yeah, take it to the bank, cash it and save it.

VIII. The Importance of the Heart in Bible Study

In chapter 7, a little refreshing here. We see the man Ezra. I'm only going to say one thing about Ezra. There's a lot of things that I could talk to you about him. But what I want to say is found in chapter 7 verse 10, it says it all.

Ezra 7:10

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Now, I want you to see that. It doesn't say that he prepared his heart to seek the Lord, which you're commonly hear quoted all the time. No, no, no. It says that he prepared his heart to seek a book. The law of the Lord. He prepared his heart to teach that book statutes and judgments. It was authority as it always will be, as it always was. You know what Ezra did? He prepared his heart, not his head. That's the problem today. Men want to prepare their head, but they don't want to prepare their hearts. The book that I'm talking about, you'll never learn it with an IQ. You'll never learn it with head knowledge. God didn't care what you know, what you don't know. The better off when it comes to the Bible is that you're so stupid, you don't even suspect anything. I mean, the key to the Bible is being of ignorance of bliss, be a blizzard, man. I mean, this should be as dumb as you can be. You know why? Because that's what God uses. He's looking at your heart, not your head knowledge. Not your head knowledge. God will take a heart over every time. Why? Everything you find in there. He talks about your heart being deceitful or wicked

above all things. When he said to David, he said, "Man, look up on the outward appearance, but God looks for the heart time and time and time again." So it's no wonder we find that Ezra was a ready scribe, for he prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord.

Then in chapter 8, you find the men that are with Ezra, and you find those men are good men. They want to do what's right. They want to follow God. There's some great studies into that. Then you get into chapter 9 and you get into chapter 10. You'll find that the problem that they had is the same problem that we have. This great book closes on this note, which everybody had to take home with you today. The Bible is a great book. The Bible is the one and most wonderful book the world has ever seen. I laid out for you and just give you a little glimpse, a little sliver of the magic of this book, the wet your appetite, to go home and lay it out, study it, put it all together.

But the bottom line is simply this, my friend, all this stuff down through here. Let me just say this to you. These last two chapters show you what the real problem is. The real problem is not the adversaries. The real problem isn't their accusations. People are going to lie about you and make fun of you and lie about you all your life if you're going to do what's right. Get used to it. I mean, it's just the way it is. It's the price you pay for bearing his name and carrying that cross. Some people can't do it. Some people are too thin-skinned. Some people are too political. But I'm telling you, if you're ever going to be a mighty man of valor, that is called the sting of battle. And sometimes it comes from your friends. Sometimes it comes from your family. But I'm just telling you this, that ain't the real problem. That ain't the real problem. The real problem is you and me. The real problem lies within. Because in chapter 9 and chapter 10, we see that after all that God had done, after all they'd been through in the judgment of the seven years of captivity, after all the things that they had done and the things that they'd been through, before they went any farther, they had to stop and look inside themselves and they had to clean house and get rid of all the things that was inward that was not pleasing to God.

I'm telling you, your old sin nature will never be gone until you get your new glorified body. You've got to live with it. You've got to live with it. That's Romans chapter 7. Romans chapter 7 is the greatest chapter in the Bible. It is the definitive chapter on your old sin nature. That thing shows you in Romans chapter 7, Paul himself says, "The things I want to do, I don't do. The things that I should do, I don't do. And the things that are the rotten things, the things that I do do." And he said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of sin that is death?" And then he answers his own question. He says, "Jesus Christ will." You're going to struggle with it. I'm going to struggle with it. It's going to be your greatest enemy. The adversaries are well to be there. And you know what? Truth of the matter is they're like mosquitoes bouncing off a brick wall. They ain't going to hurt a thing. They're not going to stop you. All the accusations, all the lies, you know what? Doesn't make any difference at all. It doesn't make any difference at all because the bottom line is, is the only one who can stop your relationship with God to stop building that temple is you.

That's why I'm saying you have to make up your mind. You're going to learn this book. You have to make up your mind that this thing is going to be the most important thing in your life. And you're going to get in it and you're going to study it. You won't be able to look back and I don't

know. We always do. Oh, we always do. We always do. We always do. We are so fickle. I'll tell you what we are so fickle. It's a wonder God wants any of us in heaven. We are the most messed up, screwed up bunch of people you ever met in your life. We are always constantly blaming our problems on somebody else or something else. It is never our fault. It is always this. It is always that. It is always my circumstances are special. No, let me tell you this. It is you and it is me. We are the only reason why we aren't where we're at today.

I tell you this, you know, I first time you come in or you start to get into the Bible, I give you five years, man. I do. I give you five years. I give you five years just to figure out what's going on. I give you five years just to scratch your head and look around and say, "Hey, this is what I want to do." But after that, you're on your own. Let me tell you something. If you've been saved five years or more and you don't in a church where you get taught the Bible, you ought to know these things. This is nothing secret. This is some secret wisdom that I have that nobody else has. This is in the book, man. And it all depends on what you make your life career. And it needs to be the Word of God. That's what this thing is all about.

That's why when you come to these great books, you know, yeah, you see the history. You see how it lays out. You see how the Old Testament breaks itself down to three categories. But you also see the practical application. Yeah, you see the doctrinal. You see how it's all prophetic and how that first captivity and that second return or first return and that second captivity and that second return all figured around the first, second coming. Oh, that's great and exciting. But you know what? The bottom line is tomorrow morning, when you get up and go back to the office and you have to face the world, the flesh and the devil, tomorrow, when the adversaries show up and start ragging on you again and nagging on you again, you know what? You're going to have to have a subtle more than that to get you to sustain you. It's going to have to go down deep. I said it at the beginning of this message. You're going to have to settle in your heart like I had to that are in any man, any woman, any child, any reading, any writing, any book, anybody in this world that's going to take from you what God has given you unless you let them. And it comes just determining in your mind, "You know what? I'm going to be that mighty man of valor for God, whether you're a man or you're a woman. I'm going to be that man, that woman that God wants me to be and I'm going to learn that book. And I don't care what I got to do to do it. I'm going to do it." That's the key. And that's where we're at. And that, my friend, is the Book of Ezra.

Let's pray. Father, we're so thankful today for the Lord Jesus.