



## 'My Response' Sermon Series

*Divine Lessons from the Restoration Era – Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*

# 3 STEPS TO GET TO THE NEXT LEVEL

| Mount Zion Church | Sunday Service | 11 July 2021 |

### INTRO:

The book of Ezra was commenced with the royal announcement from Cyrus, king of Persia, that happened at **537 BC**. And indeed it was the opportunity from God for His people since God Himself stirred the heart of the king to fulfil the promise and the prophecy given through Jeremiah, God's prophet. That announcement brought **the 1<sup>st</sup> group** of people returning from the exile back to the land of promises (only about 50,000 peoples out of 1 million Jewish people that went to the exile around 70 years before).

However, **Ezra** was not in that 1<sup>st</sup> batch. Why? He was born at **480 BC** (about 57 years after the 1<sup>st</sup> return) and Ezra led the 2<sup>nd</sup> group of people (about 5,000) came home when he was about 22 / 23 years old (around 458 / 457 BC) and then died 17 years later at his 40 (440 BC)! Though he only had a quite short time of life, but amazingly Ezra gave very good response toward God's will and he led the people of Israel in the restoration era to get to the **NEXT LEVEL!** What actually Ezra did to bring God's people to get there? Let's check it out together!

<https://biblehub.com/timeline/ezra/1.htm>

<https://www.sabda.org/sabdaweb/biblical/intro/?b=15>

# THE HEART OF EZRA

**EZRA 7** <sup>6</sup> this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he *was* a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to **the hand of the LORD his God upon him**.

<sup>9</sup> On the first *day* of the first month he began *his* journey from Babylon, and on the first *day* of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to **the good hand of his God upon him**.

<sup>10</sup> For Ezra had **prepared his heart** to seek **the Law of the LORD**, and to do *it*, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.



The Bible clearly recorded how **the hand of God** was upon Ezra's life! Because of **the hand of God**, Artaxerxes - the king of Persia, granted him all his request! And again, because **the hand of God**, his journey, together with the 2<sup>nd</sup> group of people of Israel, was safe and sound from Babylon to Jerusalem. How wonderful is that! Having the hand of God upon the life of believers is something that really matters since we are nothing, we can't do everything by our own. And indeed that is the next level of the journey of our faith.

So, why the hand of God was so tangible in the life of Ezra? It all started with his **heart**! Ezra was someone who **had prepared his heart** to always seek **the law of the Lord** first above anything else! Ezra **responded** amazingly to the heart of God, even in his young age. It is always in God's heart to draw His people closer and closer to His Words *Pro.8:1*.

## What is the next level?

At the Old Testament, the people of Israel counted as God's people by birth. Now in the New Testament, people counted as God's people by believing in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. Get to the next level in the journey of faith simply means that we grow from the **salvation** that we received by grace alone in Jesus Christ to the measure of the stature of the **fullness** of Christ *Eph.4:13*. Let's advance together to the next level!

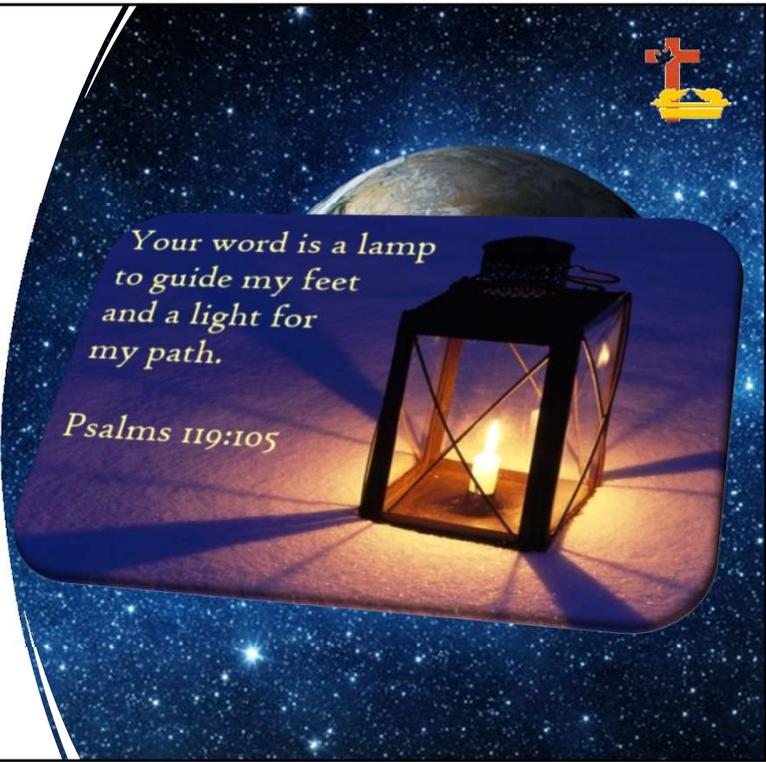
## THE LAW OF THE LORD

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**LUKE 21** <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but **My words will by no means pass away.**

**ISAIAH 40** <sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades, but **the word of our God stands forever.**

**PROVERBS 30** <sup>5</sup> Every word of God *is pure*; He *is a shield* to those who put their trust in Him.



*Your word is a lamp  
to guide my feet  
and a light for  
my path.*

*Psalms 119:105*

It is only **the Word of God** that is more than able to sustain this life, more than the life itself! The Word of our God stands forever! That's why it is only the Word of God that we must seek more than anything else. The life of Ezra was the true evidence that loving the law of the Lord is the key to advance to the next level: living under the hand of God!

God is light and it is impossible for God to walk in the darkness. John wrote that in Him is **no darkness** at all *1Jn.1:5*. To let the hand of God always upon us simply means that we must walk within His path. Psalmist wrote: **Your word** is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path *Ps.119:105*.

## — SEEK, DO, and TEACH

**EZRA 7<sup>10</sup>** For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

### **SEEK ONLY, DON'T DO nor TEACH:**

- a man in a mirror *Jam.1:23*
- King Herod heard John gladly *Mrk.6:20*
- The Athenians *Ac.17:21*

### **DO ONLY, DON'T SEEK:**

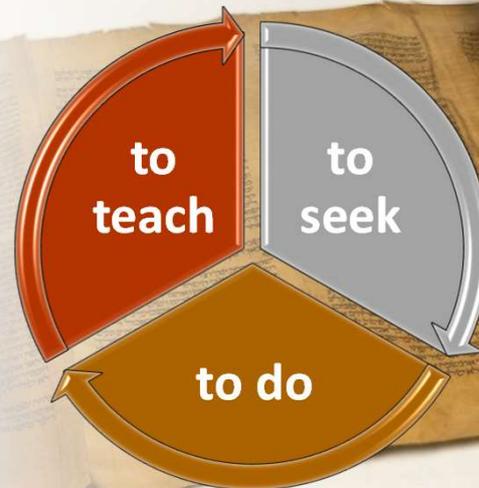
- Common people of Israel *Rom.10:1-2*

### **SEEK & DO, DON'T TEACH:**

- Lack of hope, joy, crown of rejoicing *1Thes.2:19*

### **TEACH ONLY, DON'T DO:**

- The scribes & the Pharisees *Mat.23:3*



Illustrative: Torah scroll Ink on gevil. Spain, 15th century (photo credit: Green Collection)

These are the **3 steps** to get to the next level with the journey of our faith. Definitely believers need the Word of God, and those are 3 things that we must do with God's Word.

'Always seek to the Word without any desire to do it' is just like a man observing his face in a mirror: observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does *Jam.1:22-25*.

**King Herod – MARK 6<sup>20</sup>** for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

**The Athenians – ACTS 17<sup>21</sup>** For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

**Common people of Israel – ROMANS 10<sup>1</sup>** Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

**Lack of hope – 1THES 2<sup>19</sup>** For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

**The scribes & the Pharisees – MATTHEW 23** <sup>3</sup> Therefore whatever they tell you [\[a\]](#)to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

# GOOD PROGRESS

**1TIMOTHY 4** <sup>13</sup> Till I come, **give attention** to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. <sup>14</sup> Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. <sup>15</sup> **Meditate** on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that **your progress may be evident to all**. <sup>16</sup> Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. **Continue** in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who **hear** you.

## PROGRESS OF CHARACTER

**ACTS 17** <sup>11</sup> Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

## PROGRESS OF READINESS

**REVELATION 1** <sup>3</sup> Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

## PROGRESS OF WALK IN THE SPIRIT

**JOHN 14** <sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Just like Ezra, Paul also concerned with those 3 steps! When writing to his own son in the faith, Paul asked Timothy to do that 3 steps to get to the next level: **seek** (give attention, meditate), **do** (continue in it), and **teach** (those who hear you). This is the key to have **good progress** within the journey of our faith. Without those 3 steps, **believers will go nowhere!** God's Word is an **essential** thing for believers to grow! Paul was so serious about that and he made a special mention to encourage Timothy so that he would also being serious about it.

To seek, to do, and to teach will definitely consume a good quality time from us to invest in the Bible. Indeed, it will bring a **good progress** that will **evident** to all!

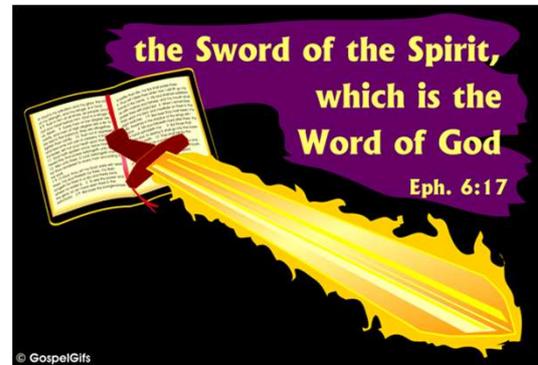
Also, in the opening of the book of Revelation, John wrote that a blessing will be given for anyone who **read, hear, and keep** the word of prophecy, so that they will be in a good position in readiness for the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit will work freely in the platform of the Word of God. Anyone will not be able to abuse Holy Spirit to do their own will. But when we have a desire in God's Word, then Holy Spirit will work mightily and freely in us.

## THE POWER TO FIGHT AT THE END TIMES

**DANIEL 11** <sup>32</sup> Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people **who know their God** shall be strong, and **carry out great exploits**.

*NIV: the people who know their God will firmly resist him*



There will be so many challenges and difficulties at the end times toward our faith. The spirit of the Antichrist is now already in the world and doing their action *1Jn.4:3*. John wrote: the (full & real) Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour *1Jn.2:18*.

The deception will happen massively at the end times because the spirit of antichrist will corrupt this world with flattery. Jesus said: **MAT 24** <sup>24</sup> For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But only the people who know their God (yada) will be strong and able to **carry out great exploits** (*NIV*: will firmly resist him, *NET*: will act valiantly)!

Speaking about **spiritual warfare**, Paul explained about the whole armour of God *Eph.6:13-17*. While another 5 are the armour of defence, it is only 1 that has the ability to attack, which is **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God!**

<sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having **girded your waist with truth**, having put on **the breastplate of righteousness**, <sup>15</sup> and having **shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**; <sup>16</sup> above all, taking **the shield of faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. <sup>17</sup> And take **the helmet of salvation**, and **the sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God;

The word of God will enable us to advance to the next level with the journey of faith.



**GOD BLESS YOU!**

*HAVE A BLESSED WEEK WITH JESUS*

See You Next Sunday!