

**BOOK OF EZRA**  
**WORSHIP RESTORED**  
**EZRA 3:1-6**

**Introduction**

So thus far we've seen how:

**In Chapter 1:**

1. **God Uses Whom He Pleases To Accomplish His Will!**
2. **God's Things Were Restored.**  
(The precious vessels that originally were sanctified for temple worship.)

**In Chapter 2:**

1. **God People Were Restored (That Is, A Remnant Was Restored).**  
He provided all the different kinds of people He chose to perform His work. He provided leaders and followers. Well-known people and no-named people. He had a place for everyone to work.
2. **Responsible Giving Was Restored.**

Now we're going to look at something else that was restored before God's people could rebuild the temple foundations. Before they ever so much as turned a stone or dug a hole for the temple foundation, God restored their worship.

Before God would bless them with the new temple, they had to get their worship right?

When we look at what is called worship in Churches today, how much of it is really worship? How can we know what is right and wrong in worship?

Some folks judge worship about the same way that I judge art? I don't know anything about art, so the only way I can judge it is whether or not I like it... Whether or not it appeals to my senses.

But, is that how we are to judge worship? Whether or not it appeals to our senses? Whether or not we like it? No...because worship isn't about us!

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It's not about what appeals to us. It's not a self-centered thing—or at least it is not supposed to be that way!

Who is worship supposed to be about? God. And it's His worship that was being restored in Jerusalem in our text!

This morning we're going to look at restoring worship. In order to do that we have to look at worship. We're going to look at four characteristics of these folks restored worship.

- I. **NOTICE THAT THEY WORSHIPED TOGETHER! (VS 1)**  
Remember where the remnant was. They had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. And when they first arrived in Jerusalem, they took their offerings to the spot where the temple had stood.

It was only after they abundantly gave to the Lord's work that they found places to live and settled in the villages surrounding Jerusalem. After they had a little time to settle in and get a few boxes unpacked, the seventh month had arrived.

On the Jewish calendar, the seventh month was the month of Tishri. On our calendar, it would have been late September or early October. Tishri was the most significant month of the Jewish year.

It's appropriate that we're looking at this passage on the first Sunday of our New Year, because it was in the seventh month that the Jews celebrated their New Year.

The first day of that month was their big New Year's bash called the **Fest of Trumpets**. If you have a calendar that includes Jewish holidays, that day will be called **Rosh Hashanah**.

But not only was the seventh month their New Year, but the **Day of Atonement** or **Yom Kippur** was on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of that month.

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Finally, as if that didn't make the seventh month important enough, from the 15th through the 20th day of the month, they celebrated the **Feast of Tabernacles**. That was the feast they were able to keep in our passage according to verse 4.

So here they were, just getting settled into their new homes and it was time to pack up and head to Jerusalem. If you've ever moved, you know how hectic it can be for a few months. And here they were in the middle of settling in and it was time for worship. So what did they do?

Did they stay at home and get their stuff done? After all, they had quite a bit to get done and they were still weary from that long 1000 mile journey and unpacking and getting settled in. Well if they had been like some folks in Church today, they would have!

What did they do? Well, they stopped what they were doing and headed back to Jerusalem...for the sole purpose of worshiping God.

Picture the scene. Here they all came. After the offering we talked about last time, they scattered to all the surrounding villages to settle down. And here they all came from all different directions.

And as the Jews in our passage came together, look how they gathered. They "*gathered themselves together as one.*" That word "**gathered**" pictures a mass moving to one place. It's used of gathering grain into silos from the fields.

In other words, they came from all of their diverse places, their diverse interests, their diverse lifestyles. No matter where they came from, they gathered. And what were they like when they got there? They were as one man. Isn't that how we're supposed to worship together?

We are a diverse group of people. We don't all have the same tastes or backgrounds or personalities or abilities or gifts. But that doesn't matter when we are gathered together as one man to worship!

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As a matter of fact, if we let it, it makes our worship that much more God-centered instead of self-centered. Mrs. Carol plays the song "**Family of God**" when we get around to greet one another in the morning service. But is that how we really worship?

Do we act like we're so glad we're a part of the family of God?  
Do we act like we're all joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod?

Or are we more like, "*What am I doing here in the midst of this bunch of misfits?*"

**II. NOTICE THAT THEY WORSHIPED FITTINGLY! (Vs 2)**

Notice what they did once all the people had gathered. The two leaders—Jeshua the Chief Priest and Zerubbabel the Chief Prince—came together with their people to build or rebuild the altar!

As the people had gathered together from all around Jerusalem, they immediately got their focus where it needed to be!

As the people gathered, they immediately drew their attention to the focus of their worship—to the altar of God!

Think about our order of service for a minute. Have you ever wondered why it's put together that way? Why does the service begin with a song? Primarily it is to draw us out of our time of fellowship and into our time of worship. From that time forward, everything in our service should be focused on our altar where our sacrifice is to be made.

Except our altar is different than theirs and our sacrifice is different! On their altar, they offered burnt offerings in anticipation of the Messiah. On our altar, we offer ourselves. Romans 12:1-2 says, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"

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To the Jews, the fitting expression of worship was a burnt offering as was written in the law of Moses!

But to us, the fitting expression of our worship is offering ourselves a living sacrifice unto God! How do we offer ourselves a living sacrifice? By being transformed! How are we transformed? We're transformed by the renewing of our minds. How is our mind renewed? By the Word of God!

Our mind is renewed by our faith...and where does faith come from? *Romans 10:17*—“*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”

***1 Corinthians 2:4ff***

So what is fitting worship? Fitting worship is first gathering people, then gathering thoughts.

As we are gathered in physically from all over the place, so should our thoughts be gathered in from all of our outside distractions. Fitting worship gathers our thoughts from all over the place to one focus.

The focus of a proper altar (heart) on which to sacrifice ourselves. That altar is built through singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. It's built through testimony!  
It's built through praise!  
It's built through giving!  
It's built through prayer!  
It's built through receiving God's holy Word for us!

Because it is only through God's Word that our hearts, our minds and our lives can be transformed. And it is only when we are transformed by the renewing of our minds that we can truly present ourselves a living sacrifice that is acceptable to God.

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Fitting worship really has very little to do with style. Just a few centuries ago, our services would have been condemned because we have a piano.

Pianos were barroom instruments and were considered unfit for God's worship. That seems silly to us, doesn't it? The point is not style. No style of music in and of itself is worshipful.

What makes it fitting as worship is not its style—it is whether it builds a proper altar on which a proper sacrifice can be made.

An proper altar is built only in accordance with the Word of God. The Word of God that transforms us into the living sacrifices we are called to be! Is our worship fitting? If not, we need to restore our worship!

Restored worship is worshiping together and it is worshiping fittingly!

**III. NOTICE THAT THEY WORSHIPED FREELY. (Vs. 3)**

After the priests and leaders built the altar, they picked it up and placed it on the bases where the old altar was.

The fact that it fit meant that they did it right. But what's interesting is that this whole time they were afraid.

It had been over 70 years since they were in the land. Those who lived in the land weren't familiar with them or their worship of God.

Those in the land may not have even known about Cyrus' decree allowing the Jews to go back there and do what they were doing.

So, when those living in the land saw this group coming en masse to Jerusalem, I'm sure they were suspicious. And suspicious people aren't friendly people.

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It would have been a lot easier for them to forget about God and just try to blend in with those around them.

But that's not what they did. Instead of giving in to their fear, they claimed freedom. They claimed freedom and worshipped God publicly and freely! Freedom has to do with openly worshiping God no matter what the consequences.

These Jews publicly gathered and worshiped God in spite of the threat of war from their neighbors.

Worshiping freely is publicly focusing on God and worshiping Him according to His Word no matter what stands in your way.

Is our worship free? If not, we need to restore our worship!

**IV. NOTICE THEY THAT THEY WORSHIPED FULLY! (Vs. 4-5)**

Notice what the people did. They looked at the calendar where they were right then. And from that date, they did everything!

They started with the next feast on the calendar—the Feast of Tabernacles! They did it just the way they were supposed to.

Not only that, they started doing the daily sacrifice just like they were supposed to. Then the continual burnt offerings and all the other feasts and offerings that were required.

Now, remember who we're talking about here. This was a remnant. They had quite a few people who returned to Jerusalem. But do you remember a few weeks ago when we talked about the number of priests and Levites who returned? It was just a fraction of the number that was required for a group of people that large.

But did they cut back on what they did because their numbers weren't very large? No they didn't!

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They did everything they were required to do to serve God. They didn't do it half-way. They didn't hold out for more people or more money. They just did it!

When you look at all the things that the Law required to be done in the temple, it makes you praise God we don't have to go through that any more.

But just because we don't have to go through all the rigors of temple service doesn't mean we have nothing to do. As a matter of fact, the New Testament makes our job as a Church very clear!

When you look at our text, one thing strikes you. That first service they had was just a very small part of what they were called to do!

The altar was the key element, but unless they got that right, anything else they did would have been in vain.

But as far as the work for the people went, that was just preparatory. The real work was outside of the altar. Just like the real work for our Church body is outside these walls!

What is done in here is to prepare us and train us! It's training for what we need to be doing outside of here!

Once you have worshipped fully, then comes the work! As a matter of fact, you can never worship fully without doing the work.

We gather together and worship together as the family of God!

We worship fittingly in accordance with the Word of God!

We worship freely no matter what goes on around us!

And then we worship fully when we take it outside these walls! Are we doing that? If not, we need to restore our worship to where it needs to be! And what better time to do that than at the beginning of a new year!

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**Conclusion**

We can begin by committing to gathering here and worshiping together with God's people at every opportunity this year.

Next, we can commit to worshipping fittingly when we are gathered together. Each and every service, commit to focusing your energies on receiving the Word in order that we might be transformed.

Commit to never leaving a service the same way we entered it this year.

We can also commit to worshipping freely this year. No matter what barriers pop up in our lives this year, let's not let them get in the way of our worship!

Whether the barriers are inside or outside, let's not let them keep us from our worship!

Finally, we can commit to worshipping fully this year. Let's let our worship grow into work. Instead of coming to Church like a sick person goes to the hospital, let's come to Church like a doctor goes to medical school.

Come to worship—then leave to serve! There is a world that needs Jesus!  
May our worship lead to their salvation!