EZRA: RETURN TO THE WORD
RESUMING THE VISION (EZRA 5-6)



Memory Verse: "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel." Ezra 7:10

- Approximately sixteen years lapses between the stoppage of the work in chapter 4 to the call to resume in chapter 5. God used Haggai and Zechariah to call His people back to His plan.
- Journey's mission: Introduce people to Jesus and help them follow Him
- Journey's vision: Core to Corners
- Journey's strategy: Gather, Grow, Give, Go

1. Resume the vision by responding to Scripture, Ezra 5:1-2, Haggai 1:5, Zechariah 4:6
    a. God's Word exposes our wrong perspectives and calls us to spiritual perspective
    b. **Arose** (***Qum*** in Hebrew) means to stop being inactive and start being active, James 1:22
    c. The prophets worked alongside the people for the work of the ministry. Action is just as valuable as audible instruction.
2. Resume the vision by trusting God's sovereignty, Ezra 5:5
    a. The presence of opposition is not proof of the absence of God, it usually is a result of it! Romans 8:31, Ezra 6:7,12
    b. The investigation that threatened the vision became the foundation for completion. God is always in the details!
    c. God is faithful in the outcome while He calls His people to be active in their obedience. Nehemiah 4:9
3. Resume the vision by persevering until the end, Ezra 6:14-15
    a. The temple was completed around 516 BC, roughly four years after work resumed under Darius and approximately twenty-one years after the foundation was initially laid.
    b. ***Shelem*** carries the idea of being completely finished. Beginning is important, but the goal is finishing the vision. Galatians 6:9, Ezra 6:22
    c. The vision is the true worship of God by His people through their obedience to His will. Church buildings, programs, attendance are only metrics to gauge obedience and opportunity. Philippians 1:6

What part of God's vision for your life needs to be restored for true joy to return to your soul?

Questions:

1. Read Ezra 5:1–2; Haggai 1:2–8; Zechariah 4:6–10;James 1:22–25; Romans 12:1–2; 2 Timothy 3:16–17. What causes God's people to abandon or neglect a vision, and how does God's Word call us back? The temple project had stopped, but God sent Haggai and Zechariah to confront the people's spiritual condition. Haggai challenged them to examine their priorities, while Zechariah reminded them that God's work depends upon His Spirit. What factors contributed to the people's delay in rebuilding? How can legitimate responsibilities become excuses for neglecting spiritual priorities? What is the difference between pursuing a personal ambition and obeying a biblical command? How does regular exposure to Scripture correct our priorities? Identify one area where your obedience has stalled. Examine it in light of Scripture rather than merely asking whether it is convenient.
2. Read Ezra 5:3–5; Ezra 6:6–12; Psalm 121:1–8; Isaiah 41:10; Romans 8:31–39; 2 Corinthians 4:7–10. What does Ezra 5:5 teach us about God's presence when His people face opposition? The officials investigated the rebuilding project, but Ezra emphasizes that God's eye was upon the elders. God's protection did not eliminate the investigation; rather, the investigation became part of the process through which the original decree was confirmed. Why is it important that Ezra mentions God's watchful care in the middle of an official investigation? Does opposition always indicate that a ministry is outside God's will? Why or why not? How can Christians distinguish between persecution for righteousness and legitimate correction? What does it look like to trust God's sovereignty while continuing to act responsibly? Consider a current difficulty that tempts you to quit. Ask whether you are responding primarily from fear or from biblical conviction.
3. Read Ezra 5:1–2, 5; Ezra 6:1–12, 14; Proverbs 21:1; Nehemiah 4:9; Philippians 2:12–13; 1 Corinthians 3:5–9. How does God's sovereignty work together with human responsibility? God watched over the elders, moved events toward the confirmation of the decree, and enabled the work to prosper. Yet the people still had to build, the leaders had to lead, and the prophets had to proclaim God's Word. What would have happened if the people had claimed to trust God but refused to rebuild? How can prayer and practical planning work together? What is the difference between trusting God's providence and presuming upon it? How should this balance influence the way a church develops and evaluates ministry plans? Are you using God's sovereignty as an excuse for passivity, or are you working as though everything depends entirely on you?