

June 19th 2005: Overview of OT: EZRA: Passionate Man of God: Ezra 7.

My wife is a Natural List Maker.....She enjoys making lists....How many?

I'm not.....Makes me a lot less organised !!!

If I pack a box to store.....But when Judy packs.....

EZRA WAS A LIST MAKER.....I discovered this first....1 Chron....17 of 29chpts

In the book of Ezra.....chpt 1....list of the articles sent back by Cyrus

In chp 2....list of the exiles who returned

In chpt 8.....list of the family heads returning with Ezra

In chpt 10.....list of those guilty of intermarriage

SO IF YOU ARE A LIST MAKER.....You have something in common with Ezra

But what we esp discover in this book of Ezra.....about Ezra himself.....

Is that he was a Passionate man

HE WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT the job he was doing for God

HE WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT the need for righteousness in God's people

HE WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT the future God had planned for His people

I'm not sure you would have noticed that he was a passionate man....

in the normal course of things.....

Theres only one situation where this passion comes to surface...9&10...sin

But we know he was passionate about the job....he was doing for God

Because of what is written about him in chapter 7

He begins by tracing his priesthood back to Aaron

So straight away we know.....that this young man born in captivity

Cherished the calling to be a priest....part of his inheritance

But we also discover.....that as a priest....he dedicated himself to knowing God's Word

So 7:6 says of him ***He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given.***

And with that knowledge.....there came to him the understanding...of the job that....

7:10 says

For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

That's what he became Passionate about...and in an amazing way....it happened
King Artaxerxes of Persia.....just happened to be the son.....
Not only commissioned Ezra to go back to Israel
But gave him an immense amount of gold and silver articles.....

Its hard to believe.....that a pagan King.....would not only send a Priest back...
But would pay for his journey.....
Return the spoils of war.....and provide a massive offering.....

Well it occurred writes Ezra.....because the hand of the Lord God was upon me
Look at 7:27-28.....

Ezra uses that phrase.....for the hand of the Lord was upon.....
in 7:6; 7:9; 7:28; 8:18; 8:22; and 8:31

The message is clear.....If a person is passionate in doing the work that God has laid
God gracious....enabling hand...will be over their efforts

We all need to be passionate about the task God has called us to do
If you feel that God has called you to help others.....needy...sick....Be passionate

If you feel that God has called you to pray.....be passionate
Laid on your heart to support a certain missionary....be passionate
Has called you into some ministry.....Be Passionate

THEN GOD'S HAND OF BLESSING WILL BE UPON YOUR ENDEAVOURS
Luke warm effort will get you nowhere

THE OTHER THING ABOUT EZRA....
he was passionate about the need for righteousness in God's people

Because he was so passionate about the work he was doing for God
He could not turn a blind eye....to the sin that was likely to destroy.....

Ezra and those with him.....Had arrived in Jerusalem with great joy
Ezra was really excited about the task before him.....Teaching the people

Then he was told about the sin of the Priests and leaders
9:1-2.....Ezra was appalledstunned....fearful

In those days when men had many wives
Those in authority.....had chosen to break the specific command....
And in doing so.....they had opened up Israel once again.....to the potential sin of
idolatry.....for which God had punished

Ezra's prayer to God in 9:5ff is well worth reading
He begins by acknowledging that God's people had deserved the exile
Through intermarriage.....particularly that of Solomon....they had become a Nation
of idol worshippers

Then in v8-9 he prays.....Then from v10 he confesses that as a people
They had gone and re-committed the sins of the past
That once again they were about to welcome heathen gods into their homes...Nation

And as he realised that everything he had hoped for...as far as God's people
Could be sacrificed.....because of the lust,,,greed,,,,,of a few....He was devastated

Look at 10:1.....

He came before God for his people....as though he too was a sinner
He didn't stand apart from them.....and browbeat them about their sin
But cried out to God for mercy as one with those who were about to be judged

And as the people saw his pain.....so they agreed to do what was right.....
And those who had sinned were called to account for their sin.....
And to put things right between them and God

Ezra was truly concerned....about the possibility of judgment upon his people
And so cried out to God for them.....that righteousness once again came to.....
Perhaps he was thinking of the words....2 Chron 7:14

That's what we need to do.....if we truly want God to be merciful to our land
Too often I feel.....we fall into the trap of thinking.....

I'm alright so if others don't care about seeking.....That's their problem

We need to have that passion in our praying
That's where it started for Ezra.....where it must start for us

Think of someone who is outside of Jesus.....Think of a group
Then commit yourself to pray once a day for them
To plead as though you were as lost as they are.....for God to have mercy

Ezra prayed that way.....and it changed the future of a Nation
Surely God will do the same for us.....if only we begin to pray with passion