

Exile #3 -- The Outcome of Exile

Let us turn to the Lord:

Lord, I want to thank You for the times that You have helped me in my life; I am grateful. Now, Lord, it is another time that I need Your help. How thankful I am that You know and that You are the Helper. You have given us a Helper. So, Lord, we come to You this morning in the name of Jesus Christ, free from our sins and as Your loved ones, and we ask only, Lord, that You would be pleased to speak to us and to encourage us in what You are doing in our lives. We ask that You open the Word to us by the Holy Spirit, and that You would speak to our spirits through Your Word, and we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction

You have probably figured out by now that I have been talking about the exile of the Jews from Judah to Babylon. It has been on my heart for quite a while, and I have been able to share some things that the Lord allowed me to observe. But I do not want to claim that the Lord directly instructed me to say this or anything of that sort.

So today, I just want to bring this to a culmination. I started out by talking about why they were exiled, why the Lord exiled these people, and why He allowed His people to go into exile. Then, last time, we talked about what happened to them during their exile. And today, I want to look at the outcome of exile. What fruit came out of the exile?

The Intentions of God and His Promise of Restoration

Now, I want to begin by reading a verse from Hosea because I think these verses give you an idea of what the Lord was doing during this time of exile for His people. Starting in chapter 2:14-17 of Hosea, the Lord is speaking through Hosea. As Kenny was saying, it is not Hosea speaking, but it is the Lord speaking: "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. "And it shall be, in that day," Says the Lord, "That you will call Me 'My Husband,' And no longer call Me 'My Master,' for I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more."

Verse 19-23: "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord." "It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer," says the Lord; I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel. Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'"

God Calls Them His People Again

Now, when you think of that, consider these last things. There was a time when the Lord was saying before the exile, “You are not my people anymore; you do not act like I am your God. And since you have given Me up for another, I will give you up to another.” But through this whole time, what He was saying is, “Now I am coming back, having dealt with you in love, in discipline, but not in punishment.” Punishment means harm; it means I am going to harm you. But discipline means I am going to correct you. And having corrected them, He says, “Now I am calling you My people again. And you who I did not show mercy, I let you go into exile, and now I am showing mercy by bringing you back out and saying that you are My people.” It is almost like a reclamation project, reclaiming them for Himself. All of these dealings over these 70 years were to reclaim His people for Himself.

God Is Our God

We talked about last time how, in this, they realized God was more than just their God; He was God over all. He was much bigger than they thought. He was not just the one who delivered them from Egypt and said, “Okay, you are My people, and I am just going to watch over you.” No, He was the God of the whole earth and the heavens. I think that is one thing they did learn that He is the God of the earth and the heavens. Even though during the exile, we know that He is not called the God of the heavens and the earth, it does not mean He was not God of the heavens and the earth anymore. But out of this whole experience, they came to the place of saying not only is God responding and saying, “You are My people,” but there was also a response from the people saying, “You are My God.” There has been a transaction. Something has happened that has caused them to transact with God and claim Him as their own again.

The Fruits of Exile

We want to look at the closing of the exile. In the first message, I brought up a verse from Hebrews 12:11, which says, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, (this is what he talked about in the first message) but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained (or exercised, or disciplined) by it.”

So really, what we are looking at in the return of the exiles, (I am not going to give you a history of all the things that happened) what we are seeing is the fruit that was yielded out of this whole experience. God allows us to go through experiences, and He yields the fruit. I do not want to say that when we are looking at fruit, there are all sorts of fruit. But what is the fruit that is talked about most in the Bible? Real physical fruit? Pomegranates, figs, grapes, and olives are all examples. However, I want to turn to the vine because Israel is called the vine, right?

On an olive tree, you see an olive here, an olive there, and an olive over there. With a pomegranate tree, you will see a pomegranate, and inside the pomegranate, there are all these little seeds, but there is only one pomegranate. However, with grapes on the

vine, you get a cluster, which, to me, is really weird. You know, it is not like one grape here and one grape there; they are all clustered together.

God Persistently Works Out His Purpose

When we look at this and see the fruit that the Lord brought about, we must remember that it is the Lord who brought it about. It is not saying that you do these things, if the Lord brought this about and is dealing with His people, He brought it about. He is the cause of it. It is not that they saw, "Oh, we need to correct things." No! He brought them here, showed them something, and they responded to it. In their response, they yielded to Him. Out of that yielding to Him, He brought about something in them. That is what we want to look at. We want to look at what He brought out in these people because that is what God was after. He has been after this from the beginning. Even when He brought them out of Egypt, He was after this very thing.

So, I want to look at this as a cluster. I have six grapes in this cluster. Okay, I guess it is not a very big cluster, but it is enough.

You know, I am not here to talk about the rebuilding of the temple and such things. I want to talk about something that happened which you can see in these people personally. This is something that personally came out of this experience. So, it is not just a history lesson; there is something that is saying this happened within them. Something changed in them because of God's dealings with them. Brothers and sisters, when God deals with us, something changes. *Something changes*. It does not change our outward appearance, but it changes us inwardly. There is an inward change that is manifested in our outward life. It can be seen and tasted by others. So, let us look at these things.

The Awakening of the Spirit

First of all, going to Ezra, we look at the exile there. The post-exilic books are Ezra and Nehemiah. I am not going to say Esther, because I think Esther takes place during the exile, as they were still in Babylon or Persia. Then there are the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

So, going to Ezra, I want to read just an opening verse, chapter 1:5. This is after the edict of Cyrus. After the edict was given, Ezra said that God has told him to build a house, and whoever wanted to go back can go back. "Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem."

The first thing that happened was that the word "moved" here actually means that they were awakened. They were awakened in their spirits, not in their minds. This was a spiritual matter; it was in the spirit. And this is a nebulous thing. You know, God has made us with a spirit, and that spirit, before we become Christians, is dead, or as Brother Kaung said, "comatose." We can say the same thing. When these brothers and sisters, these people of Israel, went into captivity, their spirits were comatose, but through this experience, they were awakened; their spirits were awakened. But it was not when they

were awakened that they heard the Lord. And it was not just that they sensed something in their spirits because we can always sense something in our spirits. The thing is, when we sense that something in our spirits, what do we do? What do we do? I used to have a poster, and I cannot believe I put this poster up as a teacher in my classroom. It was a polar bear, and he was lying back in a relaxed position. And it said, “Whenever I have the urge to do homework, I lie down until it goes away.” I cannot believe that as a teacher, I put that up in my classroom. What was I telling my students? “I was just doing what you said.”

Respond Collectively to the Call of the Spirit

But brothers and sisters, what about us? Sometimes we sense the moving of the Spirit within us, and we all just try to ignore it. It is like Brother Lenny when he gave his talk on abiding and the Spirit telling him, “I want you to go over and talk to that lady.” And the fight that he had in this way: “Oh, let me do something spiritual instead.” That was a way of saying, “I do not want to move with You. I know You are moving me, but I do not want to move with You. Let me do something spiritual instead.” That is a real cop-out; something spiritual, right? “Well, I am praying; I am going to pray, that is spiritual.” But the whole thing was, when the Spirit moved, when it awakened him to what the Lord wanted him to do, he was to move with the Spirit.

And that is what happened here; they moved with the Spirit. It is not that they just heard Him; they moved with the Spirit. You know, sometimes we can get a bit too spiritual. I will share just one idea about moving when you hear it and think you are being spiritual.

When I first got my public-school job, I went through two or three interviews. I had just got my credential, and finally, I went into this interview at Washington Middle School. I went in first, and they called me back to write out some scenarios. After that, they called me back again and offered me the job. I thought, “Well, maybe I need to pray about it.” Then Barb came running down the stairs and said, “This is an answer to prayer. This is the Lord moving; He is moving for us.” I was thinking, “Well, I am going to be spiritual about this.” But Barb sensed the Spirit and said, “This is it; we have to move.” And we did, and we had a wonderful experience at that school.

Awaken to the Will of God

The whole idea here is that we are to have an awakening—an awakening to the Spirit moving, an awakening to God leading. These people were saying, and it must have felt like this to them: when the edict came out, they said, “This is God opening a door for us; we need to go.” And so, they did. Not many went, but there were those who did; there were those who moved. This does not mean that the others were not saved or anything like that. The point is, when God is doing something, there are people who say, “Let us go with Him. We want to be part of what He is doing.” We want to be in His perfect will. And so, they moved and began to cooperate with the Spirit. This is one of the fruits—being awakened to the Spirit living in our lives, dwelling within us, moving within us, stirring us into the will of God. It is one of the fruits; they were awakened to God in them.

Restoration of the Altar

Secondly, in Ezra 3:1-2, it says: “And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren, the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses, the man of God.”

They rebuilt the altar before they even rebuilt the temple. This is a precursor to the building of the temple; this is what comes first. The idea of altars is prevalent throughout the Old Testament, where saints are building altars. For example, Abraham built altars, and Jacob built altars. The concept of an altar signifies consecration; it is a sign of a new consecration. These people had strayed and been away from God, and now that they have been awakened, they wanted to say, “Lord, I want to dedicate myself afresh to You. I want to give myself afresh to You.”

Fresh Offerings on the Brazen Altar

This marks the beginning of the bronze altar. Although the brazen altar was out there, remember, during the time of exile, there were no sacrifices and no offerings. Now, this had become the offering. This was not the offering of atonement, as in the Day of Atonement, but for all offerings given on the brazen altar, there was something of atonement in them.

This was the beginning again, the fresh giving of the daily offering. They were starting over: “Lord, I am coming back again, day by day, to give You a daily offering.” The offering they presented was a sin offering because that is how we come to God. First, we come with that sin offering, and then we offer the things He wants. He wants life; He wants your life. He wants your life laid down.

Abraham’s Altars – Faithfulness, Fellowship, and Wholly Consecration

Abraham, I believe, built three altars that I can think of. He built one when he first came out, and he was between Ai and Bethel. This altar of his consecration represented his position between destruction and the house of God, or between destruction and the purpose of God. He noted that Ai was behind him and Bethel was in front of him. In other words, there was a turning back on the path.

Brothers and sisters, do you know something? We are never asked to go back and look at the past, except for two reasons. There are two times when we do it. One, we did this morning, to remember the offering of the Lord Jesus for us because our sins are forgiven and forgotten. We are never asked to remember our sins because they are forgiven. But not just forgiven; they are judged and are behind us. The only other time we look back is to see how God has been faithful.

So, when our brother opened up today and talked about how the Lord has helped him. And we also consider those things of how the Lord has helped us in spiritual matters and in worldly matters; He has been our help. That is the only thing we look back to see:

His faithfulness and His loving kindness to us. In all our past, we see, “Oh, Lord, it is not that I blew it here, but when I blew it, You helped me. When I was there, You were there; I see Your faithfulness.” We just sang it at the end, did we not? “Great is Thy faithfulness, Oh Lord, to me.”

Then he went to Hebron and made an altar there. Hebron means fellowship, and it is the idea that we have an altar where we come to consecrate ourselves by giving ourselves to Him in fellowship. It is not something like what we do in our quiet time, where we think, “I am doing something for God, and I want to get something out of it.” Fellowship is not just about our receiving; it is also about our giving. When Abraham met the Lord as He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, do you know what it says Abraham did? He ran out, greeted the Lord, and brought Him into his tent. Then he refreshed Him and washed His feet, which refreshed Him. It is a wonderful ministry. When we come to the Lord in our quiet time, we refresh Him. We refresh Him, first of all, just by our presence being there. Then, when we look up to Him, look unto Him, and look to Him, it refreshes Him. That is what He desires.

The last altar that he built was on Mount Moriah. That is because consecration costs us something. It costs us something that we may never get back. But the whole idea is that it is worth something; it is worth it. And these people came back, saying, “Lord, I want to give myself to You afresh. I just want to give myself to You afresh. Forgetting what is behind, I want to go forward.” This is a fruit that comes from being disciplined by the Lord. “Lord, I want to go forward; I just want to go on.”

Restoration of The Role of Law and Prophets

The third thing that happened was that the law and the prophets were brought to bear on their lives. I told you that there were two or three prophets here, and I am going to mention two of them. There was also the bringing in of the law by Ezra, as shown in Nehemiah.

In Ezra 7:10, it talks about him wanting to study the law, practice it, and then teach it, and in Nehemiah chapter 8, we have him actually doing that. The law was brought to bear, and the difference is this: from this point on, there was an openness to the prophets and the law; the people were receptive. You do not hear the people complaining as you did when you read the prophets. If you read Jeremiah, the people were complaining, and he would say, “Quit talking like this.” Amos also said, “Quit talking like this. You need to go.” You do not hear that in Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi, although there is some complaining in Malachi. But here, there is an openness, and not only is there an openness, but they have become entreatable. The prophets entreat them, and they are entreated; they are responding positively. They are no longer the stiff-necked people they were before they went into exile. Something has happened.

Practical and Spiritual Guidance Through Haggai and Zechariah

Let me give you an example. Two prophets were sent with the first group of people that went back to Jerusalem, and they were sent at a critical time because what the Lord

was doing was being stopped, and it had them in a quandary. They did not know what to do, so they did nothing. Well, actually, they kind of resigned themselves to inaction. But God sent Haggai, who was an older man. I want to say he was like Enoch, who was also an older man and probably one of those who had seen the original temple—that is how old he was. Then there was Zechariah, who was a young man, some say probably in his twenties. He came from a priestly family, and they both began their ministries during that time. So, he was probably a young man, which is interesting because we see the variety that God uses. He did not just use the old people; He also used the young ones. But He did not just use the young people, He used the old people, too. So, the Lord sent these, and both of them spoke into the situation that the returned exiles were in. However, their speaking was from God's view. God is saying, "This is what I see." And that is the whole thing; "It is not that I am telling you this, but this is what I see. This is what I am observing, and I want to let you know."

Then there was a practical side to what God had to say, and that was Haggai. He spoke to the practical side, but there was a spiritual side, which was Zechariah, the younger man. You might think it would be different, right? The young man would want to be practical, and the older man would want to be spiritual, but it was different. Is not God wonderful in the way He works things out?

So, Haggai, being an older brother, an older man, spoke from the experience he had of dealing with God and being dealt with by God. He spoke like a father. And by that, I do not mean like a father speaking down to his children. Rather, he spoke as a father, as in 1 John 2, where it speaks of young children, young men, and fathers: "Fathers, because you know Him who was from the beginning." And that is the whole idea; he knew Him who was from the beginning. He knew the background; he knew all the way back to the old temple.

Go On and Do the Will of God

In summary, this is kind of what Haggai said to the people: "You do not understand that God is trying to get your attention. You do not see that all these things happened not because you are stalled here, but while you are stalled, the Lord is not blessing you with clothing and food. Remember, he said, "You have money bags with holes in them," and things like that: "You are not getting what you want."

That is not a bad economic downturn; that is the Lord trying to get through to you. He is using your circumstances to say, "I am trying to talk to you. You have turned away from what God originally called you to. Get back to it." That is basically what he said, and that is the book of Haggai. "You do not understand that God has been talking to you. Now get back to business. Understand that He is trying to get your attention because He wants you to get back to what you were doing despite the obstacles."

"Go on, with the obstacle in place, and just go on doing what you are doing." Many of us, as brothers and sisters in the Lord, stall ourselves because we are trying to deal with

an obstacle, and the Lord says, "Forget about the obstacle; just follow Me. Go forward because I am going forward. It is not an obstacle to Me, so go forward."

He was very practical with His assessment, and He was very practical in the application or the answer to what was going on. Some might say, "Oh, Haggai, you are just old and blowing smoke; you are just a legalist." But there was no kicking against the goad; instead, there was a positive response and a new attitude. In Hebrews chapter 10, the author takes Psalm 40:6-8 and changes it slightly. The new attitude among the people is this: "I have come to do Thy will."

It was not just about speaking to them. They said, "You know, this is what the Lord has brought you here for. He has brought you to do His will." So, the attitude is, "Yes, I am here to do God's will; this is my consecration. Why am I concentrating? Why am I giving myself to Him? It is so I can do His will." It is that simple, is it not? God is not complex. "I brought you here to do My will. So let us get about doing it."

God Has Made Us Holy to Himself

Zechariah was a man of visions. He had eight visions in the book of Zechariah, and he also answered some questions. I want to deal with one of the visions because in this vision, he gives us a picture of people who are caught under these obstacles, and they are not moving. He says, "I want to put a finger on something. There was an enemy," and Zechariah chapter 3 is the vision of Joshua, the high priest. He is in the heavenlies, and Satan is accusing him. The first thing is the angel of the Lord saying, "Rebuke you Satan." So, the Lord intervenes first, and this is important because He says to the accuser: "Get out of here! I rebuke you! You have no place here."

Secondly, Jeshua is in ragged clothes. So, the Lord says, "Okay, change the clothes and put good garments on him." So, he puts on good garments. Now, you know something. We want to stop there and say, "Okay, I am in good garments, and that is all there is to it. The Lord has given me garments; I am acceptable to Him." But no, there is a third thing that happens, and He says, "Put a turban on him," because the high priest wore a turban."

Now I want to bring up something about the turban. It is not just the turban, but on the turban, they were supposed to put a band of pure gold that was pushed in and engraved, which meant you could not erase it. It was put in there really deep, and it said, "Holiness to the Lord." This was just a way of the Lord saying, "I want to show you what I think of you. I have clothed you in new clothes; that is great. Okay. But it is not just new clothes. I have separated you to Myself for My own purpose, and it is a deep separation because I have engraved it upon your forehead."

In the Book of Revelation, it talks about the Lord putting His name on our foreheads, which is the same thing. And this is the whole idea: "It is a spiritual thing." This is our spiritual standing. This is how we are to approach the Lord; this is to be our mindset. It is not, "Oh, I am looking at my filthy clothes. I am hearing the accuser telling me how bad I am, and I have to agree with him. But in spite of all those things, I am seeing the Lord

saying to my accuser, “I rebuke you; you have no place here.” I see the Lord changing my garments, making me acceptable to Him. And then I see Him owning me for Himself.”

This is our standing, and it is established in our minds. This is the transformation of our minds. “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” This is where we should start every morning: “I am holy to the Lord. You have made me holy to Yourself. I do not have to make myself holy to You; You have made me holy to Yourself. I come in and stand on that place, on that ground that You have given me. This is where I begin my day. This is where I begin my consecration for this day.”

And again, the response is that they got on with the work. Obstacles? Yes, I can see my failures and everything like that, but I can also see that the Lord has overruled. Is not that great? The Lord has overruled! So those are the Lord's thoughts toward us.

Walk in the Word of God

Then there was the law, and with the law came instructions. Now, we like prophetic words, and in our fellowship, we like prophetic words. As a matter of fact, at our conferences, that is what we desire. We want a prophetic word, and I am not saying that is bad or anything; I am just saying that those are the things we desire. However, that is not all the Lord gave. He did not just give prophets; He also gave teachers. Ezra had a band of Levites, and if you look in Nehemiah 8:7-8, you will find that he had this band of people who read the Word and then provided understanding and application. So, there were instructions. And the instructions are for living. How do I live in this world? It is not so spiritual that it is impractical. This is how you live. That is why you read in Psalm 119, where the psalmist is always saying, “Teach me Thy way; show me Thy ways.” That is what we are saying: “Open them up to me, not just show me what they are, but open them to me.” He gave them sense, and there was desire and a hunger for this. This is fruit—God’s fruit to us. When we turn to Him, the fruit that comes from this gives us a hunger, a longing for the Word, this pure milk that enables us to grow thereby. Then we walk in the good of it, walking in the counsel of it. We like spiritual, but we are made to walk in it; that is our witness. Our witness is how we walk, not just our words, because the idea is to go beyond that. Look at what He does, not just what He says. It states that they read it clearly and they gave sense not just to the letter of it, but to the spirit of it, so it could be understood and applied to their lives.

Restoration of the Wall

The fourth theme in Nehemiah is his talk about the rebuilding of the wall and all the needs involved in that process. In chapter three, there is an enumeration of all the people who worked on the wall. All these people great and small, sisters and brothers, slave and free—are enumerated, and the whole idea is that it was not just an individual walk now. We are called to build with the purpose of doing what God wants and rebuilding the wall. When we think of building the wall of Jerusalem, let’s look at it this way: they were called to build up the body of Christ, to build up their brothers and sisters. No matter how big or small they were, their bigness or smallness was integral to the building and repairing of

the wall and to building up the body. Each of us has something of the life of Jesus that ministers to others and helps them. When we work together or function together, when we do what the Lord wants us to do, we are living in His leading.

Strengthen the Body of Christ

Hebrews 10:24 says, “And let us consider one another.” Let us consider one another; it is not just about me, but it is to stir up love and good work. That is the work at hand: to build up others, to consider others, and to build them up in love. Loving is not just “sloppy agape,” where everyone gives each other a holy kiss and engages in superficial gestures. No, love sometimes involves discipline, compassion, and correction.

Now listen to these verses in Hebrews 12:12-13. After it says that the righteousness that yields the fruit of righteousness, it says, “Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.”

When I read this, I always look at this as speaking to me personally. This is about my personal walk. Hebrews was not a personal letter; it was a corporate letter. When I started to think about that, I realized, “Therefore strengthen the hands that hang down.” The hands that hang down might not be my hands. The feet that are out of joint might not be my feet, but it is talking about the body. That is why it says to consider one another, so you can show love. The work that the Lord has for you to do for the body, in order to heal it and make it healthy, can be accomplished, and thus the whole body benefits from it.

Gifts of Help – Ministering to One Another

Gunther said this morning, “I will help you.” He used that verse. Well, brothers and sisters, that is what the Lord wants to do for everybody in the body. But in order to do it, He is using members of the body. In the anatomy that we have, how does the body minister to itself? It is incredible. I had a cut here, and my platelets are coming, and the white blood cells are there; everything is going well, so I can go on living. Well, what about the body of Christ? There should be that same activity. I am not saying we are all moving around, but I am saying that we are attached to the Head, right? And as the Head leads us and we get the message, we are stirred in the spirit to go and do those things for the benefit and the lifting up of the body so that Christ can be glorified.

What are the gifts God has given to His body? There is a plethora of gifts. But you know, the one we do not talk about a lot is the gift of helps. The gifts of help could be in hospitality, it could be in listening, it could be in visiting, or it could be inviting someone out to lunch to talk to them. There are all sorts of ways the body is working to heal itself and strengthen itself.

And the other thing is, everybody on the wall had their place. One part did not say, “Well, you are too small; I will do your part.” Because the smaller actually ministered to the greater. “I will take this part; it is okay. You do not have to do that. I get it.” That is it. Some did more than others, and some people said, “I am not doing it at all.” So, when you

read chapter 3, that is what you see. And this is the fruit that our eyes are open to see: that it is not just about me; it is about God's entire body, God's people.

Restoration Of the Joy of Life Together, Now and Forever

Now we are closing up with joy. There are two feasts mentioned in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and one is mentioned twice. So, I think that takes precedence, and that is the Feast of Tabernacles. The Tabernacles Feast was the most joyous of all the feasts. What were they celebrating? A lot of people say, "They were celebrating their time in the wilderness." I do not know if they were celebrating their time in the wilderness. "Give us water; we do not have food. Give us this." But the whole idea is that it was not just the wilderness; it was the life together as they sojourned, as they went through times of trial. That was joy; it was the life together.

It was also called the Feast of Ingathering, which was the time of harvest when you brought everything in. Sometimes it is said that they were looking forward to the Lord's final gathering of His children, and that will be a great joy when He finally gathers us together to Himself as His own and glorifies Himself in us.

But brothers and sisters, I think it also speaks about the harvest of unsaved souls that are ours during our sojourning. You know, there is a part for us to play in the harvest. We have some brothers right now who are going down in Miami to do that. But what about us? What is our part in this harvest? And maybe this is something we need to ask: "Lord, what is my part? What am I not doing, or what should I be doing? You need to show me it because I cannot see. I do not know; I am caught up with this. Show me."

You know, there is a Scripture that says, "Seek, and you will find." We have no problem with asking, and we have no problem with knocking, but we have a lot of problems with seeking. We need to seek after these things. I want to find out, pressing on to the Lord: "Show me, show me, show me," just like that widow was seeking justice.

Hope in the Messiah and His Return

The last thing is hope, and the reason I am saying hope is that in these prophets, especially Zechariah and Malachi, we have pictures of the Messiah. All of a sudden, the King is gone; the King of Judah is gone. He is never going to come back, as far as that goes. But it is the Messiah—the hope of the Messiah, the hope of the kingdom of God—not the kingdom of Judah, not the kingdom of Israel, no nation, but the kingdom of God and His King, the Messiah. Do we not pray? Are we not taught to pray, "Thy kingdom come?" And we are, in every generation since the book of Acts, to expect Him to come in our time. We should expect Him to come in our time. Whether He comes or not, that should be our expectation. That should be our hope. I want Him to come, and that is it. We want Him to come because He is going to be glorified. That is our hope: glorified in Him. And you know, that is a hard concept—glory.

Reacquaint with God and His Desire for His People

Lastly, we have to do seven. With these people, there was no wanting to go back to Babylon. None of them wanted to return. You know, when they came out of Egypt, they thought, “We have to go back. This is not working out; we have to go back to the leeks and onions; we have to go back there.” There was never anyone mentioning, “Let us go back to Babylon; we had it much better there.” Their eyes were facing forward.

That is what the Lord wants from us. He wants our eyes forward. That is where we see the Messiah. We see the coming of the Messiah, and that is where we see the harvest. That is where we see the completion of everything He wants to do. For the exiles, it was a whole reacquainting with God. They were getting reacquainted with Him, His calling, His purpose for them, and everything He wanted for them. They were reacquainting themselves with Him.

Conclusion

God was looking for the peaceable fruit of righteousness. I looked that up because I was thinking, what is the fruit of righteousness? The Greek scholar Thayer said of this, “Righteousness is the state of him who is such as he ought to be.” That is what God is after. He is after that man who is what he was meant to be. That is behind all of God's dealings with us. He is after that man who is after Christ—not meaning he is just running after Him, but that he is like Him in nature, like Him in heart, and like Him in spirit. That is His desire.

May this cluster be manifested in us. That is God's will; He wants this cluster. He is after this fruit, and the dealings and the things that come into our lives are all about our being trained so that this fruit is produced. It is not produced by us. But as we yield to the Lord's working in our lives and our hearts, the fruit is manifested. And the fruit is not manifested for my sake; it is manifested for your sake, for my neighbor's sake, for the glory of God's sake. Because remember, they were saying, “You have made My name to be hated.” Now it is, “You have made My name glorious.” This is what the Lord is after in us. Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it wonderful that He is saying, “You know, I am not just trying to get you to toe the line? I have something for you, and I want you to see that it is wonderful. I just want you to let your eyes move forward so you do not have to look back anymore, unless you are looking back to see what I have done. Once you have stood on that which I have done for you, turn your eyes forward, and I will be your help; I will be your life; I will be everything that you need because I am God. Isn't it wonderful?”

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, I want to thank You that all Your plans for us are good, that You have designed them for us to manifest Your glory and Your likeness. Lord, we ask for a heart and a spirit that yield so that You can produce the very things You want to produce—the things that magnify You and build up the body, that harvest from what You have sown. We want to be those who do that. We want to respond to You, Lord. We want to be those who sense the moving of Your Spirit in us and then move with it. We do not want to be the ones who say, “I am going to lay down until that feeling goes away.” We want to respond to You

because You are worth our response. And how is it that You would bless us in that response instead of just saying it is our due? Oh, Lord, You are so good. We want to respond to Your Word. We do not want to kick against the things; we want Your instruction. We want to know how to live, and knowing how to live, we want to live in that way. So, Lord, we ask You to open Your Word to us by the Spirit. Help us, Lord, to understand and know clearly, so that You, Lord, can have Your people on the earth, and that people can see and say, "Let us go up to Zion." We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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