

February 8, 2012

Old Testament: Zerubbabel—How To Be A Leader

- SERIES: Old Testament
 - Last week: Mordecai—The Humble Outlast the Proud
 - This week: Zerubbabel—How To Be A Leader

- “Leadership” is all the craze these days...
 - Ever wonder, “Who will do all the following if everyone is leading”?
 - ◇ Well, as followers of Christ, we should be leading—leading others towards a life that is like Christ’s.

 - The following video shows an example of awesome leadership skills
 - ◇ **Little kid after learning to ride his bike gives a speech**

- EZRA 1-6
- Zechariah 4:6-10

- Story of Zerubbabel
 - To begin the story of Zerubbabel, we must go back to the year 586 BC
 - ◇ This is the year that the city of Jerusalem, along with the Temple, was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar
 - He carried off the Jews to be captives in Babylon
 - ◇ By the year 562 (24 years after captivity began), Nebuchadnezzar died.
 - In his succession were fairly weak leaders
 - They allowed more and more freedoms for the Israelites in their captivity, allowing them to own land and homes and to take ordinary jobs for occupation
 - ◆ Many Israelites started to get very comfortable living there.

 - Then, in the year 538 BC (24 years after Nebuchadnezzar’s death), King Cyrus takes things a step further and issues a somewhat crazy decree:
 - ◇ EZRA 1:2-4
 - God has appointed me to rebuild the temple
 - All of you Israelites are free to leave your “captivity” here in Babylon and can go home to work on the Temple
 - AND, THOSE WHO LIVE AROUND THE ISRAELITES

“SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TOWARD THEIR EXPENSES BY SUPPLYING THEM WITH SILVER AND GOLD, SUPPLIES FOR THE JOURNEY, AND LIVESTOCK, AS WELL AS A FREE-WILL OFFERING FOR THE TEMPLE OF GOD IN JERUSALEM”!

- So, a door has just been opened up, and guess who is the FIRST one to take advantage?!
 - ◇ A guy named Zerubbabel
 - The Bible lists him first among a group of leaders who returned to Jerusalem with other exiles living in Babylon (Ezra 2:1-2)
 - When the Bible mentions him first, it’s probably because he was most instrumental in one way or another in leading the people back
 - ◆ In all, he and the others led back 42,360 people, not including 7,337 servants, 200 singers, 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.
 - ◆ People gave generously to the rebuilding of the Temple:
 - ⊗ 61,000 gold coins
 - ⊗ 6,250 pounds of silver
 - ⊗ 100 robes for the priests
 - Unfortunately, this Temple would never equal the one that had been built by King Solomon and later destroyed by Nebachadnezzar
 - ◆ King David had been able to save up 1,000 times more for that Temple than was going to be used for this Temple
 - ⊗ This caused some Israelites to weep as they thought back to how much more extravagant the old Temple was in comparison to this new one being built.
- When the Israelites arrived back at Jerusalem, they were given time to go to their home areas and for each to settle themselves in to their respective places of living.
 - ◇ At a time in the fall, all of them came to gather at one place in Jerusalem.
 - The people were afraid of those living in Jerusalem at the time...
 - They were foreigners who were resettled there after the exile of the Jews to keep from nationalistic uprisings occurring.

- ◇ Despite the fear of the people, Zerubbabel, along with Jeshua, began to rebuild the altar of God AT ITS OLD SITE so they could once again make sacrifices to God there.
 - ▣ **FEAR WAS NOT GOING TO BE A DETERANT TO ZERUBBABEL THAT WOULD KEEP HIM FROM DOING WHAT THEY HAD COME TO DO**
 - To the Israelites, their nation would not be a nation again until the Temple was built and God was number 1.
- Soon after the altar was finished, work on the rest of the Temple was begun
 - ◇ The foundation for the temple was finished, and there was a great mix of emotion
 - ▣ Most people gave great shouts of praise when they saw the finished foundation
 - ▣ The old priests who had personally witnessed the former Temple wept bitterly because it was nothing in comparison to the former Temple
- Enemies tried to “get in on the building action” in order to tear them down from within
 - ◇ Zerubbabel would have no part with them
 - ▣ He did what he could to protect what it was the Israelites were doing
- Later, those same enemies wrote a letter to King Artaxerxes, essentially saying that the Israelites have had a history of being rebellious and that their work should be stopped
 - ◇ The King agreed and put the work to a halt—for upwards of 16 YEARS
- Finally, two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, came with a prophesy that it was time to rebuild and finish rebuilding the Temple
 - ◇ Zerubbabel was the first to respond once again!
 - ▣ The leaders in the region questioned who had given them permission to build
 - While seeking out the present king’s approval, God granted them the favor to continue building
 - ◆ Finally, King Darius granted permission for the work to continue.

⊗ He even required those same questioning leaders to aid in the project!

➤ What Zerubbabel did well:

- Took advantage of an open door
 - ◇ King Cyrus allowing for people to go and rebuild
- Made the correct but difficult decision, and led other people to that same decision
 - ◇ The decision to leave the comforts of Babylon to go back to Jerusalem
- Didn't allow fear to stop him
 - ◇ Foreigners were living ON THE LAND of the altar
- Did all he could to protect those he was leading, and to protect the vision of what they were seeking after
 - ◇ Didn't allow enemies to be brought in on the work
 - Would have caused much discouragement and turmoil
- Wisely gave people what they needed to be successful
 - ◇ Gave them time to settle in before getting to work
- Put God first in his leading
 - ◇ First thing built was the Altar
- While down, listened again to God's voice and finished the work that was started
 - ◇ When he listened to the prophets, he recognized the Voice of God and got back to work

➤ What Zerubbabel did NOT do well:

- Allowed discouragement to keep him from his #1 task for up to 16 years
 - ◇ He could have made attempts in that time to begin the work of rebuilding the Temple
 - Maybe, just maybe, if he had courage born out of his own relationship to God and hearing God's voice personally, maybe it wouldn't have required two prophets to give him the push he needed to re-start the building
 - (that is just a possibility though—maybe it was not yet God's time until then)

➤ We are all called to be leaders in one way or another.

- Living for Christ is, by definition, a call to leadership.

➤ 1 Timothy 4:12

- Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

◇ Your life is meant to be, as a follower of Christ, an example for others to FOLLOW!

- That means that in everything that pertains to righteous living, YOU ARE CALLED TO LEAD!

- But, we can't lead if we have nothing to give...

◇ **LITER PITCHER ILLUSTRATION**

- To be a leader to others in your daily life—to show others how Christ expects them to live—you have to have Christ pouring daily into your own life!!!

- Otherwise, you'll have nothing left to give, and there will be no reason to follow you.

➤ Leaders must:

- Provide Motivation

◇ Get people going

- Provide Encouragement

◇ Keep people going

- Find ways to self-motivate and self-encourage

◇ Get and keep yourself going when times get tough

- Zerubbabel was not a perfect leader, but he did take the opportunities that God gave him to lead and he tried to make the most of them.

□ Ultimately, God did something awesome through him.

- ◆ What is it that God could do through you if you're willing to make the difficult choices and follow God's lead in your life?

➤ PRAY

- 1) I feel like I have nothing to offer anyone. I feel as dry as can be. I need God to bring me out of this spot in my life and renew me with energy and motivation—I need God's encouragement in my life right now.

- I want to give my life to Jesus for the very first time???

- 2) In order to lead others in life, I realize that I must lead myself better. I need to seek God out more in my life and let him fill me with motivation and encouragement so that I can pass that on to others. I want to lead as God calls me to lead.