

LOOKING TO GOD ~ Ezra 8:1-36

→ Scripture Deut. 4:25-31 Deut. 6:4-6

THE RETURNING FAMILIES ~ Ezra 8:1-20

[1] These are the family heads and those registered with them who came up with me from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes... ...[15] I assembled them at the canal that flows toward Ahava, and we camped there three days. When I checked among the people and the priests, I found no Levites there.

PRAYING AND FASTING ~ Ezra 8:21-23 & 31-32

[21] There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. [22] I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him." [23] So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.

...[31] On the twelfth day of the first month we set out from the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he protected us from enemies and bandits along the way. [32] So we arrived in Jerusalem, where we rested three days.

21- Proclaimed a Fast to...

- Humble Ourselves Before God
- Ask for Safe Journey

APPLICATION

Examples of Fasting in New Testament:

- WHEN you Fast - Matt. 6:16
- they WILL Fast - Mark 2:20
- Worshipping & Fasting - Acts 13:2
- Appointed Elders & Fasted - Acts 14:23

→ **Fasting is a powerful ministry; when God's people fast, we are telling Him that He is more important to us than the food we need to sustain our bodies.** [MBI - Feb 11, 02]

There are Biblical Examples of going without...

- Food
- Food and Drink - Ex. 34:28
- Choice food & extra care for himself - Dan.10
- Married couple abstaining from Sexual Relations for a time of Prayer - 1 Cor. 7:5

→ **Fasting is for times of yearning and aching and longing.** ~ Piper

PRAY And Fast FOR...

- Closer more intimate walk with Christ
- People to be Saved
- People to be Restored
- God to Bless this Community THROUGH us
- Us to Become His hands and Feet

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ~ Ezra 8:24-30 & 33-34

[24] Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests, together with Sherebiah, Hashabiah and ten of their brothers, [25] and I weighed out to them the offering of silver and gold and the articles that the king, his advisers, his officials and all Israel present there had donated for the house of our God. [26] I weighed out to them 650 talents of silver, silver articles weighing 100 talents, 100 talents of gold, [27] 20 bowls of gold valued at 1,000 darics, and two fine articles of polished bronze, as precious as gold.

Total Weight... (today's measures)

- 24 tons of silver
- 3 tons of silver objects
- 3 tons of gold objects
- 19 pounds gold bowls

[28] I said to them, "You as well as these articles are consecrated to the LORD. The silver and gold are a freewill offering to the LORD, the God of your fathers. [29] Guard them carefully until you weigh them out in the chambers of the house of the LORD in Jerusalem before the leading priests and the Levites and the family heads of Israel." [30] Then the priests and Levites received the silver and gold and sacred articles that had been weighed out to be taken to the house of our God in Jerusalem...

...[33] On the fourth day, in the house of our God, we weighed out the silver and gold and the sacred articles into the hands of Meremoth son of Uriah, the priest. Eleazar son of Phinehas was with him, and so were the Levites Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui. [34] Everything was accounted for by number and weight, and the entire weight was recorded at that time.

APPLICATION

1 Timothy 3:2-3 (NIV) Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

1 Timothy 3:8 (NIV) Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.

SACRIFICES AT THE TEMPLE ~ Ezra 8:35-36

[35] Then the exiles who had returned from captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven male lambs and, as a sin offering, twelve male goats. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD. [36] They also delivered the king's orders to the royal satraps and to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, who then gave assistance to the people and to the house of God.

SO WHAT ??

Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] **LOOKING TO JESUS**, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.