

RADIO MINISTRY
DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM
92.1 FM OPM Radio Jinja-Uganda &
<http://revival-time-ministry.info/messages/>

Date: 4th July 2015
Time: 6:00 to 7:00 am Saturday

Our Identity and Security is in Christ

A.TEXT: Ezra 4:1-3 *Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the LORD God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here."*

But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us."

INTRODUCTION: To be able to understand and interpret the text above, there is a need to understand the summary of the history of Israel from Abraham, the founder-father of the nation of Israel, to the time of Zerubbabel.

Israel was and is still a special people through whom God passed the blessing of redemption of man kind. They are specially chosen, and their choice by God is irrevocable: The church cannot completely replace Israel. The time is coming when Israel will be grafted back.

The descendants from Abraham became a nation in Egypt where they were oppressed but God delivered them and led them out to the Promised Land. God's promises to Israel included:

- (i) Giving them Land **Genesis 18:21 ; 17:8**
- (ii) Make them a nation **Genesis 12:2 ; 17:4**
- (iii) Divine protection and blessings **Genesis 12:3** and
- (iv) A seed referring to Christ **Genesis 17:2-7 ; Galatians 3: 8,16**

God deposed seven great nations and gave their land to Israel **Deuteronomy 7; 1-5**, but warned them that He will not spare them either if they went after the abominable practices of those nations **Deuteronomy 4; 23-29**

Israel entered the Land under God's miraculous support; the Red sea splitting open, provision of manna, drying of river Jordan, collapse of Jericho walls etc. It is believed that Joshua marched into the Promised Land in year 1445.

Unfortunately Israel forgot the instruction from their God, and went after massive idolatry. God raised several prophets to warn His people but all in vain. In year **722 BC** God removed the ten tribes of Israel and scattered them throughout the Assyrian Empire **2Kings 17:7-18; Jeremiah 2:7-25**. The ten tribes were in the Promised Land for only 723 years.

The two tribes (Benjamin and Judah) constitute what is known as today's Israel. 136 years after the deportation of the 10 tribes, God used Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, destroyed the city and the temple in 587. Many people were taken into exile.

Unlike the 10 tribes, the two tribes received a mild chastisement for 70 years as prophesied by **Jeremiah 25:11**

The Babylonian Empire was overthrown by Med-Persian coalition led by Cyrus in BC 539. In BC 538, God through King Cyrus, released Israel to go return to their land and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem according to the prophecies of their God according to **Isaiah 44:28- 45:1-4**. Isaiah lived about 150 years before Cyrus was born, confirming that God's word was given through prophet Isaiah. Jeremiah had also promised that all the vessels and treasures will be

returned intact **Jeremiah 27:22**. We see the fulfillment of these prophecies in Ezra **1:2-10**.

Israel returned to their land in three sessions.

- (i) The first Session was led by Zerubbabel in **538 BC**

Haggai was called to give his prophecy in year **520 BC**, The circumstances under which he was called were stipulated in **Ezra 3:8 —4:1-6**.

- (a) People begun working on the temple in **536**
- (b) But got very much discouraged by the enemies of Israel who were denied the opportunity to participate in building the temple **Ezra 4:1-**
- (c) The people were frightened by hired counselors
- (d) The work stopped for 16 years when God called Haggai in **520 BC. Ezra 5: 1-2, Haggai 1:1-2** to encourage the people.

The second Session was led by Ezra in **458 BC**. The word of God is much the similar way, Ezra:

- (i) Reformed worship in the Temple
- (ii) Reinstated the Law (Nehemiah 8 & 9)

THEME: COMPROMISING THE WORD OF GOD

The Persian Empire was divided into twenty provinces, or satrapes, each ruled by a governor called a satrap. To check the satraps, a secretary and a military official representing the "Great King, King of Kings" were installed in every province. Also, special inspectors, "the Eyes and Ears of the King," traveled throughout the realm.

Religious life in Persian Empire was ritualistic worship of Satan. Their religion was centered on the sole god Ahura-Mazda ("Wise Lord"). Magic arts and miracles were performed by their wise men (Priests) call The Magi.

The political and military rulers who represented the Persian Empire in the Palestinian region wanted to take part in building the Holy Temple, but Zerubbabel rejected the offer.

It is very easy to understand why Zerubbabel and Jeshua rejected the voluntary help from the powerful people of the land, who could have

given their project a boost by way of protection, recognition and material support. First and foremost, it is important to take note of the fact that the entire Persian establishment was under the control of Satan and his demonic entities, who had a sinister aim of destroying, not only the project, but compromise it according to the interest of Satan. Zerubbabel and Jeshua quickly saw through the trick, and rejected it.

There is absolutely nothing good that Satan can offer for the course of God: Satan does not mix with the Holy God "**No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.**

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we? (1 Corinthians 10: 20-22). The Temple of the Holy God does not mix with the temples of demons. The witch doctor's shrine cannot mix with the pulpit in which God's truth is proclaimed.

HERE, WE SEE THREE AREAS OF HUMAN NEED IN WHICH MAN IS VULNARABLE AND PRONE TO COMPROMISE THE WORD AND THE STANDARDS OF GOD

The offer given to Zerubbabel and Jeshua by the heathen leaders had all the three areas of human vulnerability: It was not as ordinary as it appears in Scripture.

1. **IDENTITY:** Zerubbabel and Jeshua were exiles who had received favor from King Cyrus to return and build the Temple of their God. It was a fulfillment of a prophetic word to Israel as a nation. They were looked down upon as men of low status, imposters who were trying to accomplish impossibility, people rejected by their own gods. Their identity both as a nation and individuals could not sell. It is very much the way true born again Christians were looked down upon in the New Testament, "**For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the**

things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." 1 Corinthians 1:26-30)

The identity of a Christian is not to be based on worldly status, but on relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This necessitates humility on the side of a believer. This should not wrongly misinterpret to mean that a Christian should not pursue education, wealth, and high status in the world. Apostle Paul was well educated and his education helped him in ministry: They should work very hard and acquire any blessing God has in store for them. However, the blessings acquired should only serve as an opportunity to serve and God and fellowman, but not to build an identity, social class and an arrogant and lofty attitude.

Apostle Paul set a precedent of humility when he refused his academic credentials and social position to define his attitudes, relations and service delivery. As we all know, Paul was well educated and well-placed in terms of Jewish and Roman cultures. He was an expert in Jewish Law which was central in the Jewish culture. Despite all these, Paul chose to be identified with Christ, and him crucified ***"for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.***

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ. (Philippians 3:3-8)

The early Christians who were true agents of change; light and salt, were identified and defined by Jesus Christ, not what they had or

their social status. Peter and John were met by an expectant lame man at entry point to the giant temple. They told him, "Silver and Gold we do not have, but through the Jesus Christ we have, rise and walk" and the miracle took place there and then. The society looked upon them as worthless, but would not ignore their true identity. ***"When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."*** (Act17:6)

Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus and (Acts 4:13)

2. SECURITY: The basic need for every person is security. This was opportunity for Zerubbabel and Jeshua to bask in the security provided by state apparatus of the Persian Empire through the regional watchdogs. But this was hollow security. It is only God who can give true security in all things. As he said that all human endeavors to create their own security can only work if God permits it, ***"Unless. the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain (Psalms 127:1).***

We live in the world full of fear and insecurity: People are constantly concerned about their future, which includes jobs, businesses, health, wealth etc. Several have worked out security measures which range from eliminating the threats and to block to building fortifications. The witches and the con artists have profited from people's fears for the future.

The true born again Christian should respond to future threats differently. Jesus instructed His disciples not to take concern about the perceived challenges of the future. He did not mean that Christians did not need to plan and work hard. People have misinterpreted this teaching of Jesus Christ to mean laziness and lack of active planning. God is a mighty planner and a worker (**John 5:17**), and everything else in God's program happens according to plan. There is nothing haphazard in the Kingdom of God. Christ was

teaching against concerns and unfounded fears regarding the future. The context of the message is security regarding the future, not sluggishness about work and planning. ***“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “So do not “worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own Mathew 6:33-34.***

A Christian attitude is of complete rest in Lord for life now and the future. The future belongs to God and Him alone. Work hard yes, but with a relaxed attitude. Jesus gave a parable of a rich fool who thought he had answers about the future, and he was cut short.

Christ has promised to be with His disciples all the time. He has often a watching eye upon their lives

- (i) He promised them His availability (Mathew 28:20)
- (ii) He has promised material security (Romans 8:32)
- (iii) He has promised physical security (Romans 8:33)
- (iv) He has promised his guidance (Psalms 32: 8-9)

3. POWER/ATTENTION: Every male human being is created with an instinct of dominion or ruler ship. Females may not be much on this thing of power, on the attention. The temptation was to base their influence on the authority of the certain regional envoys rather than to God.

People in the world see power as the ability to be able to prevail over people by force - to lord it over them. Though man was created with the instinct of dominion, this instinct has been hijacked by the fallen human nature ***“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” Genesis 1:27.***

Christian authority and influence comes from God, and His word clearly spelled in Scripture. It is ministered in humility, servant hood attitude and in love, not by lording it upon people through oppression, compulsion and threats:

The Christian ultimate source of power and authority is God: It comes through:

(i) Distinct life of righteousness. Upright moral conduct gives a Christian trust and respect from the community. The concept of being light of the world is based on this. Respect does not only give a Christian respect and authority over fellow man, but even over demonic authorities. Righteousness is a more powerful than any military equipment of the world **“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS Ephesians 6:10-14),**

(ii) Intimacy with God through prayer:

When a Christian is well connected with God, usually through prayer and study of the His Word, the authority of God flows through him or her and is clearly recognizable.

(iii) Obedience to both the written Scripture and the faint gentle voice of the Holy Spirit. People would always want to see God in the life of a leader.

SMMARY: Man has three basic and in-built instincts which the evil human nature has diverted for evil. Christians have new nature by the ability of the Holy Spirit who indwells them. The Christian Identity, security, power and attention should not be thought from elsewhere other than in Scripture, Amen!

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Pastor Isaac Peter Oyako
In the Studio of OP Radio in
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