

Problems: Small & Large



This week we combine chapters 8 & 9 in our study. There is a common thread running through these two chapters, problems. And, such is life. There are problems we deal with every day. Some of them are small, such as not being able to find something. Others can be very large and heartbreaking, such as trouble in the family, health issues, spiritual problems.

Chapter 8

This chapter identifies the people who returned with Ezra to Jerusalem (1-14)

Two initial problems arose:

- (1) There were no Levites among them (17)
- (2) There was a need for protection from the enemies
 - Israel was carrying a large amount of silver and gold (26-27)
 - Without armed protection, they were open to attacks and ambushes (31)
 - Ezra was "ashamed" to ask King Artaxerxes for troops since he had said the hand of God was with him

- Ezra calls for a fast to humble themselves and seek the Lord's protection (21)

- They all reach Jerusalem safely, the treasures are placed in the temple
- A large sacrifice is offered to God
- The King's edict is given to the rulers in the area

Chapter 9

Word is brought to Ezra that the people in the land had intermarried with the nations around them.

- This included Levites, Priests, Princes and Rulers
- This was a violation of Deut 7:3-4

Ezra's Reaction was to:

- _____ his clothes
- _____ the hair out of his head and beard
- Sat down _____ (4)

- Some were divorcing their Jewish wives to marry foreigners (Mal 2:13-16)

During the evening prayer (5)

- Ezra was ashamed to look heavenward (6)
- He did not separate himself from the sins of others (10)

There was a great contrast:

God had been good to the nation (grace, lovingkindness)
Israel had been rebellious

The call was made to bring some Levites

- These Levites are called "ministers for the house of God" (17)
- The role of Levites was:
 - To help the priests in the service to God. During the tabernacle period, Levites assembled and dismantled and carried the articles of the tabernacle
 - They often sang in service
 - They were involved in teaching the Law
- They were excluded from military service
- They were not counted in census

This is referred to as:

- _____ (1)
- _____ (2)
- Holy race was polluted (2)

Lessons

1. What do we need to know about traveling through enemy territory?
2. Why is it that some never learn lessons from the past (Neh 13:26)?
3. What makes some problems so complicated?
4. As the chapter ends, there is no solution to this problem. What would you suggest?