

## Study 0057

### The Old Covenant Era Worship: Lessons from The Post-Exile Period (2)

In our last study, we began to look at lessons that we, today's Christians can learn from the post-exile period of the Old Covenant Era. We equated the returning Jews to returning backsliders, and new believers; and said these lessons are apt for us today. We have seen, from the last study that:

1. Everyone who comes to Christ (be it for the first time or as a returning backslider), must submit themselves to the leadership and lordship of Christ.
2. The new believer and indeed, the returning backslider, must first establish a personal altar (quiet time) where he meets with God on a daily basis, even before he gets to find a place of corporate worship.
3. The returning backslider and the new believer in Christ alike must spend time building a firm Christian foundation, lest he fall away when persecution comes.
4. The returning backslider, and the new believer (indeed, all Christians), must be involved in the building of the physical and spiritual house of God.
5. There will always be opposition whenever Christians seek to build the house of God (physical and spiritual); hence, we must beware of false ministers, and we must guide against allowing discouragement, persecution, prosperity, etc., preventing us from building the physical and spiritual house of God.
6. When a Christian is engaged in personal ventures that God has not directed, even though there may be no opposition, directly or indirectly, from the devil, God sends a famine to bring such a Christian back to refocus on Him and His house.

We shall now continue with more lessons from the post-exile period of Old Covenant worship, as it relates to new converts, returning backsliders, and all Christians, generally:

7. In calling His people back to recommence the rebuilding of His house, God spoke to them through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. This underlies the importance of the building of the house of God. Prophets and prophecy of old sought to bring God's people back from their backsliding to the worship of God. Today, the role of prophets and prophecy must be no less; and that is, to bring backsliding believers back to the worship of God, as well as new believers and believers in general to the building of the house of God—physical and spiritual (**Ephesians 4:11-14**).
8. When the people who had returned from exile began to build through the prophecy of Haggai and Zechariah, the opposition that came failed. This underscores the significance of prophecy. Unlike the way it is being portrayed today, prophecy is essentially for the edification (building up) of the body of Christ (**1 Corinthians 14:3-6**). When prophecy has gone forth, nothing can stop it from happening; not even our unbelief and doubts (**2 Kings 7:1-20**).
9. The house of God was built by the people of God, using the resources that God had made available to them; and when that was not enough, God promised, and indeed made additional resources available (**Haggai 2:6-8; Ezra 6:1-12**). The resources for the building of God's physical and spiritual house must first come from God's own people; and if there is need for additional resources, He will command such resources to come from any source He chooses. It is important that believers today realize that God's bountiful blessings are for the building of His house (physical and spiritual), and for the propagation of the gospel all around the world.
10. The successful completion of the building of the house of God by God's people was followed by its dedicated to God, as well as the rededication of God's people to the worship of God, and a firm commitment to follow God's word. Every Christian must

dedicate himself to the continued worship of God, and be committed to the continued adherence to the word of God (**John 8:31-32; Acts 2:41-47**).

11. The importance of the continued worship of God as well as devotion to follow God's word, was soon revealed, when many years later, the post-exile returnees again fell away from God, as was revealed to Ezra soon after his arrival with another set of returnees (**Ezra 9:1-2**). When a Christian ceases from continually having fellowship with God, he is in danger of losing his most reliable 'Friend' in this world, and becoming immersed in the affairs of this world to the detriment of his eternal salvation (**Luke 9:59-62; 2 Timothy 4:10a; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Timothy 2:4**). In addition to continuing in our personal worship of God, we must not forsake assembling together with other believers in Christ, so that we can be strengthened thereby (**Hebrews 10:22-27; 1 John 1:1-4**).
12. When Ezra heard of the backsliding of the exiles who had returned under Zerubbabel, he called them all to repentance, which led to restitution (**Ezra 9:3-15; 10:1ff**). A similar thing happened when Nehemiah was governor of Judah (**Nehemiah 9:1ff**). Everyone who has abandoned God and His word must return to Him through repentance, which must be followed by restitution. Repentance connotes a turning away from our sinful ways, and turning unto God and His ways; and restitution is the action which makes amends where we have picked up garbage while on the wrong way, by casting off such garbage and making reparation where necessary (**Luke 19:1-9**). In reality, genuine repentance must include restitution. For example, if you have gone to be a second wife while in your backsliding, and are now returned to God, you should make every effort to leave that unholy marriage, and wait on God for 'what next'. It is always a good thing though, to seek and take counsel from your pastor before embarking on restitution of any sort.
13. Although the returned exiles were now in their homeland, and had built the house of God, their city was still in ruins. It took Nehemiah's intervention to bring about the leadership needed to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem as well as set-up the gates thereof (**Nehemiah 1:1-3; 2:5-8, 12-18; 6:15**). It is possible to be in the house of God, and still be unprotected by our own carelessness and lethargy to spiritual things. The bible tells us to put on the whole armour of God so that we can be able to stand in the evil day (**Ephesians 6:10-18**), which includes, being truthful at all times, holding on to our faith in Christ no matter what is happening, studying and applying the word of God to our lives and situations, and praying with all manner of prayer, among others. The believer in Christ must understand that he is living among 'wolves' and 'roaring lions' who are just waiting for an opportune time to strike (**1 Peter 5:8-9**), which is why believers must be sober and vigilant at all times. We must be conscious of who we associate with so that we are not lured away to eating foods sacrificed to idols, or even participating (sometimes unawares) in satanic activities. Our 'wall' is the Holy Spirit and the word of God (**Ecclesiastes 10:8b**), which are maintained by holy living, and an effectual prayer life.

The pre-eminence of the worship of God cannot be overemphasized. Worship can take place in our hearts, in our homes, and in the physical house of God. Indeed, our worship of God must be reflected in everything we do; not just when we are singing a chorus. The worship of God does not necessarily have to be in a physical building. It can take place while we are walking, driving, talking, working, etc.; indeed, our lifestyle must echo our worship of God. More importantly, is the essence of continuing to worship God (**Romans 8:35, 38-39**): in good times and in bad times (**Ephesians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:18**); and when it is convenient, and when it is not convenient (**Acts 16:16-29**).

## **EXERCISE**

Please state true or false to the statements below:

1. The essence of prophecy is to make us feel good about ourselves.
2. Prophets have been given to the believer in Christ, to give him advance information of business opportunities and economic downturns, so that he can take advantage of such warnings.
3. Having completed a church building, the next phase is to enjoy ourselves.
4. As long as you are attending church services regularly, it does not really matter what you do, all will be well.
5. Repentance is telling God that although you are going in a wrong direction, He should show compassion, and bless the wrong way, since you have gone far, and it will take a lot to turn back.
6. Restitution is an Old Covenant Era matter, and does not apply to New Testament believers.
7. Studying the bible everyday can be burdensome, so it is understandable if we take a vacation from personal bible study, every now and then.
8. Since a backslider had repented before backsliding, it is not necessary for him to repent again; all that is needed is for him to resume church attendance, and all will be well.
9. Once you are in church you are protected from the devil.
10. Worship takes place on Sundays only when we attend church; hence, Sunday service should never be missed.