

## **HABITS THAT ANCHOR YOUR SOUL PRT 1**

*Ezra 3:3 And they set the altar on its bases, for fear was on them because of the people of those countries. And they offered burnt offerings on it to Jehovah, burnt offerings both morning and evening. 4 And they kept the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required. 5 And afterward they offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons and of all the set feasts of Jehovah that were set apart, and of everyone who willingly offered a freewill offering to Jehovah.*

Today, we are continuing our journey of exploring the series titled **FROM RUBBLE TO RADIANCE**, and today I am doing part 10. To those who are joining for the first time, this series is anchored in the Book of Ezra, a book written to emphasize the faithfulness of God. God's people were taken into captivity in the land of Babylon because of their unfaithfulness to God. But God was faithful in bringing them back to Jerusalem after they had served their time in captivity.

Now, you might be in some captivity of some sorts, regardless of how you got yourself there, God is faithful to restore you.

You have heard the statement that says, "human beings are creatures of habit", which means that we tend to behave in routine ways, whereby we prefer familiarity over constant change. This could be both good and bad, depending on what type of habits you are stuck with.

- I don't know if you have observed it but habits have a way of defining us. Let me put it this way: a behavior repeated becomes a habit, a habit turns into a lifestyle, and ultimately, your lifestyle defines you.
- This is profound because what starts as a minor repetition of a behavior becomes a defining behavior. Therefore, don't take repetitive behavior for granted.
- You are a healthy person because, at some point, you decided to go to the gym, you repeated your gym visits long enough, and that has become a habit and a healthy lifestyle.
- This morning, I want to talk to you on the subject matter **HABITS THAT ANCHOR YOUR SOUL**.
- Your soul, your spirit man, needs to be anchored in healthy habits. If you have bad habits, you will find yourself being unhealthy in your soul and spirit.
- Going back to our scripture reading, we are given another insight into why the returning exiles prioritized the building of the altar.

*Ezra 3:3 And they set the altar on its bases, for fear was on them because of the people of those countries*

- They were driven to build the altar because they were fearful of the uncircumcised people around them. The people from other nations were hostile towards the returning Jews.

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- They had the hope that by erecting the altar and seeking God, He would come to their rescue.
- What you do in the moment of fear matters. People run when in fear, some close inwards when fearful, and some lash out when in fear.
- The best and only way to respond to fear is to run to God – He is our refuge, He is our fortress, and a strong tower.
- Fear must never stop us from praying, from seeking God. In their fear, the Jews refused to be deterred from building the altar. There is no greater motivation to seek God than when you are facing the devil's threat.

### **1. Develop the habit of seeking God in moments of fear (uncertainty).**

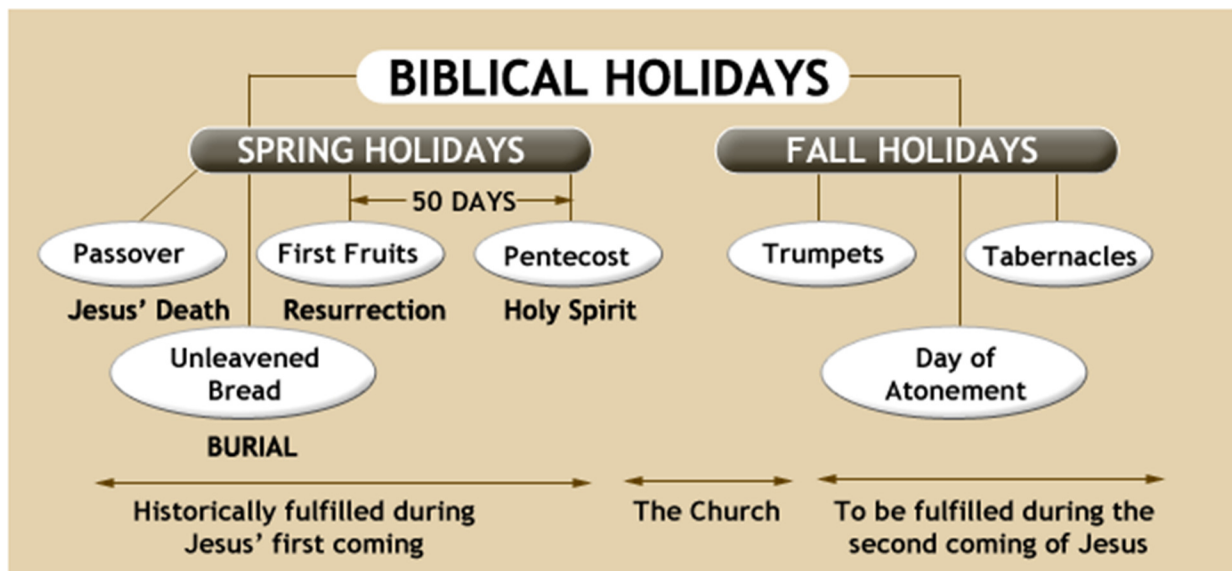
- A careful consideration of verses 3 to 6, will highlight an interesting theme – lets have a look at some terms used.
- *Ezra 3:3...they offered burnt offerings both morning and evening. 4 And they kept the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required. 5 And afterward they offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons and of all the set feasts of Jehovah that were set apart.*
- I see a repetition of sorts where they offered in the morning and in the evening, they kept the feasts, they followed a custom, and they performed the duty of every day.
- After setting up the altar, we see that the Jews engaged in regular divine worship, which they conducted daily and seasonally.
- Every time they celebrated a festival, the Jews were reminded of something regarding Yahweh.
- Without failure, the Jews celebrated these festivals daily, seasonally, and yearly, and it kept their hearts connected with God. In other words, these festivals became a healthy habit that gave them a clear perspective on who God is and who they are.
- The identity of the Jews was highly intertwined with these festivities and by re-instituting them, the Jews were asserting their identity as a covenantal people.
- A healthy soul is an outcome of having a healthy perspective of God and of self.
- In other words, there are habits that every believer must engage in if they want to have a healthy soul and spirit. Many people are unhealthy emotionally and spiritually because they don't know who they are .
- We will draw our habits from the type of divine worship that the Jews were involved in.
- In Leviticus 23, the Lord gave His nation seven annual festivals or appointed times which were designed to mark seasons and to honor God.

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- God was calling His people to create spiritual habits that would define their spiritual well-being.

*Leviticus 23:1 And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, 2 Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, The feasts of Jehovah, which you shall proclaim, holy convocations, even these are My appointed feasts.*

- These feasts are divided into spring (Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost) and fall (Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles).
- Again, all seven festivals were a shadow of what was to come, in which we see their full expression in Jesus, our Lord.
- Through Jesus Christ, we have become the new Israel of God, and there is still an expectation that we observe these festivals in our daily walk with God.
- Let me give you the lay of the land before we start exploring habits that anchor our souls.



- We are going to spend some time exploring each of them and see what they meant for the Jews of Old and what they would mean to us. In other words, what habits do we need to develop because of observing these in the context of them being fulfilled in Christ our Lord?

*Leviticus 23:3 Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work. It is a sabbath to Jehovah in all your dwellings.*

- Right at the top as an introduction to the festivals, God placed a demand for His people to understand and honor the Sabbath.
- The Sabbath is distinct from all the other seven but sets the tone and attitude with which each of the seven should be observed.

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- The Sabbath was a weekly day of rest, which was established at creation and emphasized in the Ten Commandments.
- A common error in the Sabbath-keeping debate is the concept that the Sabbath was the day of worship. The Sabbath command was to do no work on the Sabbath day (Exodus 20:8-11).
- Under the Old Covenant, sacrifices were made daily at the tabernacle/temple. The “worship” was continual.
- The Jews were prohibited from 39 categories of activities (such as baking and cooking, traveling, kindling fire, gathering wood, buying and selling, and bearing burdens from one domain into another).
- In cities and villages throughout Israel, life seems to come to a standstill on Friday nights, in anticipation of the day of rest.
- The sabbath was so holy that those who failed to observe it faced the death penalty (Exodus 35:2).
- This becomes the second habit we need to develop.

## **2. Develop the habit of resting and being at rest**

- For the New Testament believer, there is no requirement to observe specific days and seasons, but the principles that underpin the Sabbath are still applicable.
- God worked for 6 days and rested on the seventh day. The Sabbath was a holiday meant for rest.
- There is a physical side of the Sabbath, which has to do with bodily rest from work and toiling. Many people do not appreciate rest because resting is perceived as being lazy.
- Your body was never designed to work 24/7/365 non-stop. When you starve your body of rest, you can end up being sick physically and emotionally.
- These days, we talk about burnout and fatigue, resulting in sicknesses and all sorts of dysfunctions.
- In your busy schedule, find time to rest so that you can recover. A rested soul can easily hear God speaking; a rested body is effective in ministry.
- The Sabbath principle informs us of the need to have a structured rhythm of work and rest, which makes recuperating a necessity.
- Rest is a grace and gift from God, in which we can stop working and trust Him to provide our needs.

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- The greatest rest is one we find in Jesus. Through Jesus, we rest from our sins, and we are at peace with God.
- There is no amount of vacation, spa treatment, and such like things that can give you rest as Christ does.
- In the Lord we rest from the burdens of the soul, and we find forgiveness of our sins.