



The South Florida Avenue church of Christ



MESSENGER

1807 S. Florida Ave., Lakeland, FL 33803

Vol. 73 No. 38 September 22, 2020

ELDERS

David Anderson
Kenny French
Brian Kenyon
Bobby Sheumaker

DEACONS

Tyler Anderson
Jason Hendrix
Stacey Paulin
Jimmy Sweeney

MINISTER

Hiram Kemp

ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Vince Daugherty

SECRETARY

Dee Parramore

OFFICE PHONE

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

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SouthFloridaAvenueChurchOfChrist.com

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Appreciating Post-Exilic Books: Ezra & Nehemiah

Hiram Kemp

If you have ever tried to get people to cooperate on a project, you know how difficult it can be. Cooperation is further compounded when people have been sitting idle for a long time. In the Old Testament, we learn that God's people are sent into Babylonian captivity because of their idolatrous practices (Jer. 25:7-11). God was disciplining Judah because of her rebellion, but He was not giving up on His people. The prophets spoke of a future time when God would raise up a leader named Cyrus who would allow the people to return from captivity, reinhabit Jerusalem, and continue to prepare for the coming Messiah (Ezra 1:1-4; Isa. 44:28, 45:1-4; Jer. 25:12, 29:10-11).

God fulfilled His promise just as He said He would. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians fell to Cyrus and the Persians in 539 B.C. However, as you might imagine, the people had a hard time coming back to Jerusalem and resuming the Lord's work. After the people returned home, they were glad to be back in Jerusalem but for all of the wrong reasons. They spent time building their own homes while leaving the Lord's house in ruins (Hagg. 1:1-4). Just like God needed servants to warn the people before they went into captivity about their destructive behavior, He needed men to rebuke, warn, and challenge His people when they returned from Babylon. Two of the books which we have in our Old Testament that cover the events after the Babylonian exile (also known as the post-exilic period) are Ezra and Nehemiah. These books are enriching to study as they show us how God's people have always been resilient. Furthermore, they provide insight into how we can get the Lord's work done when we put our minds to it. It is interesting to note that in the Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah comprised one book. Though separated now in our English Bibles, there is still much overlap as these books share the same time period. Ezra and Nehemiah serve the Lord as contemporaries.

Ezra: Restoring the Temple & the Law

The book of Ezra divides itself into two distinct sections. In Ezra 1-6, we read of the people of God being allowed to return home at the decree of Cyrus, the king of Persia (Ezra 1:1- 4, 7-11). This first wave of captives to return home is led by Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:1-2, 3:8-9). The main issue in the first half of the book deals with rebuilding the temple. The people get off to a great start as the foundation for the temple is laid, but then the work stalls (Ezra 4:23-24). The work on the temple of God, which began so enthusiastically, ceased for sixteen years until the Jews were stirred up by God's prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, and encouraged to finish the work (Ezra 5:1-2, 6:13-15).

Ezra 7-10 deals with the people being sanctified and the law being restored. The people have the temple to resume God's worship, but if they are ignorant concerning God's Law, they will simply repeat the behavior that brought on the captivity (cf. Hosea 4:6). Ezra made the decision to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:1-7). He was a priest and a scribe ready to study, share, and

practice the law of God (Ezra 7:10). Ezra's chief concern was knowing God through His word and helping the people to do the same. He makes his way back to Jerusalem and will not accept help from the Persian king because he trusts God to provide for His people (Ezra 8:21-23). When he arrives in Jerusalem, he is astonished to find the people married to the pagans of the land (Ezra 9:1-4). Ezra prays a heartfelt prayer of confession on behalf of himself and the people expressing thanksgiving to God for restoring them to the land (Ezra 9:5-15). He includes things in his prayer that indicate he has spent time with the word of God and knows the danger of disobeying and returning to behavior that would bring on God's wrath. The book ends with Ezra encouraging the people to sever their relationships with their pagan wives (Ezra 10:1-5) and specifically calls out those who have sinned (Ezra 10:6-44).

Nehemiah: Rebuilding the Walls

The Book of Nehemiah is more well known than the book of Ezra. Many are familiar with Nehemiah's journey from Persia, where he served as the king's cupbearer, to his return home in Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1-8). He comes to Jerusalem and finds the walls in ruin, then leads the people in a rebuilding project. Though there are opposition and distraction from scoffers and enemies, the wall is rebuilt in just fifty-two days (Neh. 4:6, 6:15). Nehemiah is a man of prayer as he frequently petitions God for help and support throughout his endeavors (Neh. 1:4-11, 2:4, 4:4-5, 5:19, 6:9, 6:14). We read in this book of the people coming to hear the Word of God read and explained by Ezra (Neh. 8:1-8). There is a prayer of penitence in Nehemiah 9:4-38 similar to the one found in Ezra 9. Moreover, we read of Nehemiah's disgust at the people's moral laxity and their marriage to foreign wives whom he believed would draw them away from God (Neh. 13:23-27). The book closes as he begs the Lord to remember him for good (Neh. 13:31).

Applying These Texts Today

Though we are not under the Law of Moses today,

Youth Group by Vince Daugherty

Miracles are supernatural acts of God. God is Spirit. He does not have flesh and bone as we do, but He still wants people to know who He is. He has revealed Himself through miracles. When God sent Moses to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of captivity, even God's chosen people were skeptical. In the wilderness when the people needed a sign, His presence was abundantly seen. God went before them as a cloud and as a pillar of fire. The Red Sea was opened and closed. God sent quail and manna from heaven. Imagine seeing this miracle every morning and evening for 40 years. Even Aaron's rod budded, bloomed, and produced almonds. Has God revealed Himself?
Can there be any doubt there is a God?

there is much to be learned from reading books like Ezra and Nehemiah (Romans 15:4). They show us that God's people can accomplish anything when we work together (1 Cor. 12:12-26). Every member in the church has a job, and when we do it effectively, we can build up the Lord's kingdom just like Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilt the wall and the temple. Also, we notice the importance of the Word of God (cf. Matt. 4:4). God's people cannot do God's will without His Word. Ezra and Nehemiah both place special importance on the people knowing the Word of God and putting it into action (2 Tim. 2:15). In the church, we need to do what we can to educate God's people, and then help one another be doers of the word and not merely hearers (Acts 2:42; James 1:22-23).

Ezra and Nehemiah stress the need for God's people not to entangle themselves in relationships with outsiders that lead to sin (cf. Eph. 5:11). It is not a sin to be married to a non-Christian, but Christians should be wise about their choices in this area and in other areas where we may be negatively influenced. Students of the post-exilic books learn that though God punished His people, He did not part ways with them (Rev. 3:19). God wanted Israel to repent so He could use her to bring the promised Messiah into the world. One more interesting note from these books is the absence of the miraculous. As those who live in an age where the miraculous activity of God has ceased, we learn from books like Ezra and Nehemiah how to pray fervently, make good choices, and trust God's providence and promises (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Heb. 2:1-4). We are a long way from the days of exile, but we need to study these books and keep their message close to our hearts. Read Ezra and Nehemiah and allow yourself to be informed, challenged, and encouraged: God is faithful!

Senior Saints

by John McShane

Our world and our nation are currently undergoing events that most of us have never seen before. With the Covid-19 requiring mask-wearing, social distancing, the political polarization, and racial unrest in our country, there is a lot of fear in our daily lives. In Franklin D. Roosevelt's first Inaugural Address in 1932, he spoke these words: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself". He spoke these words to try and calm our country as it was in the midst of the great depression. An old saying goes like this: "Fear does not stop death. It stops life. And worrying does not take away tomorrow's troubles. It takes away today's peace". There are at least 33 passages in the Bible, words spoken many years ago, that basically say the same thing. Today, we can take solace in Psalm 94:19, "**In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.**" And in Proverbs 12:25, "**Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad.**" And last but not least, 2 Timothy 1:7, "**For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**"

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16

Our Members:

Frank Hamby
 Chuck & Evelyn Wyatt
 Darlene Thompson
 Bill & Carlene Long
 Ciera Edwards
 Bruce Longfellow
 Sharon M. Washington
 Kathy Nester
 Melody Baxter

Brenda Mask
 Linda McShane
 Bernetta Green
 Bobby Simpson
 Ellen Shearer
 Jim Turner
 Annette Phillip
 Brian Smith
 Antoine & Marcella Swain

Ron & Judy Ford
 Tonya Anderson
 Ray Nashick
 Bob Pratt
 Geny Johnson
 Margaret Coone
 George Davis
 Margaret Norman

(Please update the office of any changes)

The **EXTENDED FAMILY** and **FRIENDS** prayer requests are emailed every Monday.

PRAYER LIST

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

September

Designated Elder - Brian Kenyon

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

Song Leader/prayer Vince Daugherty
 Devo Brian Kenyon
 Closing Prayer Gavin Williams

Sunday, September 27, 2020

10:30 A.M.

Sermon Hiram Kemp
 "Faith That Saves"
James 2:14-26

6:00 P.M.

Sermon Hiram Kemp
 "What Every Child Should Know About God"
Matthew 19:13-14

10:30 A.M.

Open/Close bldg (both services) David Deal
 Song before class/Prayer Johnny Singh
 Announcements Bobby Sheumaker
 A.M. Song Leader Andre Medley
 Scripture reading/Prayer Tyler Anderson
 Lord's Table Wesley Brunson
 Closing Prayer Josh Potvin

6:00 P.M.

P.M. Song Leader Ian Enamorado
 Scripture reading/Prayer Alex Parramore
 Lord's Table Tucker Sweeney
 Closing Prayer Cam'ron Bailey

Wednesday, September 30, 2020

Song Leader/Prayer Vince Daugherty
 Devo Bobby Sheumaker
 Closing Prayer David Deal

ASSEMBLING UPDATE

We still encourage those who do not feel well and those who consider themselves high-risk to stay at home.

As of July 2, the city of Lakeland has issued a face mask mandate. Masks must be worn upon entering the building.

We will continue live-streaming the services on YouTube as we have since March 22. In view of more people attending, we will post a "Those to Serve" list above. If you would like to serve, please let the office know.
 - Elders -

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Sept 6	\$7,243.00
Sept. 13	\$8,282.00
Sept. 20	\$5,927.66
Contribution Average	\$7,131.29

REMEMBER OUR SHUT-INS

Faith West Joyce Burbage Cheryl Barker

Carol Eason Ellen Shearer Chuck & Evelyn Wyatt

RESPONSE

Marcella Swain responded to the Lord's invitation requesting prayers to better control her emotions in situations. She also wants to be more evangelistic.

UPDATES & PRAYER REQUESTS

Brenda Mask had several tests and scans last week. She is getting scheduled for a biopsy and/or scope of her lung for possible cancer.

Darlene Thompson has been sick and had gotten dehydrated. She is home and requesting prayers while doctors are trying to help her.

David Deal had a heart attack last week. He had a stent put in his heart and is doing better. We are thankful that he was able to worship with us on Sunday.

UPDATES ON PRAYER REQUESTS

Cooper Terry, 18 year old son of Jeff Bingle's friend who had been on our extended prayer request list, is cancer free. Thank you for all the prayers. Prayers of thanksgiving to God!

Thank you

Thank you so much for your kindness in celebrating our new home with us. We are deeply grateful to be a part of such a loving and generous congregation here at the South Florida Ave. church of Christ. We have enjoyed our time here, and we look forward to many more years to come. A home is a place for family and friends to enjoy fellowship one with another in the glorifying of God. Thank you for letting us fill it a little more with warm and fond memories to cherish.

We love you so much.

Vince & Tiffany Daugherty

Light of Life

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" John 8:12

Jesus said He is the light of life (verse 12). Have you ever notice how disorienting darkness is? After being in complete darkness for a while, you really cannot tell up from down. A tiny bit of light helps even if you cannot see far. That little light sets some things straight, freeing me from the constraints that darkness can bind me in. Jesus is that light in this dark life, setting the upside-down mess of my life back upright, orienting me so I can see straight. Even if I cannot see too far around me, not knowing what is coming at me next, I am straight with Him.

Interesting how He follows this up with:

"and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (8:32)!!

Family Responsibilities

Husbands show sacrificial love Ephesians 5:25

Wives submit to their husbands Ephesians 5:22

Fathers train children in righteousness Ephesians 6:4

Fathers provide for the family 1 Timothy 5:8

Children obey their parents Ephesians 6:1

Fathers do not provoke children to anger
Revelation 22:1-6

Wives love their husbands & children Titus 2:4

Wives are to take care of the home
1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:5

Husbands dwell with wives in knowledge & give them honor 1 Peter 3:7

REMINDERS ABOUT THE BODY OF CHRIST

God works through us all

1 Corinthians 12:6

There are many members but one body

1 Corinthians 12:12,20

No one person can do everything

1 Corinthians 12:14

Every member has something to contribute

1 Corinthians 12:15-17

God places us in the body as He pleases

1 Corinthians 12:18

God honors what we sometimes overlook

1 Corinthians 12:24

Members of the body are to sympathize with each other

1 Corinthians 12:26

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Email us: SFA.church@gmail.com

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"I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME"

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

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CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Return Service Requested