

Read Ezra 3:1-7. An easily overlooked detail in verse 2 is that the Israelites worshiped according to the law of Moses. The Law gave God's people clear warnings against worshipping him like the surrounding nations (Deut. 12:30-31). One purpose of upholding the law was to make Israel into a community that stood in contrast to those surrounding them. The contrast was not intended to create an unhealthy distance from Israel's neighbors but to demonstrate the better way of the Lord.

4. Why is it important that Christianity not blend in with the surrounding culture?

5. One of the ways our corporate worship of God can become compromised is when we treat it as a product to consume. For example, rather than asking if the worship service glorified God and helped me engage with God and learn, I judge it by its "entertainment" value or some other lesser criteria. How consumeristic we are in our worship is hard to gauge because the reality is we have choices and those choices have impacted our tastes in music and communication styles in ways we can't simply ignore. But how can you keep from becoming consumeristic in your worship?

6. Read Ezra 3:8-13. A variety of worship forms can be observed in this scene —"liturgical" (v. 11), instrumental (v. 10), shouts of joy (vv. 11-13), and weeping (vv. 12-13). What can you learn from people who worship differently than you do?

7. Looking back over this week's sermon and study, what one thing is most important for you to remember and apply?

**SERIES:** Exile & Return

**SERMON 4:** "God Always Delivers on His Promises. Always!"

**TEXT:** Ezra 1:1-5; 3:8-11

**DATE:** January 20/21, 2017

1. God always \_\_\_\_\_ on his promises.  
Ezra 1:1-2

2. The Lord uses \_\_\_\_\_ ways to bring about his promises.  
Ezra 1:2-5

3. God's promises have \_\_\_\_\_ as their goal.  
Ezra 3:8-13

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Please complete this study on your own, then bring it to your small group for discussion.

1. Looking back over your notes from this week's sermon, what particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
2. Read Ezra 1:1-8. God orchestrate events in surprising ways in order to bring about the people's return from exile. Reflect on how open you are to God working in surprising ways to bring about his purposes for you, your family, and your church?
3. Cyrus, a pagan king, calls for a freewill offering to help rebuild the temple. Even he contributes to the cause! How should our hearts for generosity and our stewardship habits change when we acknowledge that everything is the Lord's and is to be used for his purposes?

### **Family Discussion Questions:**

1. What are some ways our family can communicate living a better way to our surrounding culture today?
2. God's promise of return was fulfilled under God's sovereign direction after 50 years of exile. What can our family learn about the importance of waiting on the Lord and relying on his timing?
3. Just as the people gave of their own resources to rebuild the temple, our family is also called to give. How is the giving of our resources an act of worship?

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### **CHRIST CONNECTION**

God kept his promise to bring his people out of exile in Babylon and restore their freedom to worship him. Since Adam and Eve sinned, all humans have been in exile from paradise and are in need of deliverance. Jesus came to end this exile, bring his people home, and restore our freedom to worship.

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### **THEOLOGICAL THEME**

Worshiping God should be the first priority of his people.