



OHBC MEMORY VERSE WEEK #15

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE: EZRA 7:10

"Ezra... prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

Why Ezra 7:10?

Because this verse gives us insight into why Ezra was so wonderfully blessed of the Lord, and so mightily used by the Lord. In fact, there is a key repeated phrase in the Book of Ezra that captures the essence of God's blessing upon this choice servant. It should be the longing and passion of every child of God:

"... and the king granted him all his request, according to THE HAND OF THE LORD HIS GOD UPON HIM." (7:6)

"... ACCORDING TO THE GOOD HAND OF HIS GOD UPON HIM." (7:9)

"... And I was strengthened as the HAND OF THE LORD MY GOD WAS UPON ME." (7:28)

"... And by the GOOD HAND OF OUR GOD UPON US..." (8:18)

"... And THE HAND OF OUR GOD WAS UPON US, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy." (8:31)

What a tremendous comfort and confidence to know that the very HAND OF GOD is upon your life! You may think, "Yeah, but that was Ezra! Who am I to think that that could be true of me?" Listen to the promise of Ezra 8:22: "THE HAND OF OUR GOD IS UPON ALL THEM FOR GOOD THAT SEEK HIM!"

Once again, 21st century believers often ask a different question than God asks. While we ask, "Where is the LORD GOD of Ezra?" God asks "Where are the EZRA'S of the Lord God?" Again, this week's verse gives us insight into why God's hand was so upon Ezra, and the principles necessary for His mighty and gracious hand to be upon us. Essentially, God says that the key to His HAND is His BOOK. And the verse outlines three simple priorities that were found in Ezra that God wants each of us to have concerning His Word.

We are to SEEK it (Col. 3:1). "Ezra prepared his heart to SEEK the law of the Lord."

We are to OBEY it (I John 3:22). "...and to DO it."

We are to TEACH it (Matt. 28:19). "and to TEACH... statutes and judgments."

Those three things are really what the 365 Days of Pursuit is all about! May the GOOD HAND OF OUR GOD BE UPON US as we continue to SEEK His Word, OBEY it, and TELL OTHERS about it!

DAY 71

TODAY'S READING: II SAMUEL 9-12

OVERVIEW:

David's kindness to Mephibosheth; the defeat of the Ammonites and Syrians; David's sin with Bathsheba; Nathan's parable and David's repentance; the death of David and Bathsheba's baby; the birth of Solomon.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In chapter 9, God gives us an incredible picture of salvation through the account of David's blessing upon Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son.

Mephibosheth beautifully portrays all of us in our lost condition. Note the similarities:

1. He was born into a rejected family (Saul's – I Sam. 15:23, 26) due to sin. We, too, were born into a rejected family (Adam's – Rom 15:12) due to sin. Note that his location when David sought him was Machir, which means "sold." When God sought us, Rom. 7:14 says we were "sold under sin."
2. He was unable to walk due to a fall (II Sam. 4:4). We, too, were unable to walk due to the Fall that crippled us spiritually. We were unable to walk and to please God.

3. He lived in a land called Lodebar (9:3). The significance is that Lodebar means “no pasture.” In our lost condition, we, too, lived in a faminous land of barrenness (i.e. the world), which provided “no pasture.” (i.e. Nothing to satisfy the hunger of our souls.)

Next, note David who beautifully portrays the Lord Jesus Christ in providing our salvation:

1. David made the first move (9:1). Just as Mephibosheth was unable to make the first “step” toward David because of his lameness, we, too, were unable to make the first step in seeking the Lord (Rom. 3:10-12).
2. David extended this grace to Mephibosheth because of a covenant he had made with Jonathan (I Sam. 20:14-17). We, too, have been extended the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ because of what Hebrews 13:20-21 calls “the everlasting covenant.”
3. It was an act of David’s kindness (I Sam. 20:15). In fact, in II Samuel 9:3, David calls it “the kindness of God.” Titus 3:4-6 says, “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;”
4. David made him a part of his own family. Like all of us when we came to the Lord for salvation, Mephibosheth simply sought to be David’s servant, but he made him a son! Hallelujah! “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” (I John 3:1)
5. David provided for Mephibosheth’s every need and exceeded his needs (9:9-10). David took Mephibosheth from the place of “no pasture,” to feeding him at the table of the very king himself! Likewise, the Lord Jesus Christ took us out of the barrenness of our life, to meeting our every need (Phil. 4:19), and exceeding our every need (II Cor. 9:8, 11).

As we move into chapter 11, we move into the darkest chapter of David’s life. God’s epitaph of David is found in I Kings 15:5 – “David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” Chapter 11 of II Samuel is all about that “matter.” The “matter of Uriah the Hittite” was simply this: David first took his WIFE; then, David took his LIFE!

There is something interesting to note about how “the man after God’s own heart” got himself in this unbelievably sinful mess. David said in Psalm 27:4 – “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.”

Note, that “ONE THING” David was seeking after was expressed “THREE” ways.

1. “That I may DWELL in the HOUSE of the LORD.”
2. “To BEHOLD the BEAUTY of the LORD”
3. “To ENQUIRE in his TEMPLE.”

Notice in II Samuel 11, that when David commits this terrible atrocity against the Lord and Uriah.

1. He was DWELLING in his OWN HOUSE (11:1-2)!
2. He was BEHOLDING the BEAUTY of BATHSHEBA (11:3)!
3. He ENQUIRED after the WOMAN (11:4)!

It’s a great lesson about the priority of WORSHIP (the “one thing,” i.e. the “main thing,” and hence, the old adage, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing!” Watch out for the depths the flesh can take you when we lose worship as the “one thing”!

Sadly, it takes “the man after God’s own heart” over a year to take ownership of his sin, and then, only when confronted by the prophet Nathan. Nathan assures David that his sin would be forgiven, but that the consequences of it would follow him the remainder of his life (12:10-14). God help us to count the incredible cost of sin, and the terrible atrocity of “giving great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme” (12:14).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In the prophet Nathan giving SOLOMON the name JEDIDIAH – II Samuel 12:24-25 – Note: The name “Jedidiah” means “Beloved of the Lord.” (John 17:24; Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Eph. 1:6 – Jesus Christ is the “Beloved of the Lord.”)

DAY 72

TODAY'S READING: II SAMUEL 13-16

OVERVIEW:

Amnon rapes Tamar; Absalom, Tamar's brother, plots Amnon's murder in revenge; Absalom flees to Geshur; Joab plots to have Absalom returned to Jerusalem; David restores Absalom; Absalom leads a revolt, seeking to overthrow his father; David flees in fear of his son.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In today's reading we find the continuation of the consequences of David's sin that the Lord promised in chapter 12, verse 11, "Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house."

A parent can experience no greater pain than to see his own sin repeated in the lives of his children. In chapter 13, David's son, Amnon, commits sexual sin against his own half-sister Tamar. When David learned of Amnon's sin he was extremely upset and angry (13:21). He did not, however, punish Amnon, (Lev. 20:17 says that Amnon's punishment for raping Tamar should have been death!), probably because his own sin was so fresh in everyone's mind, not the least of which, his own! Tamar's full-brother, Absalom, was also "ticked," and his anger was only intensified as he observed that his father refused to do anything about Amnon's sin even "after two full years" (13:22-23). He plotted Amnon's death, and had him killed at a family gathering. Absalom went into hiding for the next three years (13:38), and after overcoming the grief of Amnon's death, David longed to see Absalom, his exasperated son.

Joab recognized that David longed to have Absalom back in Jerusalem, but David's hands were tied because all of the people knew that Absalom was guilty of murder and should have been executed, but David realized that to bring him back without retribution wouldn't be good for his "approval rating" in Israel. Joab devised a clever plot (much like God did through Nathan – II Sam. 12:1-7), to get David to act on the situation with his own son, by sending a woman to ask the king's counsel on a situation similar to the one David faced. In offering her counsel, David is caught in the web of his own moral wisdom. He has been backed into a corner, and now must restore, with protection, the banished, fearful, and exasperated Absalom.

David gives orders to Joab (as weak as they were), to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem, even though Absalom remained unrepentant. It is a decision through which the consequences of David's sin will bear even more fruit, and once again, just as God said, would reap evil out of his own house.

Though Absalom is brought back to Jerusalem, he is not permitted to come into his father's presence, and another "two full years" had passed (14:28). It has now been seven years since Amnon raped Tamar, and five years since Absalom has seen his father. But during Absalom's two years back in Jerusalem, while his animosity toward his father continued to grow, the hearts of the people of Israel were beginning to be turned toward Absalom. When David and Absalom were reunited, Absalom took the favor his father had extended to him, and used it as the platform to launch a national rebellion. David had spared his son's life, but Absalom schemed his father's death. Not enough can be said about the incredible danger of "provoking your children to wrath" (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). Be careful parents!

In chapters 15 and 16, Absalom blatantly seeks to extend his following, openly criticizing his father's leadership, and plotting to turn the affection of the people toward himself. It is interesting to note that while David was reigning in the height of his power, his enemies within his own kingdom (that were there all along) would not dare to oppose him. Absalom's revolt, however, gave them what they thought was the opportunity to resist the king's leadership and get away with it. What Absalom's rebellion actually did for the kingdom was sift the true from the false. God says that the same thing happens in churches: "...When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there MUST be heresies (the same word that was just translated "divisions" in the previous sentence) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (I Cor. 11:18-19). Remember, there is nothing new under the sun (Ecc. 1:9).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through DAVID'S RESTORATION OF HIS ESTRANGED SON – II Samuel 14:22 (II Cor. 5:19)

Through DAVID as he REBUKED HIS FOLLOWERS WHEN THEY WANTED TO EXECUTE HIS ENEMIES – II Samuel 16:10-11 (Luke 9:54-56)

DAY 73

TODAY'S READING: II SAMUEL 17-20

OVERVIEW:

Absalom chooses to follow Hushai's counsel over Ahithophel; Ahithophel commits suicide; David's army battle Absalom and his followers; Joab kills Absalom; David grieves bitterly; Joab rebukes David; the revolt of Sheba; David replaces Joab with Amasa as captain of his army; Amasa is replaced with Abishai; Joab is reinstated as captain of David's army; Sheba is killed.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we pick up in today's reading, Absalom's rebellion against his father and his wicked plot to overthrow him is at an all-time high. Though God has permitted this rebellion as a part of the consequences for David's sin in connection with Bathsheba and her faithful and loyal husband Uriah, he also used it to purge David's kingdom and separate the loyal from the disloyal. But now the time of judgment against Absalom had finally arrived.

Many times it takes a crisis to reveal who our real friends are. Ahithophel, David's counselor (and presumed "friend"), was invited by Absalom to be a part of his conspiracy. It is interesting and quite revealing to note the repeated usage of the personal pronouns "I" and "me" in his response:

Let "ME" choose out of 12,000 men, and "I" will arise and pursue after David this night: and "I" will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid... and "I" will smite the king only: And "I" will bring back all the people unto thee." (17:1-3).

It sounded to Absalom as if he was the object of Ahithophel's loyalty, but Ahithophel's speech betrays him. "He" was the object of his own affection, and evidently was seeking to be sure "he" had a place of prominence in what appeared to be the inevitability of a new regime.

In the meantime, David had sent his true friend, Hushai, to join Absalom. This really psyched Absalom up, because now it appeared that he had been successful in gaining his father's top two advisors. Absalom seeks the counsel of these two men for the best way to actually formalize the overthrow of his father's kingship, and put an end to David once and for all. Ahithophel's plan was obviously the best of the two, but in answer to David's prayer back in chapter 15 and verse 31, "O, Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness," God saw to it that Absalom rejected his counsel. Hushai's plan appealed to Absalom's vanity, so since that is what had been driving him for the past seven years, it was the counsel Absalom followed. Absalom's vanity is what actually led to his death! And when the vanity of Ahithophel had been crushed by Absalom's refusal to heed "his" counsel, he went out (like Judas), and took his own life. It is amazing what people will do when they don't get their own way!

Though David had given clear instruction not to kill Absalom in the midst of the battle (18:5), Joab saw the "pretty boy" hanging by the locks of his hair in a tree and immediately "shish-kabobbed" him. Joab sent Cushai to inform the king of Absalom's "condition," to which David was plummeted into deep depression and overwhelming grief. His grief, however, for one that was the source of such turmoil and revolt, almost cost David his kingdom (19:1-7)!

It was a time of great unrest and confusion in the kingdom. David begins his trip back to Jerusalem, and promises to appoint his nephew, Amasa, who had recently been Absalom's general, as the captain of his army in the place of Joab, if he was successful in turning the hearts of the people of Judah (who had been extremely upset with him), to support his return to power. It certainly must have appeared to all that David punished loyalty, and rewarded rebellion. Not quite the signal he wanted to send in such a time of political unrest and instability. These moves did, however, "bow the hearts of the men of Judah" (19:14) to David's side.

As chapter 20 begins, there is yet another rebellion. This time, it is a satanically influenced rebel by the name of Sheba, of the tribe of Benjamin, who was also successful in rallying a group of people against David. By this time, David certainly had to wonder "When will all of this nonsense be over?"

In the process of dealing with the rebellion of Sheba, David replaces Abishai in Amasa's place as captain of the army, Amasa is killed by Joab, Joab is reinstated by David as his general, and ultimately Sheba is beheaded.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through MAHANAIM, a city of refuge where David went when he was fleeing from Absalom – II Sam. 17:27 (Heb. 6:18-20 – “We... have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us... even Jesus.”)

DAY 74

TODAY'S READING: II SAMUEL 21-24

OVERVIEW:

God punishes Israel with a three year famine because of Saul's ill- treatment of the Gibeonites; seven members of Saul's family are put to death as retribution; victories over the Philistine giants; the last words of David; the last recorded sin of David; David builds an altar; David's sacrifice; the three day plague.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Today's reading covers six events, which are not necessarily in chronological order, that form what might be considered an appendix to the main context of the Book of II Samuel:

1. A major famine sent as God's judgment for Saul's treatment of the Gibeonites.
2. A series of wars with the Philistines.
3. A psalm of deliverance and praise.
4. A list of David's mighty men of valour.
5. A sinful census.
6. The severe punishment that followed.

The events of chapter 24 provide many practical principles and applications. It is difficult to say with complete assurance what motivated David to call for this census since the Scripture doesn't specifically say, but it appears that once the nation of Israel had been re-established following the whole Absalom debacle that David's heart was lifted up with pride, desiring to bask in the glory of his success. The parallel account in I Chron. 21:1 says, “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.”

It is interesting to compare this great sin in David's life with his sin with Bathsheba. II Cor. 7:1 commands us to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the FLESH and SPIRIT.” Whereas David's sin with Bathsheba was a sin of the FLESH, David's numbering of the people was a sin of the SPIRIT. Whereas his sin with Bathsheba was a sin of PASSION, done in haste; this was a sin of PRIDE, done very calculatedly. Joab even appeals to David's conscience about doing such a defiant thing against God, and still he persisted. Whereas the result of David's sin with Bathsheba caused great sorrow to David and the death of a handful of family members, his sin in numbering the people resulted in the death of 70,000 men! From a human perspective, pride and rebellion do not seem quite as terrible as adultery and murder, and yet in David's life, they produced greater sorrow and tragedy than his sin of adultery. We must always be on guard not only concerning sins of the FLESH, but for the sins of the SPIRIT! Do recognize, however, that the consequences of sin affect not only ourselves, but those we lead (i.e. family, disciples, church members, etc.)

So what does II Samuel 24 teach us?

1. We never “out-grow” temptation. David is not a strapping youth in II Samuel 24. He's way up in years, and one would think he would know better. Again, don't forget, “You're never out of the woods!”
2. God always gives us space to repent. In this case, He gave David over nine months to “cleanse himself of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” Have you cleansed yourself of ALL filthiness of the FLESH and SPIRIT?
3. We must recognize that sins of the SPIRIT are as horrific as sins of the FLESH. It is interesting that Jesus was more “accommodating” to those involved in sins of passion (i.e. the woman caught in adultery), than He was those persistently involved in sins of pride (i.e. the scribes and Pharisees). Certainly, we must guard against both.
4. Our sin always involves others. In David's case, whether it was family members or the entire nation, it screams to us that others are always affected by our sin.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WE CALL UPON FOR SALVATION – II Samuel 22:4 (Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:9, 13).

DAY 75

TODAY'S READING: I KINGS 1-3

OVERVIEW:

The end of David's reign; Adonijah's attempt to take the throne; Solomon anointed and announced as king; David's final charge to Solomon; Solomon executes judgment; Solomon asks for and receives wisdom.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Book of I Kings begins with David as a very aged king. Interestingly, it is the brother of Absalom, Adonijah, who tries to take advantage of this and exalt himself as king. It also appears that David knew Adonijah was "up to something," but never bothered to deal with the situation (1:5-6). Adonijah is able to garner the support of Joab and Abiathar. Here are two key men from David's reign, a leader of the army and one of the leading priests, backing Adonijah's claim to the throne. However, that doesn't make it right. Too many times we look to the human personalities involved and follow whichever one we prefer rather than looking to God's truth and following it. Notice the "debate" is ended when the word of the king (David) is sought and obeyed.

David's final words to Solomon emphasize the need to walk in God's way. However, it also deals with three people that need to be dealt with: Joab, the sons of Barzillai, and Shimei. Of the three, the ones to receive mercy are the ones that responded to the king (David) when he didn't look like the king. The other two represent two different types of people. Shimei is the one who cursed David, but tried to look good to Solomon (1:8). There are billions of people who curse Christ and reject Him now, but one day will bow before Him and proclaim Him Lord (Philippians 2:11). Sadly, it will be too late. Joab is a different type. On the outside it looks like they are with the king, but their heart never trusts him. They think their bad deeds are offset by their good deeds, and in their flesh they "serve" the king. Their heart is ultimately revealed when the Son of David reigns on the throne in Jerusalem. This will happen again as told by Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23. Notice also Adonijah's downfall; a man who tried to be the king, but then realizes there is only one true king. He has an outward form of submission in chapter one, but is still looking out for himself in chapter two. He believes the way to get the king's blessing is through the king's mom, Bathsheba. His plan results in his death. There are still a billion people on earth today trying to get the favor of Christ (the Son of David) by going through His "mom", Mary. Tragically their result will be the same as Adonijah's – death.

In chapter three, notice the statements made about Solomon – he loves God and walks in statutes of David. In fact, the only negative is there is still worship of the Lord being done in "high places". This is because there is no temple yet (3:2). Solomon will remedy this problem during his reign. Also, the Lord allows Solomon to ask for anything, and Solomon asks for understanding to "judge thy people". Solomon's wisdom is put to the test and the judgment Solomon pronounces is to use the sword to reveal the truth. The sword revealed the intents of the heart in these two women. We, too, have the wisdom of God, and it is in a sword that is able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through SOLOMON as the Son of David sitting on the throne of David with his kingdom established. – I Kings 2:12 (Luke 1:32; Mark 11:10).