

GENEROUS GIFTS Sunday, July 28, 2013

Unifying Topic: GIFTS FOR THE TEMPLE

Lesson Text

I. The Priests And The Temple Offering (Ezra 8:24-27)

II. Holy To The Lord (Ezra 8:28-30)

The Main Thought: And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers. (Ezra 8:28, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People often make gifts to others whom they revere. What inspires one to give in this manner? As an act of worship, Ezra prepared gifts of precious metals to be carried by the priests and Levites to the house of God of Jerusalem.

Lesson Aim: To acquaint students with the role of the Levites in the worship life of Israel and the importance of the financial gifts given for the building of the temple.

Life Aim: To demonstrate the importance of giving as an act of worship before the Lord and that giving is not limited to financial resources, but includes giving of time, talents, and life.

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- 8:24 Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them,
8:25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered:
8:26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents;
8:27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.
8:28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers.
8:29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord.
8:30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

HISTORY:

Chapter 8:21-23 ¹Ezra proclaimed a fast in preparation for the journey to Jerusalem. He wanted the assembled group thereby to humble themselves before God in order to ask Him for a safe journey for themselves, their children, and their possessions. Being humble before God shows one's spiritual dependence and acknowledgement that God is in total control. Thereby, Ezra did not want to ask for military protection (soldiers) because he had already publicly announced that God would take care of the people as they returned. Thus, committing themselves to prayer and fasting brought the answer they had intreated unto God.

LESSON:

Ezra 8:24-27 The Priests And The Temple Offering

8:24 Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them,— The Levites are now about to return to be ministers for the house of God; a fast had been proclaimed, and now ²it was time to carry out the service of the Lord. Therefore, Ezra appointed 12 leaders of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah (Levites v.18, 19), and 10 of their brethren with them. The number of priests and Levites were equal, adding in all, twenty four.

8:25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered:— So in the hands of 12 trustworthy priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah and 10 of their brethren, they were placed in charge of transporting all the silver, gold, and the vessels, even the offering unto the house of God, and then weighing them. This probably refers to some type of inventory of all that was brought into the house of God. They had an obligation, but even more, it was the Lord's treasure and those priests and Levites would one day give an account to Him. The king and his counselors, his lords and all Israel had offered and presented many precious gifts for the Temple of God in Jerusalem.

8:26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and

¹ <http://ldolphin.org/daniel/ezra02.html>

² http://k.b5z.net/i/u/6036879/f/Sunday%20School/July_28_2013.pdf

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

of gold an hundred talents;—³Ezra weighed all the objects before they left their camp by the river Ahava. Then he could be sure that nobody would steal these precious things. The commodity was great and it was costly. We must be very careful with the money and other gifts that people give for the work of God. We must find people whom we can trust to look after these things. And we too must be people whom other people can trust. Other people should be able to trust us with anything, not just God's money.

8:27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold. The basins and the vessels of fine polished bronze were precious as gold.

Ezra 8:28-30 Holy To The Lord

8:28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers. Ezra reminded the priests and Levites whom he had put in charge as guardians, that everything they were guarding was holy unto God, including themselves! Every object used in Temple service was set apart for God. They were considered as holy treasures as they were also consecrated men.

8:29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord. Stewardship is taking special care of whatever God has entrusted to you. "*Special care*" means considering these things as being from God and for Him. They could not be careless with the things of the Lord. They were to watch and keep a record until they were received into the hands of the chief of the priests, the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel at Jerusalem to go into the chambers of the house of the Lord.

8:30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God. So the priests and Levites accepted the responsibility of transporting the silver, gold, and vessels to Jerusalem into the house of God.

SUMMARY:

Twelve chief priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah and ten of their brethren were chosen to safeguard and transport all the cargo to the Temple of God (v. 24). Gifts of silver and gold were weighed, as well as offerings contributed by the king, his counsellors, and his lords for the house of God (vv. 25-27).

Ezra reminded the priests and Levites that the vessels, silver and gold, and the freewill offerings were holy unto the Lord. Therefore they were to keep a watch over all they were entrusted with until they reached Jerusalem to pass them unto the hands of the chief priest, the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel in the Temple (vv. 28-29). The priests and Levites accepted the responsibility of transporting the gifts that had been weighed into their hands to take to the temple in Jerusalem (v. 30).

APPLICATION:

All belong to God especially the gifts we give back to Him. He is generous to us, why not be generous to Him. Whatever we are in charge to do, we are to be good stewards over it. As good stewards, our temple, God's dwelling place has been entrusted unto us for safe keeping to guard. This is a most generous gift we have to give unto the Lord.

³ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/ezra-lbw.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>