

When Believers are Holy to the Lord

International Bible Lesson

Ezra 8:24-36

Sunday, July 28, 2013

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“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).

“And Ezra said to them, ‘You are holy to the LORD, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to the LORD, the God of your ancestors’” (Ezra 8:28—NRSV).

One who is “holy to the LORD” is set apart for God’s benefit or use. Usually, one who is set apart for God’s use is set apart for the benefit of others. Ezra set apart some responsible Levite leaders to take some temple vessels from Babylon back to Jerusalem. The vessels were holy because they had been dedicated and set apart to be used by the priests in temple worship to honor God and for the benefit of God’s children. When Ezra called these leaders “holy” and also called what they would carry “holy,” he put an additional weight of responsibility on them to care morally and spiritually for themselves as well as protect the vessels, the gold, and the silver that they would carry.

Today, those who serve God know they should not do some things. The Levites knew they should not misuse or steal the temple vessels or the gold and silver that belonged to God. Today, I wonder if those who say they believe in God would behave differently if they realized that God had set them apart to benefit God, others, and themselves, that they are “holy to the LORD.” I wonder how they might treat their religious and spiritual leaders or their churches and church property differently, if they understood that God had set them and these things apart to benefit God, others, and themselves. The leaders Ezra chose delivered the vessels, the gold, and the silver without loss. I wonder how many people could be trusted to do that today.

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Thinking Further

1. How many priests did Ezra select to take the gold and silver offering to the temple? Why do you think he chose as many as he did? What were their qualifications?
2. Why do you think he weighed out the gold and silver offering when he gave it to these leaders?
3. Why do you think Ezra told these leaders that they and the offering they carried were “holy to the LORD”?
4. Why do you think Ezra told them that they should guard the items he gave them until “you weigh them before the chief priests ... within the chambers of the house of the LORD”?
5. What did Ezra do when they presented the offering to the priests (see Ezra 8:33, 34)?