

2021
CFYC VIRTUAL
RETREAT

*Be Courageous
and Act!*

Ezra 10:4

Studies in the Book of Ezra
May 1, 2021

Come Fill Your Cup Virtual Retreat Spring 2021 Notebook

Bios

Erynn Sprouse is the author of *Perfected: God's Best Reserved For you (A Study of Hebrews)*. Erynn has been married to Jeremy since 1999. She earned her Associates from Adams State University and her Bachelor of Arts from Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver. She is the creator of Come Fill Your Cup women's ministry, including website and retreats. She has enjoyed speaking for ladies' days and retreats in several states. She is a stay home, homeschooling mom to five boys and one girl in Dublin, Texas where Jeremy serves as the pulpit minister.

Kathryn Baker is married to Andy Baker who preaches for the Graeber Road Church of Christ in Rosenberg, TX. A native Texan, she is a graduate of Texas A&M University with a degree in finance. Currently, she homeschools their three children, is a contributing writer for the Come Fill Your Cup blog, and occasionally speaks at ladies' events. In her spare time, she enjoys food (both cooking and eating!), vegetable gardening, and taking their Boston Terrier for walks.

Lacy Crowell is the author of *Proclaimed: Jesus the Messiah (A Study of Mark)* and *Pursued: God's Plan for Intimacy in Marriage (A Study of Song of Solomon)*. She is also the editor of Come Fill Your Cup's newest feature, *Generations*. She and her husband, Jonathan, worship with the Garriott Road church of Christ in Enid, Oklahoma where Jonathan serves as the Youth/Family Minister. They are blessed with four precious children which Lacy has the privilege of homeschooling. Lacy has an associate degree in Biblical Studies from the Bear Valley Bible Institute, and a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy from Amridge University. She has been published in *Christian Woman Magazine*, *Think Magazine*, *Queenly Quest* and *KAIO Publications*, and has spoken for various ladies' days, girl's youth rallies and camps both domestic and foreign.

Kristy Huntsman is the editor-in-chief for Come Fill Your Cup. She is the author of *Sanctified: Set Apart for a Purpose (A Study of 1 & 2 Peter)*, *Redeemed: Bought Back No Matter the Cost (A Study of Hosea)*, and *Appointed: Rising to Your Spiritual Potential (A Study of Judges and Ruth)*. She and her husband Lance attend the Stonewall Church of Christ where Lance is the minister. She is a stay-at-home, homeschooling mother of two sweet girls, Taylor (11) and Makayla (9). Kristy has earned her master's degree in Biblical Studies from the Bear Valley Bible Institute. In addition to this, she has a bachelor's and master's degree in Music Performance.

Introduction and Ezra 1-3

Erynn Sprouse

Version Used: New American Standard 95 Update

Erynn's Overview (Definitely Not An Outline)

Chapter 1— Cyrus' decree, serving God's will

Chapter 2— Head count, arrival

Chapter 3— altar made despite feat, celebrate Feast of Booths, sacrifices begin, foundation is laid, cry of triumph heard throughout the land— things are ROLLING!

Chapter 4— Enemies, work ceased.

Chapter 5— Prophets to the rescue! Questions, justifications

Chapter 6— official backing received, temple completed, Passover celebrated

Chapter 7— Ezra prepares to come to Jerusalem

Chapter 8— Hurdles encountered and overcome

Chapter 9— Cut to the heart

Chapter 10— Repentance

I. History and Date of Ezra.

A. A brief history of Israel up to this point:

1. 1446 BC, Israel's exodus from Egypt.
2. 1406-1400 BC, Israel conquers the land of Canaan.
3. 1350-1050 BC, Period of the Judges.
4. 1050 BC, The first King of Israel is anointed.
5. 933 BC, Kingdom divides
6. 722 BC, the 10 Northern Tribes went into captivity under the Assyrians.
7. 612 BC, the Babylonians conquer the Assyrians.
8. 608 BC Nebuchadnezzar begins to reign
9. 606 BC, the Babylonians conquer Judah.
10. 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar returns for another captivity.
11. 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar returns again and destroyed the Temple.
12. 562 BC, Nebuchadnezzar dies.
13. 539 BC, Medes and Persians take over Babylonia.

B. Now, it is 536 BC. The 70 years of captivity are over, cf. 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 and Jeremiah 29:10.

C. Ezra records the history of the first two returns (Zerubbabel's and Ezra's). Nehemiah will cover the third return.

II. Purpose of Ezra:

- A. To show the importance of properly worshipping God.
 - 1. God has given men the responsibility to worship and serve Him.
 - 2. The Temple needed to be restored to properly worship God.
 - 3. Enemies must not hinder worshipping God.
 - 4. Those who earnestly seek God will have the right attitude required to properly worship God.
 - 5. Also, a separation from the uncleanness of worldly people is necessary to properly worship God.
- B. The nation of Israel has been given a second chance. They have the opportunity to rebuild their lives and to rebuild their faith. It is important that they understand about worshipping God properly so that they do not mess up their second chance.

III. Key Words:

- A. Temple (occurs 21 times, 7 times it refers to temple servants). The word “utensils” also occurs 10 times.
- B. House of God/House of the Lord (occurs 30 times).
- C. Servants/Service (occurs 17 times)
- D. God (occurs 98 times).
- E. Lord (occurs 38 times). Almost every time it is used it is referring to some act of worship or service to the Lord.

IV. Themes

- A. Hand(s) (occurs 16 times, figuratively means strength or power).
 - 1. The hand of God shows favor to those who seek Him.
 - a. 7:6--The hand of the Lord was upon Ezra
 - b. 7:9--The Good hand of God was upon Ezra
 - c. 7:28--Ezra was strengthened by the hand of the Lord upon him.
 - d. 8:18--The good hand of God brought them a man of insight.
 - e. 8:22--The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him
 - f. 8:31--the hand of our God was over us
 - g. 8:31--The were delivered from the hand (palm--lesser power?) of their enemy.
 - 2. God gave the Israelites into the hands of earthly Kings because they were sinful.
 - a. 5:12--God gave Israel into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar because of unfaithfulness.
 - b. 9:7--Israel had been given into the hands of the kings of the land because of their iniquities.
 - c. 9:2--The hands of the princes and rulers were foremost in the

unfaithfulness of Israel.

3. God has given men the power to serve Him:

a. The Utensils of Temple

1) 1:8--Hand of Mithredath the treasurer brought out the vessels.

2) 8:26--Money and utensils were put into the hands of the Leading priests.

3) 8:33--The utensils were placed into the hand of Meremoth son of Uriah the priests.

b. The building of the Temple

5:8--The building of the Temple was succeeding in the Hands of the Israelites.

c. His Law/Word

1) 7:14--The Law of God was in the hands of Ezra

2) 7:25--The wisdom of God was in the hand of Ezra

d. Responsibility to follow His Law

9:5--Ezra stretches out his hands (palms--humbling himself) toward God to confess the sins of the people.

B. Seeking (occurs 5 times)

1. Those who seek God

a. The Samaritans were seeking God, 4:2.

b. The people separated from the nations to seek God, 6:21.

2. Benefits of seeking God, 8:21-22.

3. Warning not to seek the peace and prosperity of the foreign nations, 9:12.

C. Separation

1. God's people must separate themselves from the world to serve God, 6:21-22.

2. God's people must separate themselves from the world.

a. Refusal to serve God with the world, 4:1-3.

b. Need to separate from foreign wives, chapters 9-10.

3. Those who do not separate themselves are unfaithful to God (9:2, 9:4, 10:2, 10:6, 10:10).

D. Restoration

"Restoring a building constitutes a great undertaking. Restoring the human heart is the most difficult task of all." (Summers, et. al. Wacaster)

V. Author: Ezra

A. He writes in first person starting in 7:27.

B. Also, tradition maintains that he is the author in addition to being the author of 1 & 2 Chronicles.

C. See information under Prominent Characters.

VI. Prominent Characters

A. Zerubbabel (aka: Sheshbazzar, cf. 3:8, 10; 5:16).

1. The legal successor of Jeconiah (Matt. 1:12) and first governor of Israel under the return.
2. He worked with Jeshua the High Priest to restore proper worship in Israel.
 - a. Restored burnt offerings with Jeshua (3:2).
 - b. Began and finished the work on the Temple (Ezra 3:8, 5:2; Zech. 4:9).
 - c. He was chosen by God for this task (Haggai 2:23).
3. He kept God's people pure by refusing to associate with the half-Jews of the land.
4. Haggai and Zechariah were written to him and Jeshua when they let opposition stop the construction of the Temple.
5. He is in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:12, Luke 3:27).

B. Jeshua/Joshua

1. He was the High Priest during the time of the first return (Hag. 1:1, 1:12).
2. Joshua was chosen to restore the people, Zech. 3:1-7.
 - a. The image is of Satan accusing the nation of Israel to no avail. This is the remnant that God has spared like a brand pulled out of a fire.
 - b. Jeshua will take away the filthy clothes (wickedness) of the people. This will be done by restoring the Temple and proper worship.
3. Jeshua illustrated the Christ to come, Zech. 6:11-15.
 - a. This is an image of the high priest being crowned as king. This is fulfilled in Christ who is both a priest and a king (cf. Psalm 110, Heb. 8:1-2).
 - b. Jeshua built a physical temple, but the one to come would build a spiritual temple.

C. Ezra--name means "help." Might be a shortened form of Azariah (Yahweh helps).

1. He is known as a scribe--one who is learned in the Scriptures (7:6, 7:11).
2. He has many admirable qualities:
 - a. He has set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel (7:10).
 - b. He observes the spirit of the Law not just the letter (8:21).
 - c. He gives God the credit and glory for the good things in life (7:27-28).
3. He was responsible for many religious reforms (such as separating the people from their foreign wives).
4. He is also a prominent character in the Book of Nehemiah.

Year	God's People	Scripture	Persian Kings
608			Nebuchadnezzar
606	Nebuchadnezzar deposed Jehoiakim, took captives into Babylon		
597	Nebuchadnezzar deposed Zedekiah, took captives into Babylon		

Year	God's People	Scripture	Persian Kings
586	Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and house of God, carried remainder of S. Kingdom into captivity	2 Chron 36	
536 (539-8)	Cyrus released Israel; Zerubbabel and Jeshua led the fallen nation back to their homeland		Cyrus the Great (Ezra 1, etc. Isaiah 45)
535	Work began on the reconstruction of the temple, but they were "troubled" in building.	Ezra 4:4	
520	Haggai and Zechariah stirred up the people to rebuild the temple. They were again "troubled" but received Darius's permission to continue.		
529			Cambyses (Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6)
521			Gaumata 7 mo's (Artaxerxes of Ezra 4:7)
521			Darius I (Ezra 5-6)
516	The people completed the reconstruction of the temple	Ezra 6:15; Ezra 1-6, Haggai, Zechariah	
485	Ahasuerus became king		Xerxes I (Ahasuerus of Esther)
483	Vashti was deposed		
479	Ahasuerus was defeated at Thermopylae and Salamis		
479	Esther became queen		
474	Esther saved her nation	Esther	
464			Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7:1; Nehemiah 2:1, 5:14)
457	Ezra returned	Ezra 7-10	
444	Nehemiah returned to build the wall		
432	The marriage problem was resolved	Nehemiah and Malachi	
424			End of Artaxerxes' reign

Year	God's People	Scripture	Persian Kings
<i>Chart adapted by Erynn Sprouse from:</i>			
(Summers, et al. 17, 19)			

EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT

1:1

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying:

first year of Cyrus king of Persia

- All of our dates are really approximations. Typically we say that this was 536, but some sources say 539. Cyrus, a Mede, conquered Bablyon in 540-539, but he was still putting down rebellions after that date. 536 may have been when his rule was solidified and accepted.
- Cyrus did not prove to be a true follower/ worshipper of God, but the scriptures are replete with examples of those who, though they did not follow God, were used by Him to execute His will.

word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah

- Jeremiah prophesied in Jeremiah 25:12, 29:10 that the captivity would last 70 years.

Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia

- **Stirred up**— awake, arouse, agitate, start to move— used of weapons, used in pleas to ask God to move on one's behalf (Psalm 35:23, 80:2, others).
 - How did God stir up Cyrus' spirit? We are not told, but it may well be that He did so through the word of Isaiah. Isaiah prophesied more than 200 years before the birth of Cyrus that he would subdue nations. This was no vague, Nostradamus-like prophecy. God, through the pen of Isaiah, spoke of and to Cyrus by name in Isaiah 44:28-45:7.
 - How could Cyrus have heard the words of Isaiah? "It is not inconceivable... that a prophet might have been sent to Cyrus from among the captives, and in all probability, that prophet might have been faithful Daniel" (Summers et al. 49)
 - Josephus records that Cyrus' mind was stirred when he read the words of Isaiah:

Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so

written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God, for that he would be their assistant, and that he would write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighborhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and, beside that, beasts for their sacrifices.

1:2-4

“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. 4 Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.’”

‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

- Cyrus uses the personal name of God (YHWH).
- This is an adequate paraphrase of the prophecies of Isaiah.
- It is tempting to think that this reflects the heart of a true worshipper/follower of God, but that does not seem to be the case. As Roy Roper put it in the Truth for Today commentary,

“It was customary for ancient rulers to acknowledge the presence and power of many gods; often they honored the god of the moment by speaking of him as if he were the only god. Perhaps their attitude was similar to what a person’s attitude might be if he lived in one kingdom but visited another. In the kingdom he visited, he would certainly refer to the ruler as “the king,” without mentioning that his allegiance was to another king. Therefore, even though Cyrus attributed his successes to the Lord, as a polytheist he probably gave other gods credit for the same achievements. After his conquest of Babylon, Cyrus demonstrated his devotion to other gods. He spoke of Marduk, the major god of the Babylonians, as his personal deity even though he himself was a Persian and therefore primarily a subject of the Persian gods” (Roper 24).

He is the God who is in Jerusalem.

- True believers in the one God Yahweh understand that He is not located in Jerusalem, and in fact, as the creator and sustainer of all, is not contained or pinned in one place.

Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

- survivor— cf 2 Chronicles 36:17-20
- The people were traveling, bound for a place with little to no infrastructure, and little means of support once they arrived. This alone would be a costly venture, but they were also charged with rebuilding the temple, an extra expense on top of relocation. This support from their fellows was necessary.

SIDE STUDY

Difficult passages: Why do the two versions of the decree of Cyrus vary in several details (Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5)?

Consider the different purposes of these writings. Chapter 1 relates the proclamation sent out to all the people. Chapter 6 relates a memorandum found in the archives. “If what each version reports is true, or if there is no evidence to prove that either version is false, the differences should be treated as supplementation, not contradiction, and as helpful rather than harmful additions to the text” (Summer et. al; Berard 403)

1:5

Then the heads of fathers 'households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.

Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites

- The Northern tribes had gone into Assyrian captivity in 722 BC (183 years earlier) and are not mentioned.

spirit God had stirred

- Stirred— this is the same word used in 1:1 of Cyrus. Again, we are not told how this stirring occurred. It very well may be that they were stirred by the decree itself, and by the same scriptures which seem to have stirred Cyrus.
- This is God’s mission. Those who go up will be there to fulfill the mission of rebuilding the house of the Lord. Only those who were willing to do so would be going.

- The people have been in captivity for 70 years. For some, it would be the only home they know, and it would be easy for them to be more Persian than Jewish.
- Many of the Jews received freedom and many had started very successful businesses.

1:6

All those about them encouraged them with articles of silver, with gold, with goods, with cattle and with valuables, aside from all that was given as a freewill offering.

- Fulfillment of Cyrus' decree
- They receive encouragement for the people to leave. This is similar to the Egyptians giving goods for the Jews to leave, but this was done out of freewill not fear. In both captivities, the Jews left richer than they came.
- This shows one of the major themes we will see in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther--God's providence. Those who put their trust in God and desire to serve him are blessed and protected. God takes care of all of their needs.
- In the same way, if we put our trust in God, He will take care of us. We do not need to worry about the physical things of this world, we need to seek God and His kingdom (Matt. 6:33).

1:7-11

Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and put in the house of his gods; 8 and Cyrus, king of Persia, had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and he counted them out to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. 9 Now this was their number: 30 gold dishes, 1,000 silver dishes, 29 duplicates; 10 30 gold bowls, 410 silver bowls of a second kind and 1,000 other articles. 11 All the articles of gold and silver numbered 5,400. Sheshbazzar brought them all up with the exiles who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and put in the house of his gods

- **Also**— This ties the two sentences together. The people gave to the effort, and so did King Cyrus. Even the king contributes toward the restoring of God's temple.
- **articles**—

- These are the vessels and utensils used in the Temple service (cf. Num. 7:84-86).
- They were taken from the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in three attacks on Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36:7, Dan. 1:2).
 - 605 B.C. (Dan. 1:1, 2),
 - 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:13),
 - 586 B.C. when the temple was destroyed (2 Kings 25:13-17) (Roper 28).
- Some of these had been brought out by Belshazzar at the drunken feast described in Daniel 5:1-4.
- They became Cyrus' possession when he conquered the Babylonians.
- The possession of the articles is a theme in Ezra showing the responsibility God has given man to serve Him.
 - Man was given the responsibility to make them (Ex. 25:9, 40; 25:29, 27:3, 27:19).
 - The articles were anointed with the other holy items used to serve God, Lev. 8:11.
 - Man was given the responsibility to take care of them (Num. 3:29-31, 4:4-15).
 - Using them in unholy ways resulted in punishment.
 - a. Nadab and Abihu used them to offer strange fire to the Lord and were killed (Lev. 10:1-3).
 - b. The last king of Babylon (Belshazzar) used them in a drunken feast and worshipped idols with them the night the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonians (Dan. 5:1ff).
 - These articles are now being entrusted to man to restore the proper worship of God.
- Today, everyone has a responsibility to serve God. Like them we must serve God the way He commands or it will not be worship pleasing to God.
- **which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem—** Nebuchadnezzar carried the articles away in three separate instances: 2 Chronicles 36:7, 10, 18.
- **Mithredath the treasurer—** not much is known about Mithredath, but he also appears in Ezra 4:7 as a co-author of a letter to Artaxerxes.
- **Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah**

- In 5:14, we learn that Cyrus appointed Sheshbazzar as governor of Judah.
- the word for “prince” (*naši*) does not necessarily mean one of royal (Davidic) blood, but could mean leader, or ruler. See Joshua 9:15, 18 (leaders), Exodus 22:28 (ruler).
- Sheshbazzar may well be another name for Zerubbabel.
 - Sheshbazzar’s genealogy is not given— odd in a book with so many genealogies.
 - Sheshbazzar’s name is not in the list of people who returned, but Zerubbabel’s is at the top of the list, where one would expect the prince’s name.
 - Both Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar were governors of Judah (Ezra 5:14, Haggai 1:1)
 - Zerubbabel is listed first among those who laid the foundation of the temple (Ezra 3:8-11), but 5:16 credits Sheshbazzar.
 - “It is evident that the name Sheshbazzar is found only in connection with the Persians, for chapter 1 relates his dealings with Cyrus and in chapter 5 the two occurrences of his name are in a letter written by the Persian official, Tattenai. One may conclude that the Persians knew him as Sheshbazzar but the Jews called him Zerubbabel” (Elwell).
- **All the articles of gold and silver numbered 5,400**— altogether, this constitutes a massive contribution from Cyrus, and a huge responsibility for Sheshbazzar.
- **Babylon to Jerusalem**
 - 1,678.2 miles as the crow flies.
 - In Ezra 7:8,9 the journey takes 4 months, but Ezra seems to think it was a speedy journey as he says, “the good hand of [my] God was upon [me].”

EZRA 2

2:1

Now these are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city.

- **Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon**

- There were three separate instances of Nebuchadnezzar taking captives, cf Jeremiah 52:28-30.
- 2 Chronicles 36:6-7, 10, 20 relate the events surrounding the three captivities, but do not all specifically say that captives were taken.
- Other books such as Daniel, and Ezekiel also speak of some or all of the three instances.

2:2

These came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah.

- **Zerubbabel**—
 - prominent figure in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah.
 - See discussion of Sheshbazzar in notes on 1:7-11.
- **Jeshua**— Levite, seems to be Zerubbabel's right hand man, served as high priest (3:2; Hag. 1:1; Zech. 3:1), oversaw workmen at the temple (3:9); his sons married foreign wives (10:18).
- **Nehemiah**— not the same Nehemiah as the book; only mentioned here.
- **Mordecai**— It is possible that this is the same Moredcai as mentioned in Esther, but not likely. The Moredcai of Esther was in Susa during a time period after this return. If we assume this is the same Mordecai, then it would mean he was taken from Jerusalem in the second captivity, then left Babylon for Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, then left Jerusalem for Susa to raise Esther (cf. Esther 2:5-7). This is conceivable, but not likely.

2:1-35

- This is a record of the exiles returning to Judah. Those who left their lives to seek God and obey His will are honored by this mention in the Bible.
- Eleven men are mentioned in 2:2 which could refer to the heads of the 11 tribes other than Levi. The head of Levi is mentioned in 2:36.
- Those returning are described by their families, the ancestors they were descended from, or by the towns and cities to which they originally belonged. Other than their numbers we know nothing about them.
- This record is also recorded in Nehemiah 7:8-38, but with minor differences. These differences are accounted for in two ways (Gleason L Archer, Jr 229-231):
 - Ezra is recording those who said they were going and Nehemiah is recording the number that actually arrived. Last minute additions and subtractions would account for the differences.

- It is very easy to make mistakes copying Hebrew numbers. Minor smudges and tears can easily change the number. One should not make the mistake of assuming that minor transmission errors impugn the text as a whole.

“The mistakes encountered in the lists before us, that is, mistakes of numbers, names, and individual words leave us with no doubts as to what God would have us do or not do for the salvation of our souls. God, in His perfect wisdom and power, has set out those Truths bearing directly on our salvation with sufficient repetition in the inspired documents themselves and/or with His providential preservation of unquestionably accurate copies so as to insure their unimpaired transmission. We challenge the infidel to find the point in Scripture where man is left uncertain as to the way that is right and cannot be wrong due to copyists; errors or any other cause (John 7:17; 8:31-32)” (Summers, et. al.; Berard 402).

2:36-58

- This section records those returning who have special duties in their service to God. There are five groups mentioned:
 - Priests (2:36-39)--Were of the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron.
 - Their work was interceding between the people and God (mostly through sacrifices).
 - They were almost one-tenth of the people returning.
 - Levites (2:40)--Were considered a holy tribe. Their duties at one-time included carrying the Tabernacle (including the utensils). They also assisted the priests in divine worship.
 - Singers (2:41)--These are the sons of Asaph, who wrote at least 12 psalms (Psalm 50 and Psalms 73-83).
 - Gatekeepers (2:42)-- This was a sacred and honorable order of men (1 Chr. 9:19, 9:22, 23:5; 2 Chr. 23:19).
 - They guarded the gates of the Temple (1 Chr. 9:23).
 - They opened and closed the gates at the proper times (1 Chr. 9:27).
 - They had charge of the sacred vessels and of the free-will offerings (2 Chr. 31:14).
 - Temple Servants (2:43-58)--These were men who performed menial tasks for the priests. Some of their functions were water-carrying and wood cutting (Jos. 9:27, Ezk. 8:20).

2:58-60

Now these are those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan and Immer, but they were not able to give evidence of their fathers' households and their descendants, whether they were of Israel; 60 the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 652.

- **Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan and Immer**— Babylonian cities of uncertain location.
- **not able to give evidence of their fathers' households and their descendants, whether they were of Israel**— It could not be proven with records that they were truly part of the children of God. This could be because they were living apart from the main body of Jewish exiles. It could also be that they were the descendants of proselytes, and thus had no documentation. The fact that nothing more is said of them implies that they were accepted (Roper 41).

2:61-63

Of the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and he was called by their name. 62 These searched among their ancestral registration, but they could not be located; therefore they were considered unclean and excluded from the priesthood. 63 The governor said to them that they should not eat from the most holy things until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim.

- **Of the sons of the priests... These searched among their ancestral registration, but they could not be located... unclean and excluded from the priesthood**— for those hoping to serve as priests to be unable to show evidence of their Aaronic lineage is a difficulty. God appointed the sons of Aaron as priests, and no other. Likely finding it better to err on the side of caution, these were provisionally excluded from serving as priests.
- **Urim and Thummim**— "While the Jews had a high priest (Jeshua), apparently the Urim and Thummim had been lost, probably when Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were deported to Babylon. Without the Urim and Thummim, God's people could not know for certain whether or not the priests without credentials were really priests. Thus, until the Urim and Thummim were found, the men in question were excluded from the priesthood. The text never reveals if the men listed here were allowed to serve as priests" (Roper 42).

2:64-67

The whole assembly numbered 42,360, besides their male and female servants who numbered 7,337; and they had 200 singing men and women. Their horses were 736; their mules, 245; their camels, 435; their donkeys, 6,720.

- **42,360**— This total is significantly different from the total one would reach by adding the numbers thus far given. One possibility is that this total includes women and children. Another is that the list given is only meant to be partial.

2:68-69

Some of the heads of fathers 'households, when they arrived at the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to restore it on its foundation. According to their ability they gave to the treasury for the work 61,000 gold drachmas and 5,000 silver minas and 100 priestly garments.

- **offered willingly... According to their ability**— there was no set requirement or obligation laid on the people. They gave as they saw fit, according to their own judgment of their ability/ budget (so to speak). So ought we to do so (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- **drachmas**—
 - “Daric” in some versions
 - “The drachmas referred to here and in chapter 8:27 and in Nehemiah 7:71–72 is the Persian daric. They were thick, gold, coins. On one side was the figure of a king with a bow and javelin, or bow and dagger, and on the other an irregular oblong depression. A daric was equivalent to four days 'wages. It was probably introduced by Darius I (522–486

b.c.), and was possibly the earliest coined money used by the Jews who became acquainted with it during the Exile” (Freeman).



By Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com>, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=74462590>

- The coin pictured here is a Type II daric, which did not come into use until around 505 BC, after the time of the book of Ezra. Darics are, however, mentioned in literature well prior to 505, and such are classified as Type I darics. There are no known Type I darics, but it is likely they looked very similar to Type II darics. (IQ)
- **Silver minas**— a weight equivalent to 50 shekels; about \$300USD (Faithlife).

2:70

Now the priests and the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants lived in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

Not all lived in Jerusalem. It seems that the people were allowed to go back to their hometowns. If there were others who had settled there in the intervening years, this may account for some of the hostility experienced in later parts of Ezra, as well as Nehemiah.

CHAPTER 3

3:1

Now when the seventh month came, and the sons of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem.

- **seventh month**
 - Tishri (Babylonian); Ziv (Canaanite); September-October

- Canaanite names for months were used before captivity, and Babylonian names were used (and still are) in the Jewish calendar.
- **sons of Israel**— God’s people. We’re still talking about the same people as came back and were enumerated in the previous chapter, not all 12 tribes.
- **as one man**— a phrase which shows their unity of purpose.

3:2-3

Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brothers arose and built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God. So they set up the altar on its foundation, for they were terrified because of the peoples of the lands; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening.

- **as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God**—
 - The people of God follow the word of God. 2 Chronicles 36:15,16 records that the people repeatedly mocked the messengers, despised God’s words, and scoffed at the prophets. The result was the absolute desolation of Jerusalem, and the captivity of God’s children. This was not done was not out of hatred, however, but out of God’s love and discipline stemming from that love (Hebrews 12:7-11). It seems that now the people have learned the necessary lesson, choosing to do according to God’s word.
 - Some assert that the book of Moses was not written until late in the 6th Century BC, but this shows the Israelites consulting the already-written books of Moses. Jesus Himself asserted that Moses wrote the books of the Law (John 5:46).
 - cf. Exodus 20:24-26, Joshua 8:31
- **for they were terrified because of the peoples of the lands**—
 - “For” could also be translated “even though” or “even when” (Holladay).
 - If they were building the altar because of their fear, they are wise, indeed. Anxieties and fears should be resolved by bringing them to the Lord (Philippians 4:6).
 - If they were building the altar in spite of their fear, they are also wise. Fear of man should never outweigh our fear of (and service to) God (Matthew 10:28).

3:4-5

They celebrated the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the fixed number of burnt offerings daily, according to the ordinance, as each day required; and afterward there was a continual burnt offering, also for the new moons and for all the fixed festivals of the Lord that were consecrated, and from everyone who offered a freewill offering to the Lord.

- **Feast of Booths**— one of the three yearly times required for all males to go to Jerusalem (Lev 23:34-43, Deuteronomy 16:16).
- They have likely been in the land only a few months (exact timing is unsure), and they are making a good start by getting the Lord's altar in place.
- Just as Jeshua and Zerubbabel restored the temple according to what was written, and according to the ordinance, so too must we be sure that we are following their same restoration principle. Our practices must not be based on tradition or convenience or anything else aside from what is written and what is ordained by the word of God.

3:6

From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, but the foundation of the temple of the Lord had not been laid.

- **foundation**— 3:3 in some translations read “so they set up the altar in its place...” It could be that they set it up on the remnants of Solomon's temple, or it could be as other versions read, that they established it in its proper place. Either way, we see clearly here that the temple's foundation was not yet ready.

3:7

Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and food, drink and oil to the Sidonians and to the Tyrians, to bring cedar wood from Lebanon to the sea at Joppa, according to the permission they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

- **permission they had from Cyrus king of Persia**
 - details in 6:3-5
 - This shows that they did have the additional information given in the memorandum cited in chapter six, even though the same information is not given in the proclamation of chapter one.

3:8-9

Now in the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers the priests and the Levites, and all who came from the captivity to Jerusalem, began the work and appointed the Levites from twenty years and older to oversee the work of the house of the Lord. Then Jeshua with his sons and brothers stood united with Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah and the sons of Henadad with their sons and brothers the Levites, to oversee the workmen in the temple of God.

- **Second year... second month—**

- Second month= Iyyar (Babylonian); Ziv (Canaanite); April-May
- “Why did it take over half a year, since the dedication of the altar in ‘the seventh month’ (3:1–3), to begin work on the temple? Likely, there was a delay while the materials were collected. After all, the wood for the temple had to come all the way from Lebanon, by way of Joppa (3:7)” (Roper 56).

- **appointed the Levites from twenty years and older to oversee the work of the house of the Lord—** the Levites were given charge of temple duties from the very beginning. Additionally, these are most likely to have access to the scriptures, which would relate how the temple is to be laid out, etc.

3:10-11

Now when the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord according to the directions of King David of Israel. They sang, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, saying, “For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever.” And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

- **with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals—** recall that in Babylon, they had not sung praises to God, nor used their instruments (Psalm 137:2).
- **according to the directions of King David of Israel**
 - 1. In 1 Chronicles 15:16 David appointed people to be singers and musicians.

- 2. Also, they used the psalms he penned.
- **“For He is good, for His loving kindness is upon Israel forever”** — these are the starting and ending words of Psalm 136.

3:12-13

Yet many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' households, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, while many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard far away.

- **the old men who had seen the first temple**
 - It had been 70 years since the first captives were carried off, and about 50 years since the temple had been razed. There may well have been many still alive who had seen Solomon's temple.
- **wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes**
 - Usually, the explanation given for their weeping is they could see by this temple's foundation it would not match the grandeur of Solomon's. Perhaps they wept that it was so much smaller. Or perhaps they wept over the rebellion which had caused the destruction to begin with. Scripture does not illuminate us as to the cause of their weeping.
 - In Haggai 2:3-9, God asks if this temple seems like nothing to those who saw the former, and goes on to encourage His people that the glory of this temple will be greater, and that He will give peace.

The Israelites were charged with worshipping correctly. In order to do so, they gave up much, went to great lengths, and took pains to restore the temple and proper worship. We must do so, also. John 4:24 charges us to worship in Spirit and truth if we are to be those whom God would seek. We ought to do all in our power to fulfill our responsibility to worship God rightly and with our whole hearts.

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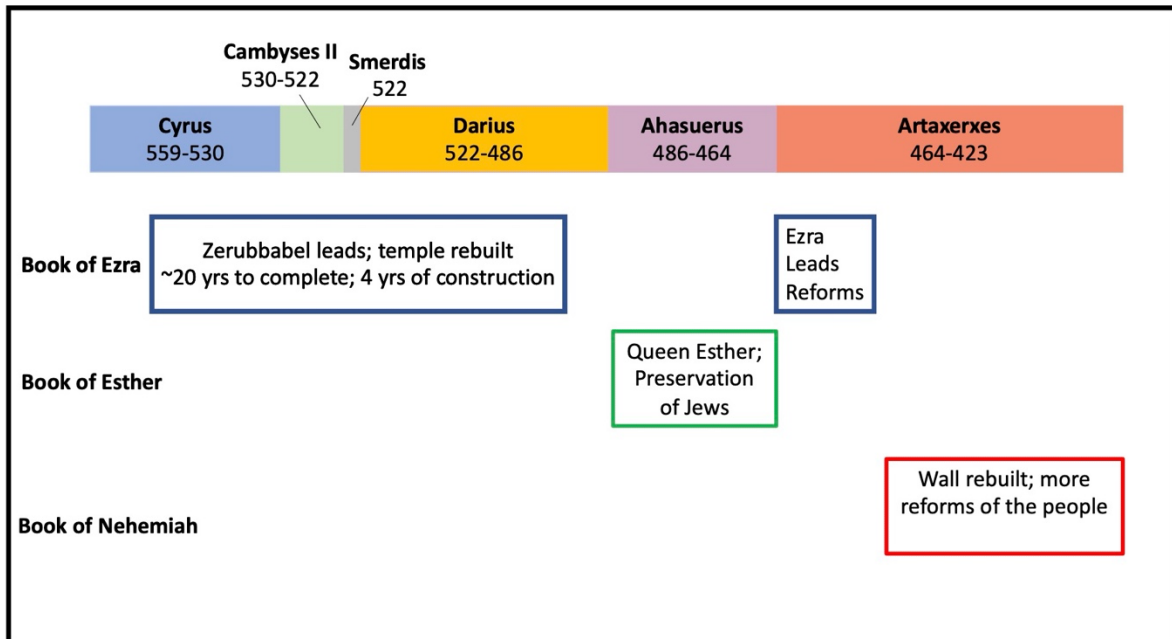
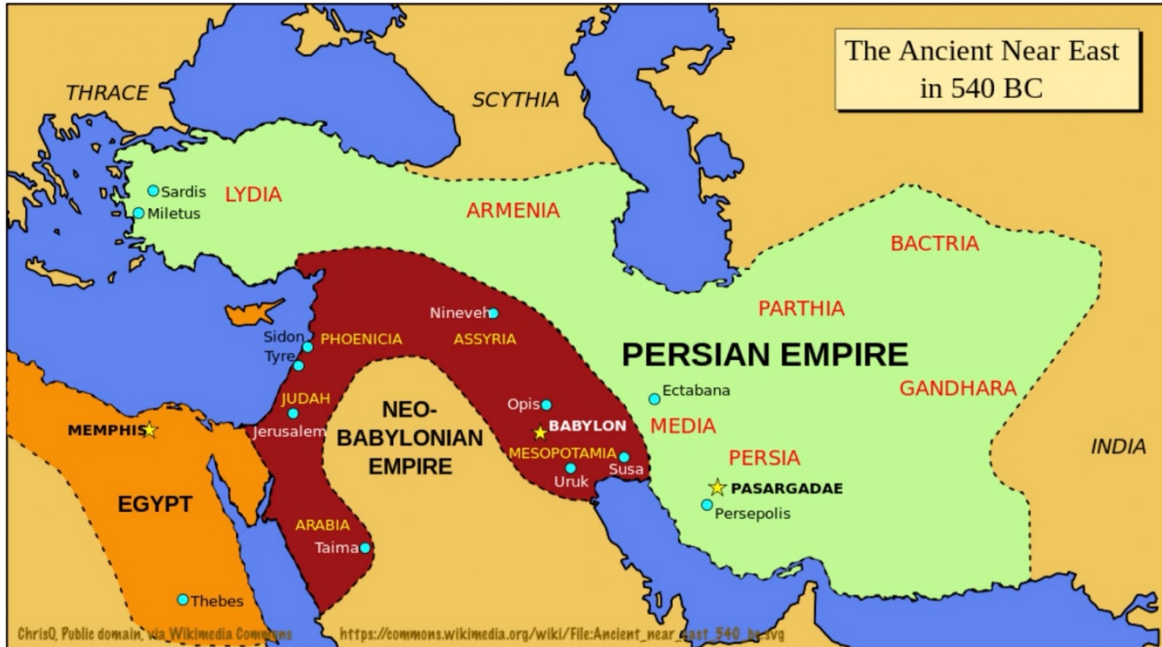
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Ezra 4-6

Kathryn Baker

Version Used: New American Standard 95 Update



Outline: Zerubbabel Rebuilds the Temple:

Chapter 3- Foundation

Chapter 4- Obstruction

Chapter 5- Determination

Chapter 6- Completion

Application:

Chapter 4- When one sets out to do what is right in service and worship to God, there WILL be adversaries trying to thwart success.

Chapter 5:1-5- No matter what fears or obstacles you face, the fear of God must be greater (Mat 10:28).

Chapter 5:6-17- God wants His people to succeed in what is right!

Chapter 6- When we do things God's way there will be adversaries, but ultimately if we stick with it, there will be JOY!

Chapter 4-Retardation of rebuilding of temple by opposition

vv. 1, 2 — The enemies' first effort at disrupting the rebuilding of the temple is to offer to become allies.

v. 3 — This is absolutely rejected.

vv. 4, 5 — In the second effort to hinder the work, the enemy seeks to disrupt the building by various means.

vv. 6-10 — The third effort to stop the rebuilding of the temple is a letter sent by the enemy to Artaxerxes with false accusations.

vv. 11-16 — The contents of the letter are given (note their estimation of Jerusalem [v. 12] in contrast to God's in Psalm 87).

vv. 17-24 — The enemy succeeds in sending a letter to Artaxerxes, and he shoots back a reply that the work is to cease. The suspension of work continues until the time of Darius, king of Persia.

Chapter 5 and 6-Renewal of Rebuilding of Temple

vv. 5:1-6 — Haggai and Zechariah encourage the people to resume rebuilding of the temple. When the leaders are challenged, they appeal to Darius.

vv. 5:7-17 — Darius grants permission to resume the rebuilding of the temple.

vv. 6:1-12 — Darius issues a decree which confirms the original decree of Cyrus.

vv. 6:13-15 — The temple is rebuilt under the inspiration of Haggai and Zechariah. God is identified here as the God of Israel (not Judah). This means there were some from all tribes in Jerusalem at this time.

v. 6:16 — Those who returned are likewise identified here as "the children of Israel."

v. 6:17 — The language here is more explicit: "all Israel."

v. 6:18 — The emphasis again is upon the Word of God (see also v. 14).

vv. 6:19-22 — The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are observed again.

Ezra 7-8 CFYC Spring Retreat 2021

Translation Used: English Standard Version

Cyrus, Darius & Artaxerxes: comparing Ezra 1, 6 & 7

CYRUS	DARIUS	ARTAXERXES
Proclaims the Jews should return (1:3)	Proclaims Darius' decree to be found (6:1)	Proclaims the Jew should return (7:13)
Proclaims funding from the people (1:4)	Proclaims the building should continue (6:7)	Proclaims funding from the people (7:16)
Returns the temple vessels (1:5)	Proclaims funding by the people (6:8)	Funds the build (7:20)

Before you begin:

- It is important to note that approximately 60 years have passed between Ezra chapters six and seven.
- Chronologically, the book of Esther transpires during this 60 year period.
- Chapter seven transpires approximately 58 years after the completion of the temple (Dockery 177).
- Chapter seven takes place in approximately 458 BC (Smith).
- Key phrase in this text is, "The hand of the Lord his God was on him." Found six times in chapters 7-8.

Timeline of restoration (Smith) (biblecharts).

DATE	RULER	EVENT
539-530 B.C.	Cyrus	Temple foundation laid (536) Rebuilding stopped (534) Resumed (520)
522-486 B.C.	Darius	Temple is completed (515 B.C.)
486-465 B.C.	Xerxes (Ahasuerus)	Strong Samaritan opposition to rebuilding, God protects Jews through Haman's evil plan to exterminate them. Esther becomes queen of Persia.
465-423 B.C.	Artaxerxes I	Ezra returns and restores the Law.
444 B.C.	Artaxerxes I	Nehemiah returns and rebuilds the wall.

7:1-5

- "Now after this" does not mean "immediately" after. This is approximately 60 years after the temple was completed.
- Artaxerxes is now king of Persia, where Darius was reigning in chapter 6.
 - Many believe that Artaxerxes was in fact the son or grandson of Esther. Scripture never states this, although Artaxerxes does deal favorably with the Jews.

Ezra's Genealogy:

- Covers 16 generations. The length of an individual's genealogy was often indicative of that person's significance in Scripture (Roper).
- Connects Ezra directly to Phinehas, Eleazar and Aaron, the first chief priest and brother of Moses.
- It is likely that the Seraiah mentioned here is the same as the high priest who was executed by the Babylonians in 2 Kings 25: 18-21 (Roper).
- Some describe Ezra as a second Moses, which is an interesting thought considering that his genealogy ties back directly to the Exodus.

7:6 -Descriptors of Ezra:

1. Scribe
2. Skilled in the Law of Moses
3. Was granted all he asked of the king
4. The hand of the Lord his God was on him

7:7-9

5 groups of people returned with Ezra:

1. Priests
2. Levites
3. Singers
4. Gatekeepers (guardians)
5. Temple Servants

Timeframe of the trip: Ezra left Babylonia on the first day of the first month, & arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month. Although as the bird flies the distance from Babylonia to Jerusalem was 500 miles, their trip would have actually covered 900 miles (Roper). With animals and children with them (8:21) they were only able cover about eight miles a day, so the trip took them four months.

7:9 Is the second time we see that Ezra's success and safety were due to the hand of the Lord being on him.

7:10

- This is certainly the key passage of our text, and I believe for the entire book of Ezra.

3 Reasons Ezra made an eternal impact; he had set his heart:

1. To study the Law of the Lord
2. To do it
3. To teach his statutes in Israel.

7:11

4 Descriptors of Ezra:

1. The priest
2. The scribe
3. A man learned in the matters of the commandments of the Lord
4. A man learned in God's statutes for Israel.

Scribe - One highly learned in Scripture. They were highly educated government ministers and personal secretaries (Fiensy).

Commandment - The teachings and laws of Scripture, i.e. the 10 commandments.

Statute - Civil laws or ordinances, God's commands for the Israelites as a nation.

Qualifications of Priests	Responsibilities of Priests
Must be a male (Exodus 28:1)	Teach the people. (Leviticus 10:8-11)
Must be a descendant of Aaron (Exodus 28:1) with a documented lineage.	Serve as judges to resolve controversy. (Deut. 21:5)
Must be between 30 and 50 years old. (Numbers 4:3)	Offer sacrifices. (Exodus 29:38-42)
Must be unblemished (not lame or blond). (Lev. 21:16-23)	Assess impurity. (Leviticus 13-15)
Must have a proper marriage. (Leviticus 21:9, 14, Ezekiel 44:22) - Not married to a harlot. - Not married to a divorced woman. - Not married to a widow other than a priest's widow. - The high priest must marry a virgin of his own people	Burn incense. (Exodus 30:7-8)
Must have no uncleanness (leprosy, etc.). (Lev. 22:3-9)	Bless the people. (Numbers 6:22-27)
Must have an untrimmed beard with well trimmed (but unshaved) hair. (Ezekiel 4:20; Leviticus 21:5)	Bless God (Deuteronomy 10:8)

Must be properly dressed. (Ex. 28:1-4; Ezekiel 44:17-19)	Keep the tabernacle. (Numbers 3:38; 4:16)
	Take care of the altar (Leviticus 6:8-13), the lamps, and the showbread (Leviticus 24:1-9)
	Prepare the holy things for each days journey. (Num. 4:5-15)
	Continue the sacred fire. (Leviticus 6:12-13)
	Blow the trumpets. (Numbers 10:1-10)

Chart info taken from

<http://www.biblecharts.org/oldtestament/oldtestamentpriestsandpriesthood.pdf>

*** Verses 12-26 are a recording of the official proclamation given by King Artaxerxes. As such, in the original text these verses are written in Aramaic, whereas the rest of chapters 7 and 8 are in Hebrew.

7:12

- Artaxerxes identifies himself as the “King of Kings.” This was a common title used for Persian Kings, although it also calls to mind titles such as, “Song of Songs.” The double descriptor was to emphasize the authority of what is being described. Can be read as “Kingliest of Kings.”
- Once again describes Ezra as both priest and Scribe of the Law of the God of heaven.

7:13

- Artaxerxes gives his decree to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem he cites 3 categories that would encompass all of the people: any of the people, the priests or the Levites.
 - The stipulation: who freely offers to go.

7:14-25

Artaxerxes cites 6 purposes for this decree:

1. For Ezra to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem (7:14)
2. To carry the silver and gold he is giving to the Jews (7:14)
3. To offer sacrifices to God (7:17)
4. To deliver the vessels Artaxerxes is giving to the temple (7:19)
5. To appoint magistrates and judges (7:25)
6. To teach the laws of God (7:25)

Of note:

Verse 14 - Artaxerxes gives Ezra the authority to inquire about the Jew's obedience to God's Laws.

Verse 17 - Artaxerxes is going to provide whatever is needed for the Jews to offer the appropriate sacrifices.

Verse 21 - Artaxerxes is extended this beyond his capitol, and telling the provinces they must also provide whatever Ezra requires for God. Ezra is once again described as both priest and scribe.

Verse 23 - Artaxerxes' motivation: "lest his wrath be against the realm of the king."

Verse 24 - Artaxerxes does not allow any of his provinces to require taxes from anyone affiliated with temple work.

Verse 25 - Ezra is given full authority over "all such as know the laws of your God." This is very important to note! Many will try to say that Ezra was made king over everyone Beyond the River, however Artaxerxes specifies that Ezra's authority is specifically for the Jews with this statement.

Modern Equivalent for verses 21-24 (Roper 118)

- 3 ¾ tons of salt
- 650 bushels of wheat
- 600 gallons of wine
- 600 gallons of oil
- This would have been enough to supply the temple for about 2 years.

7:26

Ezra is given authority for both God's laws and the laws of the Persian government:

- Death
- Banishment
- Confiscation of goods
- Imprisonment

**** This ends the Aramaic section of the original text. Verse 27 resumes in Hebrew.

7:27-28

- From here Ezra begins to give a first-person account of all that has taken place.
- Ezra praises God for His divine intervention in all that has transpired. He specifies that these efforts are to beautify the newly rebuilt temple.
- We once again see our key phrase, “the hand of the Lord my God was on me.”

8:1

- This picks up with Ezra’s comment in 7:28, “I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.”

8:2

- Ezra begins with descendants of Aaron: Gershom of Phinehas’ line, and Daniel of Ithamar’s line. This would also have made Gershom and Daniel relatives of Ezra (Ezra 7:1-5).
- Hattush was a descendant of King David.
- This establishes lines of both priests and royalty in those traveling with Ezra.

8:3-14

- There are 12 additional families listed here.
- It is estimated that approximately 5,000-9,000 individuals returned with Ezra, including temple servants, women and children (Roper).

8:15-17

- At first glance this can appear contradictory: how can Ezra review the people and the *priests*, and not find any Levites?! This goes back to the idea that all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. Verse 17 offers some clarification, “to send us ministers.” Ezra had the descendants of Aaron he needed to serve as the priests, yet he did not have the manpower necessary for the daily running of the temple. (Refer back to the list in Ezra 7:7-9.)

Ezra takes 6 actions in these verses:

1. Gathers the Israelites to the river (15)
 2. Reviewed the people (15)
 3. Sent for Eliezer for men of insight (16)
 4. Sent those men to Iddo (17)
 5. Told the men exactly what to say (to send us ministers) (17)
- Side note, it is amusing to note that there are three separate “Elnathan’s” mentioned here. This could have been similar to having three men named “John” in a group today (Roper.)
 - Casiphia was home to a settlement of Levites (Roper 134).
 - The word for “place” here could mean that this was one of the first Jewish synagogues, particularly since the individuals there are referred to as “temple servants” (Roper 134).
 - This adds approximately 1,758 individuals to Ezra’s party (Roper 134).

8:18-20

- We once again see our phrase, “by the good hand of our God on us.”
- The call goes out, and the men of Casiphia respond, sending Ezra the workers that he needs.
- It is interesting to note that, although the Jews have been in captivity, David has enough authority that he has his own officials.

8:21-23

- Once everyone is gathered, Ezra’s first proclamation is that a fast will be held to:
 - Humble themselves before God
 - Ask God for safe travels
- It is interesting to note that Ezra’s faith in God would not allow him to ask Artaxerxes for guards. Especially considering in Nehemiah 2:7-9 Nehemiah did exactly that.
 - Here we have 2 tremendous men of faith taking two separate approaches, each equally based on their faith in God.
 - Is it possible to have a different approach from our brethren (the mask debate) and both positions be pleasing to God if they are based in faith?

Verse 23 - Spoiler alert! Ezra prays for God’s protection, & God listens to their entreaty, keeping His people safe on their journey.

8:24-27

- Verse 24 can be confusing if not read carefully. The ESV states, “Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their kinsmen with them.” It appears that the title of priest was given because the majority were priests, & Sherebiah and Hashabiah are listed by name because, although they were included, they were Levites and not priests.

For comparison (Roper 137):

- 650 talents equals about 49,000 lbs, or 25 tons of silver
- 100 talents equals 7,500 lbs
- This would have been worth millions of American dollars

8:28-30

- Ezra reminds them of the holiness of the treasure they are carrying. These items are not theirs, they are for their God. After this reminder, Ezra tasks these men with guarding them until they are able to set them before the chief priests in the newly rebuilt temple.

8:31

- Provides the date they left Ahava: the twelfth day of the first month.
- Once again, “The hand of our God was on us.”

8:32-34

- Once they arrived at Jerusalem they rested for three days.
- After their rest they completed their task, safely transferring their treasure into the hands of the priest to be counted, weighed and recorded.

8:35

- Immediately upon completion of their task, they offer burnt offerings to the Lord.
- Switches to third person until 9:1.

8:36

- Once their treasure was delivered and sacrifices had been made, Ezra went to the Persian satraps and governors to present them with Artaxerxes’ proclamation, and as the king had commanded those Beyond the River aided God’s people.

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Ezra 9-10
Kristy Huntsman
Version Used: New American Standard 95 Update

Keywords in Ezra 9-10:

- Guilt/offense (ASMAH)- Ezra 9:6, 7, 13, 15; 10:10, 19 (2xs)
- Unfaithfulness (MAAL)-Ezra 9:2, 4; 10:2, 6, 10
- Foreign (NAKRI)-Ezra 10:2, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 44
- Abomination (TOEBAH)-Ezra 9:1, 11, 14

Ezra 9:1-5

- Definitions:
 - Abominations (v.1)-TOEBAH-corruption, many times a reference to the Canaanites and their sexually perverse worship practices
 - Unfaithfulness (v.2)-MAAL-a breach of trust, to violate one's legal obligations
 - Appalled (v. 3 and 4)-MESOMEM-devastated, laid to waste, filled with consternation and confusion, to be astonished, to stare and tremble
- The list of foreign nations in verse 1 is similar to the list that appears in the Pentateuch (cf Deut 7:1-4, Ex 34:11-16, Deut 20:10-18)
- Cf Psalm 106:35-“But they mingled with the nations and learned their practices.”
- This was a breach of their covenant with God and would result in them adopting the pagan customs of these pagan women.
- Cf 2 Cor 6:14- “Do not be bound together with unbelievers...”
- Leaders are accountable not just for what they teach, but for their examples.
- Tearing one's clothes was a symbol of humiliation and sorrow
- Those who tremble at the word of God will tremble at sin.
- “The evening offering” was offered at twilight (cf Numbers 28:4)

Ezra 9:6-15

- Definitions:
 - Ashamed (v.6)-BOSETTI-put to shame excessively
 - Embarrassed (v.6)-KLM-injured, suffered harm, put to open shame
 - Grace (v.8)-TEHINNAH-mercy, pardon, compassion

- Reviving (v.8)-MIHEYAH-preservation of life, provisions
- Impurity (v.11)-TUMAH-state of ceremonial uncleanness
- Even though Ezra was not personally guilty, as a leader, he considered himself guilty with the whole community.
- “Open shame” in verse 7 is literally “shame of the face” (cf Jer 7:19, Ps 44:16, Dan 9:7-8, 2 Chron 32:21)
- The promise of a remnant was extremely important to the Jewish people. Though they didn’t understand the full significance of what would happen, they understood that the preservation of this remnant would lead to the coming of the Messiah.
- “Give us a peg” in verse 8 is literally a tent peg, and refers to one using a tent peg as a foothold, which equated to security in one’s position.
- The word for wall used in verse 9 (GADER) is different from the city wall Nehemiah would construct later (HOMAH). The wall in verse 9 is used of a hedge or a fence around a vineyard. This is a reference to God’s protection of the Jews.
- In verses 10-11, Ezra references many of the commands that God had stated throughout his word (cf. Lev 18:25; 2 Kings 16:3; Deut 7:1-3, 11:8, 23:6; 2 Kings 21:16, Isa 1:19)
- In verse 13, “you have requited us less than our iniquities deserve...” is literally “you have held our punishment below our iniquities.” This emphasizes the fact that it is God’s mercy and NOT their merit that would save them from condemnation.

Ezra 10:1-6

- Definitions:
 - Unfaithful (v.2)- MAAL-a breach of trust, to violate one’s legal obligations
- Most of chapter 9 is written in the first person, but here in chapter 10, Ezra switches to third person.
- “Ezra was a respected leader, and his extreme distress caught the people’s attention. In fact, such an uninhibited demonstration of emotion proved infectious. Instead of whipping a reluctant people into action, Ezra has pricked their conscience to the point at which they now urge *him* to act.” (Breneman)
- This is a reminder that a leader has the responsibility to make hard decisions that will have an eternal effect on people and many of these decisions are not pleasant to have to make.

- Before making this decision, Ezra's first response was to fast and pray. This shows what a deep devotion he had to doing what was right in God's eyes.

Ezra 10:7-11

- Definitions:
 - Trembling (v.9)-MESOMEM-anxious with fright
- The threat of the loss of their property shows how serious this meeting of repentance would be.
- "The ninth month" indicates this took place a little more than four months after Ezra arrived in Jerusalem (cf Ezra 7:8-9)

Ezra 10:12-17

- Definitions:
 - Transgressed (v.13)-PESOA-to break away from
- According to verse 14, all of the guilty men had to come with their city officials to account for what they had done individually
- In verse 15, we see that this did repentance did not meet with 100% compliance. Any time we are seeking restoration, there will always be those who stand in opposition.
- When we look at verse 17, we see that this process took about three months.

Ezra 10:18-44

- Overall, 111 Israelites were found guilty of taking foreign wives: 70 priests, 10 Levites, and 84 other Israelites
- In verse 44, it is clear that some of these men had children by these foreign women and were required to send away the women and the children.
- Ezra's actions were drastic, but the faithfulness of the entire Jewish community was at stake.

- These marriages were wrong and breaking God's covenant with them from the outset.
- These men were called to true biblical repentance, that is not just saying you are sorry, but requires action and a change of course.

Questions for Consideration:

- Am I familiar with God's word that I am able to see when I am behaving in a sinful way?
 - Am I honest enough with myself and God that when I see these missteps that I am willing to acknowledge them?
 - Is there anything I wouldn't be willing to give up in my pursuit to live according to God's will?
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