

Outline of the Book of Ezra

Introduction:

The book of Ezra picks up the history of God's people at the approximate point that Daniel chapters 9 and 10 leave off (see Daniel 9:1-2; 10:1). The people of God have been in Babylonian captivity for 70 years as was prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 25:8-11 / Dan. 9:2). Cyrus, the Persian military general, conquered Babylon in the years 539 – 538 BC. Cyrus handed the Babylonian Empire over to Darius the Mede (cf. Dan. 5:31). Darius reigned two years before being replaced by Cyrus at 536 BC. Ezra picks up the history of God's people in captivity at the point of Cyrus' kingship during the year 536 BC. (cf. Ezra 1:1). Approximately 200 years prior to this date, Isaiah the prophet had foretold of Cyrus by name (Isa. 44:28). Cyrus was a man who would be responsible, by divine decree, for allowing the Jews to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its temple. No doubt Cyrus was familiar with this prophecy. According to the book of Ezra, Cyrus performed his duty faithfully. The book is comprised of an approximately 80-year time frame in which Ezra reveals that God has fulfilled His promise to cause the Jews to return to Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 29:8-10).

The book of Ezra is the historical record of God's people returning to Jerusalem after the long captivity to rebuild the city, walls, and temple. Zerubbabel returns to Jerusalem in 536 BC with 50,000 returnees to rebuild the temple under the authority of Cyrus, the Persian King. After a strong and zealous start, the returnees are discouraged from building the temple by the Samaritans. The construction of the temple is brought to a halt and remains that way for approximately 15 years (compare Ezra chapter 4:24 and 6:1ff). God sends the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to His people to motivate them to return to the work of building His temple (Ezra 5:1ff). The leaving off of building for fifteen years was sinful due to God having commanded that they build it (cf. Ezra 6:14). Twenty one years pass from Zerubbabel's first coming to Jerusalem with the children of captivity (compare Ezra 1:1; 3:8; and 6:15), and finally the temple is completed. Between chapters six and seven of Ezra, 57 years pass with no mention of that time. It is generally agreed that the events of Esther and the institution of the feast of Purim occur during these days.

The book takes its name from Ezra, a scribe and priest (cf. Ezra 7:11). Ezra is not mentioned until chapter seven. Ezra returns with about 7000 people and reforms Judah with the law of God. Ezra, by the providence of God, has the duty of "*inquiring concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thy hand*" (Ezra 7:14). Ezra is a man ready for such a work (Ezra 7:6). This priestly scribe is a man who loves the laws of God (Ezra 7:10) and he knows that there are consequences to face when one sins (cf. Ezra 9:3). Ezra is a praying man (Ezra 9:5ff; 10:1), bold in the faith (Ezra 10:10), and diligent to accomplish the work God had providentially provided for him (Ezra 7:27; 9:1 – 10:44). The Lord's people had violated the Mosaic Law in that they married foreign women (compare Ezra 9:1-2 with Deut. 7:1-4). Ezra chapter 10:18-44 reveals 100 men to have married foreign women, and it only takes the priestly scribe three months to straighten the mess out (compare Ezra 10:9 to 10:17).

Ezra achieves his purpose of religious reform in a matter of one year (compare Ezra 7:9 with Ezra 10:17). From a time frame point of view, one would have to say that Ezra was successful. However, from a longevity point of view, his teachings and conviction did not remain with the people of God. Twenty to thirty years after this reform, Nehemiah finds the people in the same condition as Ezra had found them.

Chapter 1

I. Isaiah and Jeremiah's Prophecy Fulfilled (chapter one all):

- A. *“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem” (1:1-4).*
1. The first year of Cyrus would be the year 536 (70 years after the Jews entered into Babylonian captivity / 606 BC). Jeremiah's prophecy, regarding seventy years of captivity was thus fulfilled (cf. Jer. 25:11). Note that the word *“accomplished”* (*kalah*) = “to be complete, finished” (Young 378). The word of the Lord was complete in relation to the Jews serving seventy years in captivity (cf. II Chron. 36:19-21). Likewise, when all the word of God had been delivered by the apostles and prophets it was complete and in no more need of additions (cf. II Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3). God had promised that all nations would be blessed with the opportunity to receive the forgiveness of sins through Christ (Gen. 12:1-4; Gal. 3:8, 16). The information regarding this promise was termed a covenant and was to be distributed by the apostles and prophets (cf. Jer. 31:31; Eph. 3:3-5). When all matters of our salvation had been revealed there was no need for additional revelation (I Cor. 13:1ff) (see study # 1; The Nature of Truth).
 2. The reign of Cyrus was far superior to that of Nebuchadnezzar in spiritual matters. Nebuchadnezzar was moved to believe that Jehovah was “a god” after witnessing miraculous events and being informed by Daniel the prophet. Many years went by in Nebuchadnezzar's life before he finally pronounces Jehovah as the one true God (cf. Dan. 4:34-37).
 3. Cyrus makes a public proclamation of his faith in Jehovah God by writing an edict to free all Jews who serve the Lord in the first year of his rule. The Jews were to return to Judah and rebuild the temple to the Lord. Not only does Cyrus make such a decree but also requires all peoples of Persia to assist monetarily toward this effort.
- B. *“Then rose up the heads of fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered” (1:5-6).*
1. God stirred their hearts with His fulfilled promise. He had promised the captives that they would return through prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Those who had spiritual faith and longed to serve the Lord had their spirit *“stirred”* within by the fulfillment of this promise and thereby returned by faith.
 2. Not only did the Jew's brethren support them but apparently even the heathen did.
- C. *“Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah” (1:7-8).*
1. Cyrus goes further in his help of the Jews by giving them back all the vessels of gold and silver that Nebuchadnezzar had previously stolen out of the temple of Jehovah God (II Chron. 36:7).
 2. Cyrus gives these treasures to Mithredath, one of his trusted treasures, and he in turn hands the treasures over to *“Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.”* It seems very likely that this Sheshbazzar is the Chaldean name for Zerubbabel much like Daniel was known as Belteshazzar (See study # 2; Zerubbabel). Consider the following chart:

Facts	Zerubbabel	Sheshbazzar
Governor of Judah	Hag. 1:1; 2:2	Ezra 5:14
Prince of Judah		Ezra 1:8
Came to Jerusalem with those of the Babylonian captivity.	Ezra 2:1-2	Ezra 1:11
Had a part in organizing the construction of the temple's foundation.	Ezra 3:8	Ezra 5:16
Began work on temple foundation	Ezra 5:2	Ezra 5:16

D. *“And this is the number of them: thirty platters of gold, a thousand platters of silver, nine and twenty knives, thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem”* (1:11).

1. In all there were 5400 vessels of gold and silver turned over to Zerubbabel to bring back to Jerusalem.
2. Mithredath handed these treasures over to Zerubbabel while in Babylon and the governor brought them back to Jerusalem.

Lessons Learned

- God fulfills His promises (II Chron. 36:19-21 / Gen. 12:1ff and Gal. 3:8, 16) (see study # 3; God's Promises).
- God's word is complete (cf. Ezra 1:1 / II Tim. 3:16-17 and Jude 3) (see study # 1).

Chapter 2

I. A List of those who traveled back to Jerusalem from Babylon (2:1-67):

A. *“Now these are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and that returned unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:”* (2:1-2).

1. Not all of the Jews returned to Jerusalem for the work of rebuilding the temple (cf. Ezra 1:3-4).
2. The total returning party numbered about 50,000.

B. *“The children of Parosh, two thousand a hundred seventy and two. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua [and] Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. The children of*

Bani, six hundred forty and two. The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. The children of Ater, of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. The children of Jorah, a hundred and twelve. The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. The children of Beth-lehem, a hundred twenty and three. The men of Netophah, fifty and six. The men of Anathoth, a hundred twenty and eight. The children of Azmaveth, forty and two. The children of Kiriath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three. The children of Ramah and Geba, six hundred twenty and one. The men of Michmas, a hundred twenty and two. The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. The children of Nebo, fifty and two. The children of Magbish, a hundred fifty and six. The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty” (2:3-35).

1. The Jews in general (People of Israel) that returned to Jerusalem were numbered at 24,144 people.
 2. The next group was the priests and Levites.
- C. *“The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. The children of Pashhur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen. The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four” (2:36-40).*
1. Note that not all Levites were priests. Some Levites were responsible for carrying the furnishings (cf. Numb. 3:27ff).
 2. The Sons of Aaron were the priests. The book of Ezra numbers the priests at 4289 and the Levites at 74.
- D. *“The singers: the children of Asaph, a hundred twenty and eight. The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, in all a hundred thirty and nine” (2:41-42).*
1. The “singers” numbered 267.
- E. *“The Nethinim: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, the children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon, the children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, the children of Hagab, the children of Shamlai, the children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, the children of Asnah, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephisim, the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, the children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, the children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Temah, the children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha” (2:43-54):*
1. The Nethinim were likely servants in the temple of Jehovah (cf. Ezra 8:20). Josephus referred to the Nethinim as temple slaves (Ant. Xi.5.1 [128]). “One may thus assume that the Nethinim were originally foreign slaves, mostly prisoners of war, who were given to the temple and assigned the lower menial duties there” (ISBE, v. 3, pp. 525).
 2. Ezra 2:58 lumps both the Nethinim and Solomon’s servants together numbering them at 392.
- F. *“The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Hassophereth, the children of Peruda, the children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the children of Ami. All the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two” (2:55-58).*
1. “In both Ezra and Nehemiah the list of Nethinim is immediately followed by that of the servants of Solomon, whose duties were similar to and perhaps even humbler than theirs.

These servants of Solomon appear to be descendants of the Canaanites whom Solomon employed in building (I Kings 5:15; 9:15-21)” (ISBE, v. 3, pp. 525).

2. Again, their exact number is unknown (their total is added to the Nethinim and totaled at 392).
- G. *“And these were they that went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer; but they could not show their fathers' houses, and their seed, whether they were of Israel: the children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two”* (2:59-60).
 1. 652 people who could not prove their Israelite heritage.
 2. Apparently registry of descent was kept in some form or fashion (cf. example at Matt. 1:1ff).
- H. *“And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Hakkoz, the children of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name. These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood. And the governor said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim”* (2:61-63).
 1. Some priest could not prove their Israelite descent through written records.
 2. Zerubbabel’s judgment was that they not serve in the capacity of priests until their heritage could be proved by use of the *“Urim and Thummim.”* The *“Urim and Thummim”* was “a means of revelation used by the high priest in giving Jehovah’s answer to inquiries” (ISBE, V. 4, pp. 957).
- I. *“The whole assembly together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, besides their men-servants and their maid-servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred singing men and singing women. Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; their camels, four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty”* (2:64-67).
 1. Totals are now given of those returning to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.
 2. 42,630 men and 7337 men servants and maids.

II. Heads of father’s Houses (2:68-70):

- A. *“And some of the heads of fathers' [houses], when they came to the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to set it up in its place: they gave after their ability into the treasury of the work threescore and one thousand darics of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred priests' garments”* (2:68-69).
 1. The *“heads of father’s houses”* offer gifts to the Lord’s treasury upon entering Jerusalem.
 2. Who are the *“heads of father’s houses?”*
 - a. “Israel was a tribal society in which kinship played the primary part” (ISBE, v. 2, pp. 287).
 - b. We first run across Abraham in Gen. 11. Abraham was the head of his household. He was a father of many nations (Gen. 17:4). “The Oriental idea of the family is a little kingdom within itself, over which the father is supreme ruler. Every company of travelers, every tribe, every community, every family, must have ‘a father,’ who is the head of the group...Under the patriarchal administration, the father is supreme in command. This authority which the father has, extends to his wife, to his children, his children’s children, his servants, and to all hi household, and if he is the sheik, it extends to all the tribe...When Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived in tents in the Land of Promise, they were ruled by this same system. And when the Law of Moses was given to Israel, the authority of the parents, and especially the father, was still recognized. In a majority of cases, the great authority, which the father had, was handed down to his eldest son, who took over the position of leadership upon the death of his father. Thus Isaac became the new ‘sheik’ over his father’s household upon the death of Abraham.”¹ “A man determined his lineage first by his father, then his clan, his tribe, and finally (if at all) by his people. In nearly every introduction of a character he is described as ‘_____ son of _____...Thus the head of the household, in an extended family arrangement, would have been the grandfather or oldest

¹ Manners and Customs of Bible Lands by Fred H. Wight pg. 103-104

active male member.”² For example, when God had chose Saul to be the first King of Israel, Samuel showed the people that he was God’s choice by bringing all the families of Israel together. Out of all the tribes, Benjamin was chose. Their families brought Benjamin to the forefront. From all the families of Benjamin, the Matrites were taken. From the family of Matrites, Saul was chosen (cf. I Sam. 10:20-21).

- c. The house of Eleazar produced sixteen heads of fathers’ houses (I Ch. 24:4).
 - d. The heads of the houses are often times referred to as elders in the OT. “According to patriarchal custom the fathers, standing by the right of birth at the head of the several tribes and divisions of tribes, regulated the relations of the tribes and clans, punished offenses and crimes, and administered law and equity. Thus from the heads of tribes, clans and families proceeded the elders, who, even before the time of Moses, formed the superiors of the people.”³
 - e. An example is seen when Moses and Aaron arrive in Egypt, they called the elders of the people together to announce their divine commission to deliver the people out of bondage (Ex. 3:16-18). Another example is seen in Ex. 24:1 where 70 elders accompanied Moses at Mt. Sinai. Again, we see the elders being spoken of in Nehemiah 1:6 which corresponds to the heads mentioned here in Ezra 2:68. Thus this was the social makeup of the people of God. The heads (elders) of the households governed them. These elders were responsible for the actions of each person in their family. When Achan sinned (Josh. 7:16-18), the whole family perished.
- B. *“So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities” (2:70).*

Chapter 3

I. Israel assembles in Jerusalem united in Purpose (3:1-6):

- A. *“And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem” (3:1).*
 - 1. Once in Israel the people of God scattered into their own cities and settled down.
 - 2. *“When the seventh month”* had come (seven months after being in Judah or the Jewish seventh month?), Israel assembled together in Jerusalem as though they were *“one man”* (i.e., one in purpose) (compare Neh. 8:1).
- B. *“Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar upon its base; for fear was upon them because of the peoples of the countries: and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto Jehovah, even burnt-offerings morning and evening” (3:2-3).*
 - 1. The Mosaic Law had prescribed both morning and evening sacrifices upon the altar of burnt offering (cf. Ex. 28:38ff; Num. 28:3ff).
 - 2. Jeshua (the high priest) and Zerubbabel (the appointed governor) lead the priests and all Israel in the erecting of a new altar of burnt offering.
 - 3. Their motivation for quickly erecting the altar of burnt offering was the danger posed to them by the *“peoples of the countries.”* God’s divine favor would be with Israel as long as they kept His commandments (cf. Deut. 7:12-26). The act of erecting the altar indicated the people’s faith in God’s divine protection and their understanding of the consequences of not doing so (i.e., they just left seventy years of captivity due to disobedience).
- C. *“And they kept the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number, according to the ordinance, as the duty of every day required; and afterward the continual burnt-offering, and the offerings of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of Jehovah that were*

² Manners and Customs of The Bible by Victor H. Matthews pg. 67-68

³ The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary by Merrill F. Unger pg. 343

consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill-offering unto Jehovah. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt-offerings unto Jehovah: but the foundation of the temple of Jehovah was not yet laid” (3:4-6).

1. There were five annual feasts that the people of God were to keep each year (i.e., the Passover, Pentecost (the feast of Weeks), Feast of Tabernacles, Feast of Ingathering, Trumpets, and Atonement. Five days after the Day of Atonement the Feast of Tabernacles and Feast of Ingathering occurred. The feast lasts for seven days.
2. The seventh month was the time of the feast of tabernacles. We are not told how long Israel had been in their cities before this (i.e., how much time has elapsed since their arrival and the temple foundation not having yet begun to be built). Ezra 3:8 indicates that two years had passed before any work started on the foundation of the temple.

II. Construction on the Foundation of the new Temple (3:7-13):

- A.** *“They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and food, and drink, and oil, unto them of Sidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar-trees from Lebanon to the sea, unto Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia” (3:7).*
1. Israel, under the supervision of Zerubbabel and Jeshua the high priest, issued monies from the state’s treasury to skilled workers to begin the foundation’s construction process.
 2. The source of their rich treasury was *“the grant they had of Cyrus king of Persia.”* Cyrus (Persia) was financing the building of the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem.
 3. Not only was this money spent on skilled laborers but on materials (wood) from Lebanon as Solomon had once done (II Kings 5:20ff).
- B.** *“Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem, and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to have the oversight of the work of the house of Jehovah. Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to have the oversight of the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Jehovah, after the order of David king of Israel. And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah, saying, For he is good, for his lovingkindness endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid” (3:8-11).*
1. The Levites over 20 were appointed to oversee the construction process of the temple’s foundation. Jeshua and Kadmiel (along with their sons) took the oversight of the hired workers.
 2. At the completion of the foundation the people were excited. The priests wore their holy garments and held trumpets while the sons of the Levites clanged cymbals as *“praising Jehovah.”* Notice that they *“sang”* songs of *“praise”* to God with *“trumpets”* and *“cymbals”* and this was done *“after the order of David king of Israel.”*
 - a. Some today would say that this is their authority for using musical instruments in worship today. Notice; however, that as Israel is back in their home land they are fulfilling the written *“law of Moses”* (cf. Ezra 3:2).
 - b. Jesus nailed the Mosaic Law to the cross and thereby it has no authority over New Testament Christians (cf. Col. 2:14 / Gal. 5:4). Notice that the apostle Paul says that this law was *“against us”* in that it could not remove man’s sins (cf. Heb. 7:18-19; 10:1ff).
 - c. The only Mosaic laws that are binding on man today are those that have been brought over into the law of Christ. Jesus and the apostles revealed new covenant truths that included some Mosaic ordinances (such as the sin of murder, stealing, obeying parents etc.), however, it excluded others (giving of oaths, divorce for any cause, sacrificing animals on altars, etc.) (see study # 1). When it comes to singing praises to God the New Covenant under Jesus Christ simply states that we are to sing with our hearts (the text says nothing about instruments) (cf. Eph. 5:19) (see study # 4; Bible Singing). A great lesson is learned

throughout a study of God's word in relation to how I am to interpret His word. When God tells us what He wants He does not express endless other options. For example, the Lord reveals to us first day of the week worship at Acts 20:7. God does not have to say though shalt not partake of the Lord's Supper in worship on Monday, Tuesday, etc. He tells us what we need to know about a subject and we are not at liberty to change His commands (see study # 5; Bible Authority).

- C. *"But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, the old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off"* (3:12-13).
1. The sounds of joy and praise were mingled with sounds of sadness so that those afar could not distinguish between the joyful and sad noises the people made.
 2. "Solomon's temple was destroyed BC 588, and the foundation of the subsequent temple laid BC 535 or 534: hence the older men among those present at the latter event might possibly have seen the former house; indeed, some (Hagg. 2:2) were still living in the second year of Darius Hystaspis who had beheld the glory of the earlier building. Upon these aged men, the miserable circumstances under which the foundation of the new temple were laid produced so overwhelming an impression, that they broke into loud weeping."⁴

Lessons Learned:

- **Faith:** due to their fear of the surrounding nations they quickly erect the altar of burnt offering and attempt to follow all the Mosaic Law that God's favor would be with them... A sign of their faith in God (cf. Ezra 3:2-4).
- **Authority:** The Jews desire was to do all that was "*written in the law of Moses the man of God*" (Ezra 3:2). When the foundation of the temple was erected they sang songs of praise to God with musical instruments "*after the order of David king of Israel*" (Ezra 3:10). A lesson on divine authority is given. When Jesus hung upon the cross the Law of Moses was abrogated (cf. Col. 2:14). Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 4:23). Many principles of the Mosaic system were left out of the new covenant of Jesus Christ (ex. sacrificing animals, Sabbath keeping, circumcision, swearing to God etc.). When it comes to singing in worship we can only look to New Testament (NT) examples for said worship as those in Ezra's day did. They sang with the instrument because they had David as their example. We do not use the instrument today because no where in the NT do we see them used in worship. There is no David in the New Testament using instruments in praise to God so that we may learn by his example. There is no command to sing with the instrument and neither is there any inference that New Testament Christians were using the instrument in worship. Singing did take place in worship during early NT times (cf. I Cor. 14:23ff). The singing that took place was done with the heart rather than the instrument (cf. Eph. 5:19). NT examples indicate singing with the heart and not the instrument. A valuable lesson in Bible authority is thereby learned. God gives examples and commands and the Christian today has no right to go beyond those instructions (cf. II Jn. 9-10) (see study # 4).

Chapter 4

I. The Samaritans interfere with the Building of the Temple (4:1-6):

- A. *"Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity were building a temple unto Jehovah, the God of Israel; then they drew near to Zerubbabel, and to the heads of fathers' houses, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do;*

⁴ Keil and Ditzsch. Commentary on the Old Testament. Ezra, Nehemiah Esther, and Job Pg. 35

and we sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up hither” (4:1-2).

1. When Assyria had conquered the ten northern tribes of Israel, they deported the captives to other lands and brought foreign captives to Samaria to dwell (II Kings 17:24). Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, brought in priest of Israel to teach the foreign captives how to worship Jehovah God that they may dwell in the land safely. These people came to be known as the Samaritans (cf. II Kings 17:29). The Samaritans feared Jehovah yet they served their own gods as well (II Kings 17:33).
 2. Note that Ezra refers to the Samaritans as *“the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin.”* The Samaritans make a request that they be granted the opportunity to help build Jehovah’s temple. Their qualifications are sited as, *“for we seek your God as ye do; and we sacrifice unto him...”*
- B.** *“But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of father’s houses of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us”* (4:3).
1. Cyrus had termed Jehovah, *“the God of Israel”* at Ezra 1:3. The Samaritans worshipped a host of other gods and viewed Jehovah as another god (cf. II Kings 17:32ff). Apparently the Samaritans had the opportunity to fear, worship, and obey Jehovah God and be accepted (cf. II Kings 17:40); however, they rejected monotheism of the Lord God Almighty.
 2. Zerubbabel, Jeshua the high priest, and the heads of the father’s houses reject the Samaritans offer to help build a worship house for God based upon the fact that they were not true worshippers of God. Here is a lesson on zeal and Bible fellowship. To many today this would seem unloving, judgmental, and unchristian... after all... if the Jews would accept them they might influence them to do what is right.
 3. We may gain incite into the realm of Christian fellowship today from this verse. All those who would claim to be in fellowship with God while walking in error are deluded (cf. I Jn. 1:5-7) (see study # 6; Bible Fellowship). Such a one *“hath not God”* (II Jn. 9-10) and those who receive into their fellowship or passively accept the erring one’s false doctrines are just as guilty (II Cor. 6:14; II Jn. 11). The Lord’s church needs zealous men such as Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the heads of the father’s houses to take a stand against those who would try to creep into the church and destroy it (cf. II Tim. 3:1-7; II Pet. 2:1ff) (See study # 7; Bible Characters of Great Conviction (examples of men who showed forth great conviction in the face of adversaries)).
 4. If Zerubbabel and Jeshua would have accepted the offer of the Samaritans they would have sinned and had no part in God’s promises to restore Judah (see Ezek. 44:4-9). The very first commandment was against idolatry. To cower and accept the help of the Samaritans would have been to join hands with them in a spiritual work (i.e., building the temple of Jehovah God). Though the Jews were relatively small in number and fearful of the surrounding nations (cf. Ezra 3:3) they were determined to do all things *“as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God...”* (Ezra 3:2-4) and so they kept the set feast and offered sacrifices upon the altar of burnt offering because they were seeking God’s favor rather than the favor of men. The lesson of great faith continues with God’s people from chapter 3.
- C.** *“Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem”* (4:4-6).
1. Why didn’t the Samaritans try to prove to Zerubbabel and Jeshua that they truly loved and worshipped Jehovah alone? The answer must be that they continued in their multiplicity of gods and were not willing to give them up (Rev. 3:9). Once turned away their anger is kindled against the people of God. Again, Jesus said that such would be the case even in our days. When we expose people’s errors they often times do all they can do to hurt us (Jn. 7:7; 15:18ff; II Tim. 2:12) (see study # 8; Bible Persecution).

2. The Samaritans, in a spirit of hatred, began to “*trouble*” the people of God. Legal agents were hired to represent the Samaritans in the Persian court system. These legal officers were successful in getting the work stopped in Jerusalem. It seems that the work stopped while legal battles over the construction of the temple in Jerusalem took place in Persia. These legal battles went on for approximately 10 years. After experiencing success, four years pass unchecked by the Jews. Approximately 14 years pass, from the days of Cyrus until the reign of Darius, before the temple construction would once again begin.
3. Date Issues: Some have concluded that the Ahasuerus of this verse is the Ahasuerus of Esther known as Xerxes who reigned from 486 BC to 465 BC. Again, some believe that the Artaxerxes of the next verse is Artaxerxes Longimanus who reigned in Persia from 465 to 424 BC. If this is true then Ezra 4:6-23 is a parenthetical type of section that reveals events that happened 34 and 55 years after the Jews resumed their work on the temple and city walls. If, however, the book of Ezra chapters 1-6 are to be taken chronologically Ahasuerus would likely be associated with Cambyses and Artaxerxes with Gomates (The Persian kings have a history of overlapping and multiple references to their names which makes studying them difficult). Consider a list of the kings of Persia and their dates: Cyrus (the Great) 539 – 530 BC, Cambyses II 530 – 522, Gomates (Pseudo-Smerdis) 522 – 521, and Darius I (The Great, son of Hystaspes) 521 – 486 BC. The more probable approach is to take the Artaxerxes of chapter 7 and assign to him the Xerxes or Ahasuerus of the book of Esther.

II. The Samaritans write letters of complaint to the King of Persia regarding the Rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple (4:7-16):

- A. *“And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian character, and set forth in the Syrian tongue. Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions, the Dinaites, and the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Shushanchites, the Dehaites, the Elamites, and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar brought over, and set in the city of Samaria, and in the rest of the country beyond the River, and so forth. This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto Artaxerxes the king: Thy servants the men beyond the River, and so forth”* (4:7-11).
 1. It appears that three different letters are under consideration in this section.
 2. We have recorded the contents of one only (Ezra 4:11ff).
- B. *“Be it known unto the king, that the Jews that came up from thee are come to us unto Jerusalem; they are building the rebellious and the bad city, and have finished the walls, and repaired the foundations. Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and in the end it will be hurtful unto the kings. Now because we eat the salt of the palace, and it is not meet for us to see the king’s dishonor, therefore have we sent and certified the king; that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time; for which cause was this city laid waste. We certify the king that, if this city be builded, and the walls finished, by this means thou shalt have no portion beyond the River”* (4:12-16).
 1. We know that the walls of Jerusalem had not yet been finished for this would be the work of Nehemiah some sixty years latter. Apparently someone had begun the rebuilding process (cf. Ezra 9:9). The foundations referred to by the Samaritan letter are likely the beginnings of many buildings being rebuilt rather than the temple alone.
 2. The Samaritans refer to Jerusalem as a “*rebellious and bad city... they will not pay taxes... Jerusalem has a history of being rebellious and hurtful to surrounding nations... and for these causes it was laid waste.*”
 3. Interestingly, what the world perceives as rebellious, troublemakers, hurtful, filled with sedition (conduct or language that incites rebellion against authority), and deserving of being laid waste the Lord commends His people for their obedience (see Jn. 7:7; 15:17 – 16:4; I Jn. 2:15-17)

(see study # 9; The World's View of God's People). When God's people lose their zeal and conviction they are no longer viewed as troublesome and rebellious by the world. We have peace with the world but trouble with God. When peace comes from ecumenism and or unity in diversity we have effectively given up on God's word. Christians are not trouble makers but rather peace seekers. Peace; however, is found in truth alone. Let us seek truth first then peace will follow (cf. James 3:17). Through no other name than Christ will one obtain salvation (cf. Acts 4:12).

III. Artaxerxes Responds to the Samaritan's Letter [Work is Halted] (4:17-23):

A. *"Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and in the rest of the country beyond the River: Peace, and so forth. The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. And I decreed, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the country beyond the River; and tribute, custom, and toll, was paid unto them. Make ye now a decree to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until a decree shall be made by me. And take heed that ye be not slack herein: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?"* (4:17-22).

1. The power of spiritual ignorance is depicted here. Once Artaxerxes researched the libraries of history and found the statements of the Samaritans to be true he hurriedly replied and agreed to stop the Jews from rebuilding the city, its walls, and the temple.
2. When the adversaries of God's people today have a quarrel they often turn to history as well. They may say things such as these people think they are the only one's going to heaven... they don't even believe in musical instruments in the worship services... they are literalists and legalists.... they seek their salvation through perfect obedience... they split over such and such issues and so forth. When the spiritually dead of the world hear such statements they turn their head against the church of Christ before even giving an ear. Their malignant view of the church is love and peace at the cost of doctrine. The world does not want to hear of controversy and standing for truth. They want peace without paying the cost (cf. Ezek. 13:10-16).

B. *"Then when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem; and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia"* (4:23-24).

1. A short term victory was achieved by the Samaritans. Jubilee was no doubt in their hearts as they read the letter. Often times the enemies of the cross have minor victories over the faithful of God, however, the Lord reveals that their happiness will be turned to tears and shame (cf. Jer. 50:11-13).
2. The second year of the reign of Darius would represent a 14 year work stoppage.

Lessons from chapter 4

1. The "*children of captivity's*" faith. The people of God evidenced their great faith in the Lord in that they put God's laws first even though there was reason to fear (cf. Ezra 3:3). God's laws prohibited the wicked and uncircumcised in heart and flesh to sacrifice unto the Lord (Ezek. 44:4-9). Compromise and fear would have been the grounds for unity between the Jews and Samaritans yet the people of God took a stand and said, *"Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God"* (Ezra 4:3).
2. When the Godly of all ages expose rather than fellowship error the wicked will retaliate (cf. Eph. 5:11; cf. Jn. 7:7; II Tim. 2:12) (see study # 8):
 - They will *"weaken the hands of the people of God"* (Ezra 4:4)
 - *"Trouble"* the people of God (Ezra 4:4)
 - Do all within their power to *"frustrate"* the work of the Godly (Ezra 4:5). One way that the Samaritans did this to the Jews was that they wrote letters to the king of Persia that was filled with misleading truths (Ezra 4:7-16).

3. When God's people seek peace with erring brethren and the religious world by compromise, tolerance (i.e., unity in diversity), and ecumenism we lose our distinctive edge to shame and convert the world. We are no longer considered "*rebellious, hurtful, and filled with sedition*" (Ezra 4:13-16) because we have blended in with everyone else. When we take a firm stand for truth trouble will certainly find us (see study # 10; Compromise for the sake of Unity and Peace).

Chapter 5

I. Work on the Temple in Jerusalem is Resumed after a 14 Year Work Stoppage (5:1-2):

- A. "*Now the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem; in the name of the God of Israel prophesied they unto them*" (5:1).
 1. Haggai and Zechariah have books that we often refer to as the "minor prophets." These two men were "*prophets*" (*prophetes*) = "One who speaks for God and interprets his will to man, a prophet... generally, an interpreter, declarer... one who possesses the gift of prophecy, an inspired preacher and teacher... the revealer of God's counsel for the future, a prophet... a predictor of future events" (LS 704). When one speaks of prophets and prophecy one enters into a discussion of the means whereby God delivered His will to mankind. The apostle Peter writes, "*For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit*" (II Pet. 1:21). Speaking of the full gospel message the apostle Paul writes, "*which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;*" (Eph. 3:5). Again, Paul writes to the Galatians laying claims to speaking by divine guidance when he said, "*For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Gal. 1:11-12). A study of the book of Ezekiel reveals the Holy Spirit's direct involvement in the prophet's abilities to speak the mind of God to mankind (cf. Ezek. 1:3; 2:1-2; 11:4-7) (see study # 11; The Inspiration of the Word of God).
 2. When Ezra records that Haggai and Zechariah "*prophesied unto the Jews... in the name of the God of Israel...*" the priests / scribe is stating the fact that these men declared the mind of God to the designed audience by His authority. They spoke what God wanted the people to know. The Holy Spirit thereby "*fell upon*" (Ezek. 11:5), "*entered into*" (Ezek. 2:1) and "*moved*" them (II Pet. 1:21) to speak the mind of God. Not only do we see the means whereby prophecy occurred but we too see the work of the Holy Spirit (i.e., to reveal the mind of God) (see study # 12; The Work of the Holy Spirit).
- B. "*Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem; and with them were the prophets of God, helping them*" (5:2).
 1. Ezra does not record the words delivered by Haggai and Zechariah but the two books that bear their name do. Haggai charged the people to get back to the work that God originally intended for them to do; i.e., build the temple and the walls of the city. Zechariah encouraged the people to reform their spiritual deficiencies. The people of God had actually used the purchased and delivered materials that were intended to be used to build the temple to construct their own homes (cf. Hag. 1:4ff).
 2. "Haggai entered upon his work on the first day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius; and his first address made such an impression, that Zerubbabel and Joshua with the people set about the intermitted work of building as early as the twenty-fourth day of the same month (comp. Hagg. 1:1 and 14f.). Two months later, viz., in the eighth month of the same year, Zechariah began to exhort the people to turn sincerely to the Lord their God, and not to relapse into the sins of their fathers."⁵

⁵ Ibid. Pg. 48

II. The work of Building the Temple and the City Walls is once again Challenged by the Authorities West of the Euphrates River (5:3-5):

A. *“At the same time came to them Tattenai, the governor beyond the River, and Shetharbozenai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this wall?”* (5:3)

1. “Tattenai was governor of all the provinces west and south of the Euphrates River; on a map this triangle of land would include everything from the border of Babylon to the northeastern tip of the Mediterranean Sea, and down to the border of Egypt. The governors of Syria, Samaria (former Israel), and several other lands would be under his supervision.”⁶ “Shetharbozenai seems to have been his secretary.”⁷

2. The Apharsachites: “The senders of the letter are, besides Tattenai, Shetharboznai and his companions the Apharsachites, the same called 4:9 the Apharsathchites, who perhaps, as a race specially devoted to the Persian king, took a prominent position among the settlers in Syria, and may have formed the royal garrison.”⁸

3. These authorities note the work and question its authority.

B. *“Then we told them after this manner, what the names of the men were that were making this building. But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and they did not make them cease, till the matter should come to Darius, and then answer should be returned by letter concerning it”* (5:4-5).

1. Apparently Zerubbabel and Jeshua answered the Persian official by citing the original decree of Cyrus to have the temple and city walls constructed.

2. The phrase, *“But the eye of their God was upon the elders...”* indicates that by the providence of God His people were permitted to continue their work until an official decree was sent by the king of Persia on the matter (see study # 13; Bible Providence).

III. Tattenai, Shetharbozenai, and the Apharsachites send a Letter to Darius the King of Persia to get an Official Ruling on the Matter (5:6-17):

A. *“The copy of the letter that Tattenai, the governor beyond the River, and Shetharbozenai, and his companions the Apharsachites, who were beyond the River, sent to Darius the king; they sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus: Unto Darius the king, all peace”* (5:6-7).

1. The contents of this letter demonstrate a different spirit than that which was written by Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel to king Artaxerxes (cf. Ez. 4:7ff).

2. Sufficient time has elapsed to suffice or pacify the Samaritans disposition of anger against God’s people. We do not read of the presence of Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel.

B. *“Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judah, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls; and this work goeth on with diligence and prospereth in their hands”* (5:8).

1. Again the tone of this letter is far different than the letter written 14 years back to Artaxerxes in that only the facts are stated. The facts are that the governor went into the land of Judah (probably at the behest of the Samaritans), the temple of Jehovah was being built with great stones, and the walls of the city with timber. The Jews are working very hard and are prospering.

2. Notice also that the governor refers to Jehovah God as the *“great God.”* The implied factor is that the governor was familiar with Jehovah’s past works.

C. *“Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this wall?”* (5:9).

1. The *“decree”* or city permit for building remained under consideration.

2. We may guess that the Samaritans had once again called this issue into question.

D. *“We asked them their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were at the head of them. And thus they returned us answer, saying, we are the servants of the God*

⁶ College Press Bible Study Textbook on Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. Pg. 62

⁷ Ibid. Pg. 62

⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. 4 pg. 49-50

of heaven and earth, and are building the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and finished” (5:10-11).

1. The previous faith and zeal (cf. Ezra 3:2, 4; 4:3) of the people now returns and is indicated in their answer to the governor as to why they are constructing the temple and city walls.
 2. The people of God answer by saying that their intentions are to reconstruct the great temple that was originally built by Solomon. They are “*servants of the God of heaven and earth*” and are thereby working by His decree (or authority).
- E. *“But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon” (5:12).*
1. The people of God give the governor an answer in relation to history. All of Persia was familiar with Nebuchadnezzar and his great Babylonian conquests. All were familiar with the historical battle that took place in Jerusalem whereby the city and its walls were crumbled to the ground.
 2. God did not allow this defeat to take place due to His weakness but rather because of the sins of His people and their unwillingness to repent (cf. Ezek. 36:16-21). Due to Israel’s sin, God “*gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.*”
- F. *“But in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, Cyrus the king made a decree to build this house of God. And the gold and silver vessels also of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; and he said unto him, Take these vessels, go, put them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in its place” (5:13-15).*
1. Sheshbazzar is an equivalent name to Zerubbabel (cf. notes at Ezra 1:7-8).
 2. Note the important difference between this letter and the one written by the Samaritans in Ezra chapter 4. The Samaritans instructed the king (Artaxerxes) to search the archives of the state and note how “*rebellious, hurtful, and sedition*” the kingdom of Israel has been in history (4:12-16). The Samaritans never asked the Persian king to search the archives of Cyrus to see whether permission was given to build the city.
 3. The governor of the Persian province under current consideration; however, reveals the facts that apparently the Jews have quoted to him as their justification for the work at hand. He and Darius are to seek only the truth in the matter according to the Persian archives.
- G. *“Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundations of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not completed” (5:16).*
1. The governor continues to relay the story told him by Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the elders concerning their permission and grant to rebuild the temple of Jehovah and the city of Jerusalem’s walls.
 2. The words of this letter would lead one to think that work had continued on the temple and city walls; however, Ezra recorded at 4:23 that the work was halted by Persian force. Furthermore Haggai reveals that the work had stopped (Hag. 1:2, 9 etc.). Approximately fourteen years lie between the reigns of Artaxerxes and Darius.
- H. *“Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king’s treasure-house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem; and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter” (5:17).*
1. Herein lies the chief difference between this letter sent to Darius and the letter that the Samaritans wrote Artaxerxes fourteen years ago. Tattenai’s letter revealed only facts such as the claims laid by the Jews (i.e., they are building by permission of Cyrus). The Samaritan’s letter had nothing of the sort due to the fact that its design was to stop the work of the temple. Clearly Tattenai is indifferent about the matter and only wants to uphold any Persian court ruling.
 2. When dealing with any issue in life (whether spiritual questions or everyday life predicaments) the people of God should take a lesson from Tattenai, the governor beyond the Euphrates

River. Tattenai's letter illustrated an interest in the facts alone. His emotions and personal feelings were left out. His primary interest was in upholding the Persian laws.

3. The first year of Cyrus (cf. Ezra 1:1) is documented as 539 – 538 BC. The people of God built the walls of the city of Jerusalem and the foundation of the temple for 2 years (cf. Ezra 3:8).

Chapter 6

I. Darius searches the Persian Archives and finds the Decree of Cyrus regarding the Building of Jehovah's temple and the City Walls (6:1-5):

A. *"Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the archives, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon"* (6:1).

1. Upon receiving the letter from the governor of the Euphrates area the king makes a decree that his servants search the archives of past decrees made by previous kings to see whether the permit truly existed as the Jews claim.
2. Apparently the work of rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple of Jehovah was not very important to the Persians. It would seem that such a project would have been known by most government officials. One plausible explanation is that the Medes and Persians had become a powerful empire that encompassed a vast amount of territory. There would have been multitudes of decrees made concerning the conquered lands and cities. Jerusalem was just another city to the Medo-Persian Empire. Cyrus' edict of fifteen years ago likely got lost in the volumes of decree scrolls stored at Ecbatana (capital of Media).

B. *"And there was found at Achmetha in the palace that is in the province of Media, a roll, and therein was thus written for a record: In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king made a decree: concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be builded, the place where they offer sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; with three courses of great stones, and a course of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house. And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to its place; and thou shalt put them in the house of God"* (6:2-5).

1. A decree concerning the building of Jehovah's holy temple and the city's walls (a Persian building permit) existed as the Jews claimed.
2. Achmetha, or Ecbatana, was the ancient capital city of Media. Ecbatana was a fortified city with seven walls. History reveals that Alexander the Great stored his confiscated treasures in Ecbatana. Media's archive building was located in Ecbatana (ISBE, v. 2, pp. 10-11).

II. Darius responds to Tattenai, Shetharbozenai, and the Apharsachites' letter regarding the Validity of the Jews Claims (6:6-12):

A. *"Now therefore, Tattenai, governor beyond the River, Shetharbozenai, and your companions the Apharsachites, who are beyond the River be ye far from thence: let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in its place"* (6:6-7).

1. Darius responds to the governor and his companions in regards to the letter they wrote him about the Jews construction of the temple and city walls.
2. Darius commands that the Persian governor and his companions be far from the Jews (leave them alone and let them work).

B. *"Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to these elders of the Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the River, expenses be given with all diligence unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for burnt-offerings to the God of heaven; also wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the word of the priests that are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail; that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savor unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons"* (6:8-10).

1. Not only did Darius command that the peoples of the lands leave the Jews alone but he too commanded that the “*expenses*” involved in such a project be provided by the Persian government.
 2. Additionally, Darius made a decree that all animals for daily, weekly, and monthly sacrifices be provided to the Jews so that “*they may offer sacrifice of sweet savor unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.*” To what extent Darius’ faith in Jehovah God was we are not really told. It is likely that Darius could not deny the archive history regarding the great works of Jehovah God yet continued to worship his own national deities such as the Mithra.
- C. “*Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let a beam be pulled out from his house, and let him be lifted up and fastened thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this: and the God that hath caused his name to dwell there over-throw all kings and peopoles that shall put forth their hand to alter the same, to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with all diligence*” (6:11-12).
1. Darius decreed that the Jews work be funded by the Persian government, animals provided for sacrifices, and protection in the form of a death penalty to any who interfered with the work.
 2. “This kind of capital punishment was customary among the Assyrians (Diod. Sic. ii. 1), the ancient Persians, and many other nations, but seems to have been executed in different manners among different people. Among the Assyrians it generally consisted in the impalement of the delinquent upon a sharp strong wooden post;...Darius impaled as many as 3000 Babylonians after the capture of their city. Crucifixion proper, however, i.e., nailing to a cross, also occurred among the Persians; it was, however, practiced by nailing the body of the criminal to a cross after decapitation...”⁹

III. The Jews return to the work of Building the Temple and City Walls (6:13-18):

- A. “*Then Tattenai, the governor beyond the River, Shetharbozenai, and their companions, because that Darius the king had sent, did accordingly with all diligence. And the elders of the Jews builded and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king*” (6:13-15).
1. When Tattenai and his companions received the decrees from Darius they honored the law “*with all diligence*” (i.e., they provided materials, animals for sacrificing, and protection by decree of death to those who interfered with the Jew’s work).
 2. Note that this good work was resumed due to the work of God through His prophets Haggai and Zechariah. If God would not have sent these two prophets the people may have never returned to the work God had commanded them to do.
 3. We need to also note that the work of building the temple and walls of the city were “*according to the commandment of the God of Israel*” (Ezra 6:14). God had promised to return the Jews to their homeland and have the temple, city, and walls rebuilt (Jer. 23:7-8; 31:7-9; Ezek. 20-36). Let us recall that in the first year that the Jews came back to Jerusalem they assembled as “*one man*” in purpose (Ezra 3:1). They were united in purpose to do all that is “*written in the law of Moses the man of God*” (Ezra 3:2-4).
 4. The foundation of the temple was laid two years after coming into the land (i.e., the second year of Cyrus [~ 536 BC] cf. Ezra 3:8. 21 years latter, i.e., the sixth year of Darius (515 BC) the temple is completed. The month was Adar (i.e., the twelfth month of the Hebrew calendar).
- B. “*And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy. And they offered at the dedication of this house of God a hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in*

⁹ Ibid. Pg. 55

their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses” (6:16-18).

1. 700 animals were offered as a sacrifice in keeping with the dedication of the temple. Additionally there were 12 he-goats offered for a sin offering. The dedication of Zerubbabel’s temple was only fractional compared to Solomon’s dedication. King Solomon sacrificed 142,000 animals as a dedication feast unto the Lord (cf. I Kings 8:62-63).
2. The order of priests and their services is given at I Chron. 23:1ff).

IV. Israel keeps the Passover (6:19-22):

A. *“And the children of the captivity kept the Passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure: and they killed the Passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves” (6:19-20).*

1. Approximately three weeks after the dedication of the temple the people keep the Passover Feast (established in the first month of the Hebrew calendar).
2. The priests and Levites are separated due to the fact that not all Levites are priests (only the sons of Aaron).

B. *“And the children of Israel that were come again out of the captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the nations of the land, to seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for Jehovah had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God the God of Israel” (6:21-22).*

1. “Those who had separated themselves from the uncleanness of the heathen to them (the Jews) to seek Jehovah, are not proselytes from heathenism but Israelites, who had till now lived in Palestine, and mingled with the heathen inhabitants of the Land. They were descended from those Israelites whom the kings of Assyria and Babylon had not carried away from the realms of Israel and Judah, and who with respect to religion had combined heathenism and the worship of Jehovah (II Kings 17:32, etc.), and thus defiled themselves with heathen impurity, but who now, after the erection of the temple, joined themselves to the new community, for the purpose of worshipping with them the God of their fathers in his temple, according to the law of Moses.”¹⁰
2. How did *“Jehovah turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God?”* Why the writer pins Darius as the *“king of Assyria”* is not clear. One thing that is clear is that Darius made a decree in the favor of the Jews and God had His providential hand in this decision (see study # 13).
3. Note that Israel’s hands were providentially *“strengthened”* by Darius but at chapter 4:4 the *“people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building.”* God providentially removed the barrier produced by the Samaritans and gave His people the opportunity to fulfill His command to build the temple. With the help of God we can certainly do all things necessary to fulfill His commandments and make it to heaven (cf. Phil. 4:13).

Lessons Learned:

- The method of prophecy (consider II Pet. 1:21; Ezek. 2:1; 11:5).
- The work of the Holy Spirit (in relation to prophecy cf. above scriptures in addition to Jn. 16).
- Character: Tattenai’s letter dealt with facts whereas the Samaritans’ letter of Ezra chapter 4:11ff dealt with suppositions.
- The power of motivational zeal (i.e., Haggai’s prophetic words took only 24 days to sink into the hearts of the Jews and they returned to the work God had commanded them cf. Haggai 1:1 compared to 1:14-15). God’s **command** was that they build the temple (cf. Ezra 6:14). The temple was completed in the

¹⁰ Ibid. Pg. 58

sixth year of Darius which would have been 24 years after they had arrived in Jerusalem by edict of Cyrus (cf. Ezra 1:1 and 6:14-15).

- God can “*strengthen the hands*” of His people that they might fulfill their duty to keep His commandments (cf. Ezra 6:22 compared to the Samaritans “*weakening the hands*” of God’s people through discouragement and persecution cf. Ezra 4:4). The apostle Paul wrote, “*I can do all things through him who strengthens me*” (Phil. 4:13).
- God can **providentially** use various people and authorities to strengthen the hands of His saints (see Ezra 5:5 and 6:22).

Chapter 7

Prelude to Chapter:

Between chapters six and seven of Ezra, 57 years pass with no mention of that time. During this time it is generally agreed that the events of Esther occur and the institution of the feast of Purim. “When the long and eventful reign of Darius was over, and his son Xerxes, probably the Ahasuerus of Esther, had also lived and reigned and passed away, and the grandson of Darius, known generally as Artaxerxes Longimanus, occupied the Persian throne, a further return of Israelites from Babylon, on a tolerably large scale, took place...That Longimanus, the grandson of Darius, is meant seems to follow from the fact that Eliashib, the grandson of Jeshua is high priest under him (Neh. 3:1).”¹¹

I. Ezra (7:1-10):

- A. “*Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priests*” (7:1-5).
1. Ezra is now mentioned for the first time in the study. Ezra’s ancestry is traced back to Aaron, the brother of Moses and first high priest (chief priest; vs. 5).
 2. Ezra’s ancestry proves that he is of a priestly order yet no where does the word of God refer to him as a high priest. Josephus recognizes Ezra as a “principle priest” (Antiquities, XI, 5.1, pg. 271). Artaxerxes refers to Ezra as a scribe and priest in his letter (cf. Ezra 7:12).
- B. “*This Ezra went up from Babylon. And he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which Jehovah, the God of Israel, had given; and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of Jehovah his God upon him*” (7:6).
1. Ezra is the first scribe mentioned in the Bible. A scribe was one who made copies of the Law of Moses to preserve it to the people. Nehemiah chapter 8:1 and following indicates that not only was Ezra a scribe but one who was capable of expository preaching and interpretation of the Law (see study # 14; Ezra).
 2. Ezra came in the authority of King Artaxerxes of Persia to Jerusalem to spiritually reform the people of God. The days of Ezra in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas was a time of degrading morals. “The high priesthood, which had been filled by the saintly Jeshua, was occupied by Eliashib, who became connected by marriage with two conspicuous enemies of the faith of Israel. His grandson married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite; he himself was allied unto Tobiah, to whom he gave a residence in the courts of the house of God (Neh. 13:4-7, 28). Darius had been succeeded by Xerxes, the story of whose pride, lasciviousness, passion, and feebleness is one of the most ignoble of the records of classic history. He was the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther... The full extent of the debasement of the settlers in Palestine

¹¹ The Pulpit Commentary. Vol. VII; Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Job Pg. 99-100

was not known in Babylon; it broke on both Ezra and Nehemiah with painful surprise (Ezra 9; Neh. 13).”¹²

3. Ezra must have approached Artaxerxes with a request to leave Babylon for Jerusalem that he may check on the spiritual welfare of the people.
- C. *“And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon; and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him”* (7:7-9).
 1. The seventh year of Artaxerxes (Xerxes or Ahasuerus) would be approximately 479 BC. The trip from the region of Babylon to Jerusalem is about 900 miles. The entire trip took them four months (i.e., from the 1st day of the 1st month to the 1st day of the 5th month).
 2. Xerxes gives Ezra permission to travel to Jerusalem with priests, Levites, singers, porters, and the Nethinim. The Nethinim were first mentioned in this study at Ezra 2:43. The Nethinim were likely servants in the temple of Jehovah (cf. Ezra 8:20).
- D. *“For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances”* (7:10).
 1. There are characters in the word of God that motivate us to do that which we know is to be done in our spiritual lives. Ezra goes down in history as one whose conviction and zeal became contagious to the point of God’s people being moved to repentance (see study # 14).
 2. Note the facts about Ezra’s character:
 - a. Ezra was a “*ready*” scribe. To be ready is to be prepared.
 - b. Ezra prepared himself for the work of reforming God’s people in that he “*set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah.*” This fact is the center of Ezra’s Godly character. Ezra was a man of purpose. God was real to Ezra and so were His warnings against disobedience. Ezra was convicted of the reality of God and thereby was motivated to fulfill all His commandments. Having the fear of God the scribe priests set his heart like a clock to seek law of Jehovah God and to keep it. Ezra was not in a class of identifying principles as though they were theory. Ezra took God’s laws and applied them to his life.
 - c. Ezra was made ready for the tasks of reforming God’s people through diligent study and purpose. When the opportunity arose to use his knowledge he did not shy back. The scribe priests set his heart to teach God’s laws to a people who had set them aside.

II. **God’s Providential hand moves Artaxerxes to write a letter of Permission to Ezra (7:11-26):**

- A. *“Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even the scribe of the words of the commandments of Jehovah, and of his statutes to Israel:”* (7:11).
 1. To understand what prompted this letter one must understand three things. First, know that Ezra had made a request to the king to see how his brethren fared spiritually (cf. Ezra 7:6). Secondly, know that God’s people had sinned in that they had violated His marriage laws (cf. Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:23ff). Thirdly, we need to see that it was by God’s providence that Artaxerxes decides to send a delegation of Jews to Jerusalem to teach them God’s laws (cf. Ezra 7:27). Israel’s reform would come by the providence of God through Ezra.
 2. The king writes a letter authorizing Ezra to return to Jerusalem. The original language of this letter is Aramaic, which indicates that Ezra has inserted an official Persian document here into the holy inspired word of God.
- B. *“Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect and so forth. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and their priests and the Levites, in my realm, that are minded of their own free will to go to Jerusalem, go with thee. For as much as thou art sent of the king and his seven counselors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thy hand”* (7:12-14).
 1. Artaxerxes was apparently familiar with the fact that God’s laws were designed to be followed by its adherents. Artaxerxes was also familiar with the reputation of Ezra and so chooses this scribe and priest to be the supervisor of this spiritual check on Jerusalem.

¹² Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. 4 Pg. 107

2. Artaxerxes gives the purpose of his letter to Ezra in these verses. The Persian council has determined to send a delegation to Jerusalem to inquire of their state of being in relation to the “*law of thy God.*” This must have been in response to Ezra’s request to the king mentioned at Ezra 7:6.
- C. *“and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counselors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, and all the silver and gold that thou shalt find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill-offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem;”* (7:15-16).
1. Ezra is to take his trip and the offering of the Persian government and Jews of captivity.
 2. The collected offering of gold and silver from Babylon and the Jews was to be taken to Jerusalem “*for the house of their God.*”
- D. *“therefore thou shalt with all diligence by with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meal-offerings and their drink-offerings, and shalt offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem”* (7:17).
1. The king of Persia is commanding Ezra to take this money and buy sacrificial animals and drink offerings to give unto Jehovah God when they reach Jerusalem.
 2. Question: Why would Ezra and God’s people be so quick to accept this monetary help from heathen yet refuse the help of the Samaritans at Ezra 4:3? The answer to this question is one of fellowship. The Samaritans claimed to be servants of God and to sacrifice unto Him (cf. Ezra 4:2) yet they were very far removed from keeping His laws. The Persian government, on the other hand, laid no false claims to Jehovah worship but simply supplied the people of God what they needed to perform their worship. Persia was not trying to get involved in Jehovah worship while practicing idolatry else they would have been rejected as well. God simply used Persia to accomplish His purpose with His people as He did with Pharaoh of Egypt, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians before them (see study # 13). To accept the Samaritans form of worship would be a violation of God’s laws (see study # 6).
- E. *“And whatsoever shall seem good to thee and to thy brethren to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do ye after the will of your God. And the vessels that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king’s treasure house”* (7:18-20).
1. Artaxerxes gives Ezra the charge over all surplus monies to do what God would have them do with it in His service.
 2. Furthermore, Artaxerxes makes decree that if the Jews are in further need that the Persian government would supply even more to meet their needs.
- F. *“And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasures that are beyond the River, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done with all diligence, unto a hundred talents of silver, and to a hundred measures of wheat, and to a hundred baths of wine, and to a hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven; for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?”* (7:21-23)
1. Not only did the Persian capital make contributions to the Jews but the providences controlled by Persia “*beyond the River*” were to do so as well.
 2. Verse 23 gives Artaxerxes’ motivation for doing these good deeds to the Jews in Jerusalem. The word of God tells us that God put it in the king’s heart to do all these things at Ezra 7:27. The power of God was known and apparently respected by the Persian kings (cf. Ezra 4:16, 22; 6:10). Artaxerxes felt that if he did these good deeds that he would have good standing with Jehovah God.
- G. *“Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, the singers, porters, Nethilnim, or servants of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll, upon them. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thy hand, appoint magistrates and judges, who may judge all the people that are beyond the River, all such as know the laws of thy God; and*

teach ye him that knows them not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon him with all diligence, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment” (7:24-26).

1. The letter indicates Artaxerxes’ fear and respect for the power and laws of Jehovah God.
2. No peoples are to place Israel under subjection and demand tribute, custom, or tolls upon them.
3. Artaxerxes instructs Ezra to enforce the laws of God. Those who reject God’s laws would be subject to punishment.

III. Ezra gives thanks to God (7:27-28):

- A.** *“Blessed be Jehovah, the God of our fathers, who hath put such a thing as this in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem;” (7:27).*
1. First we note that the decree for Ezra to return to Jerusalem to assess the status of God’s people in relation to His laws was providentially provided by the Lord (see study # 13).
 2. Secondly, we note that not only Artaxerxes intend for Ezra to check the spiritual state of Israel but also to *“beautify the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem.”*
- B.** *“and hath extended lovingkindness unto me before the king, and his counselors, and before all the king’s mighty princes. And I was strengthened according to the hand of Jehovah my God upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me” (7:28).*
1. Ezra gives thanks to the Lord for giving him favor in the eyes of the Persian government.
 2. Ezra is strengthened by the knowledge of God’s providential care. The scribe and priest begins to gather people to return to Jerusalem with him.
 3. The source of Ezra’s strength to perform the great task before him was Jehovah God (cf. Ezra 6:22 and Phil. 4:13).

Chapter 8

I. Those who travel to Jerusalem with Ezra (8:1-14):

- A.** *“Now these are the heads of their fathers’ houses, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king: Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom. Of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel. Of the sons of David, Hattush. Of the sons of Shecaniah, of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah; and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males a hundred and fifty. Of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai the son of Zerachiah; and with him two hundred males. Of the sons of Shecaniah, the son of Jahaziel; and with him three hundred males. And of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan; and with him fifty males. And of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah; and with him seventy males. And of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael; and with him fourscore males. Of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel; and with him two hundred and eighteen males. And of the sons of Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah; and with him a hundred and threescore males. And of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai; and with him twenty and eight males. And of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan; and with him a hundred and ten males. And of the sons of Adonikam, that were the last; and these are their names: Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah; and with them threescore males. And of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud; and with them seventy males” (8:1-14).*
1. The total number of males counted that accompanied the heads of the fathers in leaving Babylon is 1496.
 2. Note that women and children are not numbered.
- B.** *“And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there we encamped three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi. Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, who were teachers. And I sent them forth unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia; and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, [and] his brethren the Nethinim, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God. And according to the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of discretion, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and*

Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen; and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; and of the Nethinim, whom David and the princes had given for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinim: all of them were mentioned by name” (8:15-20).

1. 38 Levites are numbered.
2. 220 Nethinim (servants of the temple).
3. 1734 total males are numbered as having returned from Babylon. This number does not include women and children and thereby the total was very well over 5000.

II. **The Journey to Jerusalem (8:21-**

A. *“Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, the hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our god for this: and he was entreated of us” (8:21-23).*

1. The river Ahava is unidentifiable and may have been a canal or tributary of the Euphrates.
2. Before leaving on the lengthy journey to Jerusalem Ezra proclaims a fast and prays to God for a safe journey.
3. Ezra could have requested soldiers from the king; however, such a request would have sent mixed signals to the king of Persia. Ezra had spoken boldly with the king of Persia telling him that God would be with them because they faithfully sought him. To ask for soldiers would have said to Artaxerxes that Ezra and God’s people had not diligently sought after His laws.
4. With such thoughts in mind, Ezra states that he would be ashamed to actually ask the king for permission seeing that he has made a bold proclamation of his faith to the king.

B. *“Then I set apart twelve of the chiefs of the priests, even Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, and weighted unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering for the house of our God, which the king, and his counselors, and his princes and all Israel there present, had offered: I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels a hundred talents; of gold a hundred talents; and twenty bowls of gold, of a thousand darics; and two vessels of fine bright brass, precious as gold. And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto Jehovah, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill-offering unto Jehovah, the God of your fathers. Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites, and the princes of the father’s houses of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of Jehovah. So the priests and the Levites received the weight of silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God” (8:24-30).*

1. Ezra weighs out and distributes the gold, silver, brass, and various precious vessels to the priests and Levites.
2. Ezra entrust these treasures with these men so that they may be presented when they are in Jerusalem.

C. *“Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the lier-in-wait by the way” (8:31).*

1. The Jews spend 12 days at the river fasting and praying for a safe journey (compare to Ezra 7:6). The distribution of funds to the Levites and priests took place during this time as well.
2. The Jews would be exposed to dangers from thieves and enemies in general.

D. *“And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days. And on the fourth day the silver and the gold and the vessels were weighed in the house of our God into the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest (and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas: and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, the Levites) – the whole by number and weight: and all the weight was written at that time” (8:32-34).*

1. After arriving in Jerusalem the band of people from Babylon rest for three days no doubt getting caught up on social acquaintances.

2. The fourth day began their work. The first task was to weigh the gold, silver, and vessels that had been entrusted to the priests and Levites. When the weight was calculate, careful records were then kept.
- E. *“The children of the captivity, that were come out of exile, offered burnt-offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he-goats for a sin offering: all this was a burnt-offering unto Jehovah. And they delivered the king’s commissions unto the king’s satraps, and to the governors beyond the River: and they furthered the people and the house of God”* (8:35-36).
1. The first spiritual act was a sin sacrifice for the people at the already erected altar of burnt offering.
 2. Ezra commands that the written edict from Artaxerxes be disturbed throughout the land so that protection and materials would be provided.

Lessons Learned from Ezra 7-8

- The faith, conviction, and character of Ezra (cf. Ezra 7:6, 10).
- The providence of God (cf. Ezra 7:27; 8:31).

Chapter 9

I. Ezra is briefed on Israel’s Sin (9:1-4):

- A. *“Now when these things were done, the princes drew near unto me, saying, the people of Israel, and the priests and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the peoples of the lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass”* (9:1-2).
1. Shortly after arriving in Jerusalem, Ezra delivers the decree of Artaxerxes and offers their oblations unto the Lord upon the altar of burnt offering.
 2. The antecedent of “*me*” would be Ezra (the author of this book). The princes approach Ezra and they reveal to the scribe and priest Israel’s sin. The people of God had violated God’s marriage laws (i.e., they took the Canaanites to marry) (cf. Ex. 34:14-17; Deut. 7:3). Interestingly, the Moabites, Amorites, and Egyptians are added to the list with Canaanites here. Latter we find Ruth, a Moabite, marrying Boaz and is in the lineage of Jesus Christ.
 3. Not only had they married the Canaanites, Moabites, Amorites, and Egyptians but they had not “*separated*” themselves from them. Apparently they were picking up on the foreigner’s idolatry. The apostle Paul quotes from Isaiah saying, “*Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you*” (II Cor. 6:17). Those of the world who have no spiritual interest have the power to influence godly people so that they would emulate their sin. Again, Paul states, “*Be not deceived; Evil companionships corrupt good morals*” (I Cor. 15:33).
 4. Israel had taken the Canaanites, Moabites, Amorites, and Egyptians in as friends and were thereby influenced by their wicked ways. Furthermore, they even went as far as taking these foreigners in for their wives.
- B. *“And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my robe, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down confounded. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the trespass of them of the captivity; and I sat confounded until the evening oblation”* (9:3-4).
1. Ezra’s threefold reaction to the news that those of the captivity had involved themselves in: First, Ezra “*rent my garment and my robe.*” Rending the clothes was “a very natural expression

of grief, by which the sorrow of the heart was to be laid bare, and one which was not only common among the Israelites (Gen. 37:29; 44:13 etc.), but was very widely spread among the other nations of antiquity.”¹³

2. Secondly, Ezra *“plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard.”* Said actions were expressions of “violent wrath or moral indignation, comp. Neh. 13:25.”¹⁴
3. Thirdly, Ezra sat down *“confounded until the evening oblation.”* The word confounded means to be confused, bewildered (confuse, to cause one to loose a sense of where one is), or befuddled (confused or perplexed).
4. Note that the reaction of Ezra toward the people’s sins indicates a serious approach to sin. How do you or I act when brethren are found to be in sin or even closer when I am found to be in sin? Does it cause us great sorrow, indignation, and perplexity? Ezra could not believe the startling news. The prophet sits in a state of horror until the evening oblation along with others who felt the same way. When you and I have received news that causes us sorrow, indignation, and perplexity we too often sit and try to sort through things in our minds (see study # 14).

II. Ezra’s Prayer on behalf of Israel (9:5-15):

- A. *“And at the evening oblation I arose up from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe rent; and I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto Jehovah my God; and I said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our guiltiness is grown up unto the heavens”* (9:5-6).
 1. We are not told at what time Ezra was briefed on Israel’s sins. No doubt it was after the morning oblation. All morning and afternoon Ezra mourned over the sins of God’s people. The word of God refers to this period as a time of *“humiliation.”*
 2. Upon completion of Ezra’s time of humiliation the priest arises and then falls upon his knees and begins to pray to God regarding the situation.
 3. Ezra’s prayer (see study # 15; Prayer of Repentance):
 - a. *“I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God.”* Without shame and embarrassment over sin one will never do anything about it (cf. II Cor. 7:8ff). Have you ever sinned and felt ashamed or even embarrassed to lift your voice to God in prayer? Sin can hinder our prayers to God (cf. I Pet. 3:7).
 - b. *“Our iniquities are increased over our head.”* To identify sin in one’s life we must have both a knowledge of God’s word and a conviction that there are consequences to violating His laws. Ezra recognized that God’s people were flooded with sin and thereby they were indeed *“guilty.”*
 - c. Please note Ezra’s use of the plural pronoun *“we”* in relation to the sin. At Ezra 9:15b, Ezra states, *“for none can stand before thee because of this.”* In what way was Ezra connected to Israel’s sin? We may remember that when Achan sinned he caused all of Israel to be recognized as being in sin (cf. Josh. 7:1, 10-11). When one or more of God’s people sin it speaks volumes as to where the rest of His people stand in relation to sin. If sin is tolerated in the ranks of God’s people then all are guilty. The sin of not separating themselves from foreigners would have never had to be reported to Ezra if the elders and princes of the land would have taken care of the violations as they occurred. Apparently they not only tolerated the sin but participated in the sin. All were guilty by association. Paul condemned the Corinthians in I Corinthians 5 for their tolerating the sinner in the church. Herein is a great lesson on accountability. When one member of the church sins we ought to do all within our power to identify, expose, and bring the sinner to repentance rather than tolerating and worse yet even participating in the sin (see study # 16; Tolerance).
- B. *“Since the days of our fathers we have been exceeding guilty unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and or priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to plunder, and to confusion of face, as it is this day”* (9:7).

¹³ Ibid. Vol. 1, Pg. 555

¹⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, v. 4, pp. 74

1. Israel has been exiled by the Assyrians and Babylonians because they had in times past no fear of God in their hearts (Jer. 5:22-24), rebellious (Jer. 6:15-16), filled with pride (Jer. 8:6), and had totally put God out of their lives (Jer. 18:15).
 2. God's people had died by sword, captivity, and plundering as well as being confused by the onslaught of violence against them (cf. Jer. 19:9; Lam. 4:10).
 3. Again, if there would have been multitudes of people stand up and defeat the false prophets of Jeremiah and Ezekiel's day they would not be in this situation. If Zedekiah would have obeyed the commandment of God to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar the city and temple would have never been destroyed (cf. Jer. 38:17-18).
- C. *"And now for a little moment grace hath been showed from Jehovah our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we are bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended lovingkindness unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the ruins thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem"* (9:8-9).
1. God's people were guilty in times past of sin too. The Jews received their just reward for refusing God's pleas for their repentance. Now, however, the people of God were experiencing God's favor. They had been allowed to return to their home land and rebuild the city, its walls, and the Lord's temple. Have they once again indicated that they are not worthy of such gracious opportunities?
 2. The expression *"nail in his holy place"* is a figurative expression. "A nail or peg struck into the wall, to hang any kind of domestic utensils upon;. Such a nail was the place of God's sanctuary, the temple, to the rescued community. This was to them a firm nail, by which they were borne and upheld; and this nail God had given them as a support to which they might cling, and gain new life and vigor."¹⁵
 3. Ezra 9:9 is a thematic statement for the entire book. It states the overall objective of the book: God has fulfilled His promise to bring a remnant back to Jerusalem. Verse nine gives the purpose of returning the remnant: to spiritually revive Israel, to build the temple of God, to repair the ruins of the city and wall around the city. We must not that these gracious favors of God were a command. It was a command of God that the remnant rebuild the temple and city walls (cf. Ezra 6:14). Herein is a great lesson on the workings of Bible grace. Though the Lord *"gave"* the remnant a wall it was not something that just zapped into place around Jerusalem. The book of Nehemiah tells of the **work** involved in receiving this gracious gift of God (see study # 17; Bible Grace).
- D. *"And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken thy commandments, which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, the land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land through the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, through their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their filthiness: now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto yours sons, nor seek their peace or their prosperity for ever; that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever"* (9:10-12).
1. Moses had commanded that Israel totally exterminate the inhabitants of the land of Canaan due to their wicked influence (Deut. 7:1-4).
 2. The people; however, have taken advantage of God's mercy and have once again transgressed. God had moved the hearts of Cyrus and Darius to allow them to return that they may turn back to him, however, they took God's mercy and turned against him (vs. 9-10).
- E. *"And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great guilt, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a remnant, shall we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the peoples that do these abominations? Wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no*

¹⁵ Ibid. Pg. 75.

remnant, nor any to escape? O Jehovah, the God of Israel, thou art righteous; for we are before thee in our guiltiness; for none can stand before thee because of this” (9:13-15).

1. Israel had died by the sword, pestilence, and famine at the hands of Babylon just as the Lord had warned would happen (cf. Jer. 14:11-12; 21:7; 24:10; 27:8; 29:17; 34:17; Ezek. 5:12; 6:11; 12:16). Furthermore Judah’s cities were burned with fire (Ezek. 10:1-2). The people were taken captive, robbed, stoned, killed with the sword, and houses burned with fire (Ezek. 23:46-47). They were moved to such starvation that the fathers ate their own children (Ezek. 5:10). Many died grievous deaths (Jer. 16:3-4). They spent seventy years in captivity as slaves or bondmen for their trespasses against Jehovah (cf. Jer. 25:11). God’s purpose was their repentance and cleansing (cf. Jer. 31:17-20).
2. Ezra recognizes the past sins and punishment for those sins. He too recognizes the present sins and the just rewards for such conduct. Ezra contemplates that the people who were spared the awful deaths in Jerusalem; i.e., the remnant of the captivity, ought to consider the consequences of their fellow man’s sins and be moved with Godly fear in repentance. The remaining bondsmen have received less punishment than they deserved because they were left alive whereas others were killed for their transgressions.

Chapter 10

I. The People Repent (10:1-4):

A. *“Now while Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there was gathered together unto him out of Israel a very great assembly of men and women and children; for the people wept very sore. And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, we have trespassed against our God, and have married foreign women of the peoples of the land: yet now there is hope for Israel concerning this thing” (10:1-2).*

1. How could there be “*hope*” on the part of the “*great assembly of men and women and children*” in relation to this sin? The Mosaic Law had commanded a curse upon any man or woman who did not keep “*all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them*” (cf. Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10)?
2. No doubt these OT peoples were knowledgeable of the coming Messiah and His promise to forgive mankind of their sins (cf. Jer. 31:31ff; Heb. 11:13ff; I Pet. 1:10ff) (see study # 18; The Hope of Jesus in the OT).

B. *“Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise; for the matter belongs unto thee, and we are with thee: be of good courage, and do it” (10:3-4).*

1. The prayer of Ezra had immediate results. The people considered their lawlessness and remembered the consequences of disobedience during the days of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and how that God used that king as a battle axe against His people (cf. Jer. 51:20).
2. The “*great assembly*” of Jews wept bitterly out of a sense of Godly sorrow over their sin. They are now willing to repent by shedding themselves of their foreign wives and children. Shecaniah speaks for the people and encourages Ezra to put an end to his fasting and acts of humiliation. Shecaniah assures Ezra that the people understand their sin and are ready to remedy the situation. Shecaniah tells Ezra take good courage in the matter because the people are with the priest on this matter.

II. The Princes and Elders call all of the Captivity to Jerusalem (10:5-8):

A. *“Then arose Ezra, and made the chiefs of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they would do according to this word. So they swore. Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliabshib: and when he came thither he did eat no bread, or drink water; for he mourned because of the trespass of them of the captivity” (10:5-6).*

1. After Shecaniah’s proposal, Ezra stood and made the priest and Levites promise to put away from them the foreign women in which they agree.

2. That night, Ezra goes to the quarters of a priest (Johanan) in the temple. There he fast and evidently discussed with Johanan what should be done (Whether Johanan was the high priest at this time or not the bible does not tell).

B. *“And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; and that whosoever came not within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the assembly of the captivity”* (10:7-8).

1. Together, Ezra and Johanan make a proclamation throughout all Judah and Jerusalem that all the children of the captivity should assemble at Jerusalem in three days. Those who refused to come would suffer punishment of forfeiture. “Penalty for not appearing in person would be the loss of all their possessions, and their expulsion from the community.”¹⁶
2. Remember that Ezra prayed for the sins of the people and included his own self at Ezra 9:6, 14. Sin that is tolerated is sin that has latched on to the tolerant. So that none would be guilty of other’s sins an ultimatum is given. Either come to Jerusalem and straighten this matter out or consider yourself separated from the assembly of God’s people. The whole would no longer tolerate the wickedness of others.

III. All the Jews of Captivity Assemble in Jerusalem (10:9-15):

A. *“Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within the three days (it was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month); and all the people sat in the broad place before the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain”* (10:9).

1. The people comply with the request and in three days show up in Jerusalem. The time was the ninth month, which corresponds with our December.
2. This is a cold and rainy season in Judah. “No building would be large enough for the entire male population, so they met in the Temple yard, shivering because of the seriousness of the occasion and the discomfort of the rain.”¹⁷

B. *“And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have trespassed, and have married foreign women, to increase the guilt of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto Jehovah, the God of your fathers, and do his pleasure; and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the foreign women”* (10:10-11).

1. The Godly character of Ezra is depicted here as he boldly stands before a “*great assembly*” and makes a heart wrenching statement that was sure to affect many. Ezra stands before the people, proclaims their sin, and admonishes them to separate themselves from the foreign people and women (see study # 14).
2. The only remedy to the situation was for God’s people to confess their sins to God and fully repent (i.e., “*separate from the people of the land and from the foreign women*”).

C. *“Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said concerning us, so must we do. But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without: neither is this a work of one day or two; for we have greatly transgressed in this matter. Let now our princes be appointed for all the assembly, and let all them that are in our cities that have married foreign women come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God be turned from us, until this matter be dispatched. Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah stood up against this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them”* (10:12-15).

1. The gathered assembly agrees with Ezra’s proclamation. They reply by saying, “*As thou hast said concerning us, so must we do*” (i.e., make confession and put away all foreigners from themselves).
2. Though their resolve was to settle the matter, it was not going to happen quickly. The rain was upon them and they were cold. The matter would have to be taken up with the heads of families and judges of each city.

¹⁶ College Press Bible Study Textbook on Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. Pg. 114

¹⁷ College Press Bible Study Textbook on Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. Pg. 115-116

3. “There were so many cases to deal with, that the rulers, as the judicial authorities, must decide in this matter; and those who in all the cities of the land had transgressed, were to appear before these authorities, and submit their individual cases to their jurisdiction.”¹⁸
4. Out of all the assembled people, it appears that only two opposed the proceedings. We are not told in what manner they opposed. It may be that they were opposed to dragging out this procedure. On the other hand, they may have opposed putting away the foreign wives, we are not told what their opposition to “*the matter*” involved.

IV. Ezra’s plan is carried out (10:16-44):

- A. *“And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain heads of father’s houses, and all of them by their names, were set apart; and they sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. And they made an end with all the men that had married foreign women by the first day of the first month”* (10:16-17).
 1. First, Ezra appoints heads of households to “*examine the matter*” among their own families. The heads assembled on the first day of the tenth month, which means that it took only 10 to 11 days to organize this proceeding (compare Ezra 10:9 with 10:16). Note that the entire matter is handled in exactly one year from the time that they had arrived in Jerusalem (compare Ezra 7:9 to 10:17). It was the ninth month and 17th day that Ezra found out about this matter (Ezra 10:9). Three days latter he has a “*great assembly*” in Jerusalem to discuss the matter (Ezra 10:9). A little over three months later the matter is resolved and God’s will is followed (cf. Ezra 10:17).
 2. The question may be raised as to what these heads had to “*examine*” or investigate? Most certainly these men identified the unlawful marriages among them and settled the matter.
 3. Secondly; however, it may have been that they further investigated whether or not true conversion of some of the foreign wives who were married to their men had honestly occurred. If so, these marriages were not annulled.
 4. “There was a way to marry a person of another ethnic background, as the story of Ruth illustrates, if conversion had taken place. Rahab, the harlot at Jericho, entered the Messianic line (Mt. 1:5), and Uriah the Hittite married a Jewish girl (Bathsheba, later David’s wife) and became one of the thirty most respected men in David’s army (II Sam. 23:39). In the OT nationalities of persons are more descriptive of their religions than of their citizenship or ethnic origins.”¹⁹
- B. *“And among the sons of the priests there were found that had married foreign women: [namely], of the sons of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and his brethren, Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. And they gave their hand that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, [they offered] a ram of the flock for their guilt. And of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah. And of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uziah. And of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasa. And of the Levites: Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah (the same is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. And of the singers: Eliashib. And of the porters: Shallum, and Telem, and Uri. And of Israel: Of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, and Izziah, and Malchijah, and Mijamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah. And of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Elijah. And of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. And of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, Athlai. And of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, Jeremoth. And of the sons of Pahath-moab: Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. And of the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, Benjamin, Malluch, Shemariah. Of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, Shimei. Of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, and Uel, Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu, and Bani, and Binnui, Shimei, and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, Azarel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah, Shallum, Amariah,*

¹⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. 4 pg. 81

¹⁹ College Press Bible Study Textbook on Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. Pg. 104

Joseph. Of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Iddo, and Joel, Benaiah. All these had taken foreign wives; and some of them had wives by whom they had children” (10:18-44).

1. A list of those who had taken foreign wives (vs. 18-44):
 - a. Among the priest, there are four men mentioned (vs. 18-22).
 - b. Among the Levites, six men are mentioned (vs. 23).
 - c. Among the singers, one.
 - d. Among the porters, three (vs. 24).
 - e. Among all the people in general (other than the above named), eighty-six men who had earlier returned with Zerubbabel (vs. 25-43).
 - f. Total number of wrongful marriages adds up to 100. There were possibly much more than this. When Ezra summoned all the children of captivity to Jerusalem many may not have come due to the fact that they did not want to give up their wives and children. Such individuals were “*separated*” from the people of God (cf. Ezra 10:8). One must comply with God’s standard or be “*separated*” from God and His people (cf. I Cor. 5:1ff).
2. Did Ezra work have lasting results?
 - a. No. When Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall (20-30 years after this event with Ezra), he found the people once again unlawfully yoked with the foreign women (Neh. 8:23 and 10:31).
 - b. The book of Ezra abruptly ends on a positive note. More is learned of this scribe and priest from the book of Nehemiah.

Lessons from chapters 9 and 10

- God’s people are to come out of the world and be separate from sin (comp. Ezra 9:1-2 with II Cor. 6:17; I Jn. 2:15-17) (see study # 19; Be Ye Separate).
- Response toward sin in my life and the life of others (cf. Ezra 9:3 comp. to Rom. 7:24; II Cor. 11:28).
- We ought to turn to God in prayer when found guilty of sin (Ezra 9:5ff comp. to Acts 8:22; I Jn. 1:9).
- Guilty of sin by tolerant association (Ezra 9:6, 10, 15b comp. to Josh. 7:1, 10-11; I Cor. 5:1ff; Rev. 2:18-23). The point is made solid at Ezra 10:8.
- Know that the OT people knew of the forgiving grace that Christ would bring with Him (cf. Ezra 10:1-2 comp. to Deut. 27:26 [Gal. 3:10]; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 11:13ff; I Pet. 1:10ff).
- The character of Ezra is revealed to be convicted of the consequences of sin (Ezra 9:3), a praying man (Ezra 9:5ff), bold (Ezra 10:10ff), and diligent (Ezra 10:17).