

Ezra 07 - Ezra Leads the 2nd Return; Letter of Artaxerxes to Ezra; Ezra Appointed Administrator and Judge

II. Restoration of the people (Ezra 7:1—10:44)

(1) Ezra leads the second return (458 BC) of 2000 returnees from Persia to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:1—8:36)

(A) Description of Ezra (7:1-10)

(a) Ezra's genealogy (7:1-6)

(b) Date of the journey (7:7-9a)

(c) Ezra made the trip to teach the Law to the nation (7:9b-10)

(B) The decree of Artaxerxes granting permission for Ezra to return and adorn the Temple and appointing Ezra as administrator and judge (7:11-28)

Ezra 7

II. Restoration of the people (Ezra 7:1—10:44)

There is a 57 year gap between Ezra 6-7. In Ezra 5-6 we see the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encourage the returned remnant to resume building the temple, which took four years to complete. The events of Esther also occur sometime during this 57-year gap.

From this it is quite certain that the plot by Haman followed the completion of the Temple. If so, we can conclude that because Satan's efforts of threats and intimidation against the Jews in Judah had failed (the Temple had been completed), that back in Persia he raised up an instrument to once and for all wipe out the Jews. This too failed in God's sovereignty. Both events were "close calls" in bringing to nothing God's plan of presenting the Messiah—a purpose which could not fail.

(1) Ezra leads the second return (458 BC) of 2000 returnees from Persia to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:1—8:36)

(A) Description of Ezra (7:1-10)

(a) Ezra's genealogy (7:1-6)

1 Now after **these things**, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, *Ezra went up to Jerusalem; Ezra was* the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah,

1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, *there went up* Ezra son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah,

1 After all of this, during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, Seraiah's son Ezra (who was the grandson of Azariah, son of Hilkiah,

1 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,

- 58 years passed between the events of Ezra 6 and those of Ezra 7. It was during this time that the events of the Book of Esther occurred. This might explain Artaxerxes' favorable attitude toward Ezra, the son of Seraiah.

- "...these things" - the events of the first return (Ezra 1-6)

- "...Ezra" - short for "Azariah" which means "Yahweh Has Helped"

2 son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub,

2 son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub,

2 son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub,

2 The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,

3 son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth,

3 son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth,

3 son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth,

3 The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,

4 son of Zerariah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki,

4 son of Zerariah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki,

4 son of Zerariah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki,

4 The son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,

5 son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the chief priest.

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5 son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the chief priest)

5 The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest:

- Ezra's lineage is traced back to Aaron, the first priest

— This list is abbreviated, it does not name every generation. Between Azariah and Meraioth (v3) six names appear in the genealogy (Cf. 1 Chr 6:7-10)

— Since Seraiah was the high priest when Jerusalem fell in 586 BC (2 Kings 25:18), Ezra may have been his great-grandson. Because of his priestly ancestry, Ezra, like the priests, had authority to teach (Cf. Lev 10:11; Ezra 7:10).

6 So this Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a **scribe** skilled in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and **the king granted him all he requested** because **the hand of the LORD his God was upon him**.

6 This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the LORD his God *was* upon him.

6 left Babylon. He was a skillful scribe of the Law of Moses that the LORD God of Israel had given. And the king granted him everything he had requested because the hand of the LORD his God was upon him.

6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

- Ezra was a teacher well-versed in the Law of Moses

- "...a scribe" - a broad word that means, a "recorder, scribe, secretary, or writer" (i.e., 2 Sam 8:17; Esther 3:12; 8:9; Ps 45:1)

- The word also referred to a learned man who could read and write and could teach what he read in God's Law

- Ezra is called a "scribe" or "teacher" 4x (7:6,11-12,21; Cf. v25). He was called "Ezra the scribe" 6x in Nehemiah (Neh 8:1,4,9,13; 12:26,36).

- "...the king granted him all he requested" - Nehemiah had an official position before the king (Neh 1:11), but Ezra held no such position.

- Because of the king's favor, Ezra was promised that he could have whatever he wanted. Rather than ask for something personal, Ezra used the monarch's favor to advance the cause of God and His people.

- "...the hand of the LORD his God *was* upon him" - mentioned 8x in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 7:6,9,28; 8:18,22,31; Neh 2:8,18)

(b) Date of the journey (7:7-9a)

7 Some of the sons of Israel and some of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.

7 Some of the sons of Israel and some of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.

7 Some of the descendants of Israel also left for Jerusalem, including the priests, the descendants of Levi, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Temple Servants, during the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.

7 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 Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.

- Ezra led a group of returnees out of Babylon back to Israel in Spring 458 BC

— Not much is said here about the trip from Babylon to Jerusalem or the preparations for it

— These few verses are a summary of the journey that is detailed in the rest of Ezra 7-8. Returning with Ezra were groups of people corresponding to the groups in Zerubbabel's return (Cf. Ezra 2).

8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.

8 He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.

8 He arrived in Jerusalem during the fifth month of the seventh year of the king's reign.

8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.

(c) Ezra made the trip to teach the Law to the nation (7:9b-10)

9 For on the first *day* of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God *was* upon him.

9 For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God *was* upon him.

9 On the first day of the first month he left Babylon and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, since the beneficent hand of his God was upon him.

9 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.

- The trip back to the land took exactly four months, from the first to the fifth month, from Nisan 1 (March-April) to Av 1 (July-August)

— The good hand of God was on Ezra because he devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching it

10 For Ezra had firmly resolved to study the Law of the LORD and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.

10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.

10 For Ezra had set his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, to obey it, and to teach God's statutes and judgments in Israel.

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

- Ezra was inwardly determined in doing three things: studying God's Law, obeying it, and teaching it to others—the perfect goal for a successful ministry!

- Ezra's personal goal is an excellent example for every believer. He first purposed to study (seek) the Law of God, then to apply what he learned to his own life. Then, to teach others the revealed will of God.

- The order here is important: Ezra first desired to understand the Word of God. This was not a devotional knowledge, but a doctrinal knowledge. Then before he put himself in authority to teach God's Word, he first applied what he studied; he put what he studied into practice in his life. Only then, after diligent study and application in his own life, Ezra began to study and teach God's Word in Israel.

- Paul called Timothy to study God's Word diligently in his ministry, likening the study of God's Word to a "workman" (2 Tim 2:15)

(B) The decree of Artaxerxes granting permission for Ezra to return and adorn the Temple and appointing Ezra as administrator and judge (7:11-28)

11 Now this is the copy of the letter which King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, learned in the words of the commandments of the LORD and His statutes to Israel:

11 Now this is the copy of the decree which King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, learned in the words of the commandments of the LORD and His statutes to Israel:

11 Here is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra, the priest-scribe, a scholar in matters concerning the commandments of the LORD and concerning his statutes pertaining to Israel:

11 Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel.

- Artaxerxes wrote a letter in Aramaic to Ezra, giving him permission to take Jewish volunteers, silver and gold, and temple vessels back to Jerusalem

- Also, he made ample provision for temple supplies and ministers, and gave Ezra authority to appoint magistrates and judges

12 "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*. And now

12 "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*. And now

12 From: Artaxerxes, King of Kings To: Ezra, the Priest, a scholar in matters concerning the laws of the God of Heaven Greetings!

12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time.

- No reason for the decree was given. It can be surmised that Ezra had asked for permission to take a group back and that this decree was the official granting of his request. The decree was sent to Ezra personally.

13 I have issued a decree that any of the people of Israel and their priests and the Levites in my kingdom who are willing to go to Jerusalem, may go with you.

13 I have issued a decree that any of the people of Israel and their priests and the Levites in my kingdom who are willing to go to Jerusalem, may go with you.

13 I hereby decree that all of the people of Israel— along with their priests and descendants of Levi in my kingdom—who are determined to return to Jerusalem with you may do so.

13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

- Artaxerxes listed certain freedoms the people were to have as they journeyed to and lived in Israel. He gave every single remaining Jew in Babylon permission to leave and go to Jerusalem.

14 Since you are sent on the part of the king and his seven advisers to inquire about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God which is in your hand,

14 Forasmuch as you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God which is in your hand,

14 You have authority to act for the king and for his Council of Seven to conduct an inquiry concerning Judah and Jerusalem in accordance with the Law of your God, which is in your possession.

14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand;

- It seems that Ezra held a position in the Persian court equivalent to that of Secretary of State for Jewish Affairs

15 and to bring the silver and gold, which the king and his advisers have voluntarily given to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,

15 and to bring the silver and gold, which the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,

15 You are carrying silver and gold that the king and his advisers have freely given to the God of Israel, whose Temple is in Jerusalem,

15 And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem,

16 with all the silver and gold which you find in the entire province of Babylon, along with the voluntary offering of the people and of the priests, who offered willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem;

16 with all the silver and gold which you find in the whole province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and of the priests, who offered willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem;

16 together with all of the silver and gold that you can raise in the province of Babylon, plus the freewill offerings given by the people and the priests, contributed for the Temple of their God, which is in Jerusalem.

16 And all the silver and gold that thou canst 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:

- He gave them silver and gold to take with them and he allowed them to get more in Babylon (v15-16,20)

17 with this money, therefore, you shall diligently buy bulls, rams, *and* lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem.

17 with this money, therefore, you shall diligently buy bulls, rams and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings and offer them on the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem.

17 Accordingly, you are to exercise due diligence to utilize this money to purchase bulls, rams, lambs, grain offerings, and drink offerings, and to offer them upon the altar of the Temple of your God, which is in Jerusalem.

17 That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem.

- He said that they could offer sacrifices on the altar at the temple

18 And whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do according to the will of your God.

18 Whatever seems good to you and to your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do according to the will of your God.

18 Furthermore, the balance remaining of the silver and gold may be used for whatever other purpose you and your people desire, as long as such use is consistent with the will of your God.

18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God.

- They were also given freedom to make their own decisions, according to the will of God

19 Also the utensils which are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem.

19 Also the utensils which are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem.

19 Furthermore, you are to deliver to the God of Jerusalem the vessels for the service of the Temple of your God that have been given to you.

19 The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem.

20 And the rest of the needs of the house of your God, for which it may be incumbent upon you to provide, provide *for them* from the royal treasury.

20 The rest of the needs for the house of your God, for which you may have occasion to provide, provide *for it* from the royal treasury.

20 Furthermore, provide from the royal treasury whatever else may be needed for the Temple of your God.

20 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.

- They could take back the utensils of worship in the temple (apparently not all of them had been carried back with Zerubbabel, Cf. 1:7-11)

21 "I myself, King Artaxerxes, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are *in the provinces* beyond the *Euphrates* River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, it shall be done diligently,

21 "I, even I, King Artaxerxes, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are *in the provinces* beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, may require of you, it shall be done diligently,

21 I, Artaxerxes, in my capacity as king, hereby decree to all royal treasuries beyond the Euphrates River that whatever Ezra the priest-scribe of the Law of the God of Heaven, may require of you are to be performed with all due diligence,

21 And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which 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 speedily,

22 up to a hundred talents of silver, a hundred kors of wheat, a hundred baths of wine, a hundred baths of anointing oil, and salt as needed.

22 *even* up to 100 talents of silver, 100 kors of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt as needed.

22 up to 100 silver talents, 100 measures of wheat, 100 measures of wine, 100 measures of oil, and salt without limitation.

22 Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much.

- They could have whatever else they needed for the temple up to a certain limit

— The wheat, oil, and salt were for use in the grain offerings (Cf. 6:9; Lev 2:1-2,7,13), and the wine was for drink offerings (Cf. Ezra 6:9; Lev 12:13)

— The amounts were enormous: 100 talents (3-3/4 tons) of silver, 100 cors (600 bushels) of wheat, 100 baths (600 gallons) of wine, 100 baths of olive oil, and salt without limit

23 Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, it shall be done with zeal for the house of the God of heaven, so that there will not be wrath against the kingdom of the king and his sons.

23 Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done with zeal for the house of the God of heaven, so that there will not be wrath against the kingdom of the king and his sons.

23 Whatever is commanded by the God of Heaven is to be done with all due diligence for the Temple of the God of Heaven, or wrath will come against the king's realm and his sons.

23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?

- Apparently Artaxerxes permitted all of this so that there would be peace and good will among his Jewish subjects, and so that he might appease Yahweh's wrath

24 We also inform you that it is not allowed to impose tax, tribute, or toll *on* any of the priests, Levites, singers, doorkeepers, temple servants, or *other* servants of this house of God.

24 We also inform you that it is not allowed to impose tax, tribute or toll *on* any of the priests, Levites, singers, doorkeepers, Nethinim or servants of this house of God.

24 Furthermore, we decree that with respect to any of the priests, descendants of Levi, singers, gatekeepers, Temple Servants, or other servants of this Temple of God, it is not to be lawful to impose any tribute, tax, or toll on them.

24 Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.

- The priests and Levites were not to be taxed

25 "And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges so that they may judge all the people who are in *the province* beyond the *Euphrates* River, that is, all those who know the laws of your God; and you may teach anyone who is ignorant *of them*.

25 "You, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges that they may judge all the people who are in *the province* beyond the River, *even* all those who know the laws of your God; and you may teach anyone who is ignorant *of them*.

25 And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom given to you by your God, are to appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people beyond the Euphrates River. All of them are to know the laws of your God, and you are to instruct those who do not know them.

25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not.

- Ezra was given royal permission to appoint rulers and judges who would teach the people the Mosaic Law. These officials had the power to punish anyone who disobeyed the Law of Moses or the law of the Persian king.

— The latter provision, in particular, coincided with Ezra's life goal (v10). He was officially responsible to teach the people God's Law, and the king paid him to do so.

26 And whoever does not comply with the Law of your God and the law of the king, judgment is to be executed upon him strictly, whether for death or for banishment, or for confiscation of property or for imprisonment."

26 Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon him strictly, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of goods or for imprisonment."

26 Whoever refuses to practice the law of your God and the law of the king is to see judgment executed quickly, whether to death, banishment, confiscation of goods, or imprisonment.

26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

- In return for granting these privileges the king was to receive some benefits from the expedition. He wanted to avoid uprisings or feelings of anger against him (v23) and to have order in that part of his empire (v25-26).

- Ezra was responsible to administer justice to all the people of the area, that is, to all who knew the laws of his God—the Jewish people. Ezra also was to administer the judicial system by handing out punishment to any who would not obey (v26).

Ezra's Response to the Letter

27 Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, **who has put *such a thing* as this in the king's heart**, to glorify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem,

27 Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put *such a thing* as this in the king's heart, to adorn the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem,

27 Blessed be the LORD God of our ancestors, who placed this decree into the king's heart to beautify the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem

27 Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem:

- "...who has put *such a thing* as this in the king's heart" - Ezra recognized and acknowledged that God moved Artaxerxes to do what he had done (Cf. Prov 21:1)

— He also noted that God had given this idea to the king (put it into the king's heart). Ezra added that the purpose of all this was to bring honor to the house of the LORD. The privileges granted by Artaxerxes were for God's glory, not Ezra's.

God can put things into men's hearts which would not arise there of themselves, and into their heads too, both by his providence and by his grace, in things pertaining both to life and godliness. If any good appear to be in our own hearts, or in the hearts of others, we must own it was God that put it there, and bless him for it. [Matthew Henry]

28 and has extended **favor** to me before the king and his counselors and before all the king's mighty officials. So I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my

God *that was* upon me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

28 and has extended lovingkindness to me before the king and his counselors and before all the king's mighty princes. Thus I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my God upon me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

28 and who showed gracious love to me before the king, before his advisors, and before all of the king's mighty officials. And I was strengthened because the hand of the LORD my God was upon me. So I gathered together the leaders of Israel to go with me.

28 And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

- Ezra also said that God's mercy was shown to him in front of all the king's pagan advisers and officials

- "...favor" - *hesed*, mercy, kindness, lovingkindness, goodness, kindly, merciful, good favor. It refers to more than love; it means covenantal love, love borne out of loyalty to a commitment.

— The Hebrew word has linguistic connections to the word translated "stork," a bird known for its affectionate devotion and care to its young. Yahweh is proving faithful to His promises to provide affectionate devotion for His chosen people.

— Because Ezra saw that God was working through him (the hand of the LORD my God was on me; Cf. v6,9; 8:18,22,31), he began the task of selecting people to make the difficult trip

— This probably was difficult and must have involved much personal contact and persuasion. But he was successful in enlisting leading men to go with him.