

## EZRA CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – The Arrival of Ezra; Heads of Families Who Returned with Ezra

### OBSERVATION

Monday 7:00pm, H 105 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by the vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – **Phil Twente**, cell #714 425 9221; email – [ptwente@gmail.com](mailto:ptwente@gmail.com) For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: [www.ptwente.com](http://www.ptwente.com) Click on “Bible Studies” on the left column. References include commentaries by numerous pastor/teachers.

### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

#### **EZRA – Chapters 7 & 8 MAIN POINTS:**

- 1. The importance of knowing, doing and teaching the Word of God – like Ezra!!**
- 2. Recognizing and giving thanks for the “good hand of the LORD our God”! Great way to live!**
- 3. Importance of fasting and prayer in properly preparing and planning any significant mission for the LORD!**
- 4. Seeing the LORD turn the hand of kings in doing His will! – approval of requests, financial help, no taxes**

**One of the main points in the Book of Ezra** is given to us in Chapter 7. Ezra was a man who was given over to the Word of God! He had a love for the Word of God and a love for his people to know the Word of God, that he would make a 900 mile trip to teach the Word! Great intellect coupled with great zeal. It is well summed up in:

**Ezr 7:6 ...according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.** Ezra lived his life “according to the hand of the LORD upon him!” –

**Ezr 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.**

To teach the Bible, one needs to know more things about it, than any other thing! To be able to look at any situation and be able to say or explain, “this is what the Bible says about this.” Never to say, I know enough about the Bible to get by! We want to know the Bible very deeply. A knowledge of the Scripture, built into your life, will always be beneficial, no matter what our calling is. It will serve you magnificently. We need to begin with a passage and end with a passage, be able to understand everything in between. When you walk away, you can say, I know and understand that passage like I’ve never known it before! That if you ever end up on some deserted island only with a Bible, you would be able to turn to that passage, understand it and apply it! That we would have one central point that applies to us! The importance of developing a deep, working knowledge of the Scriptures! Knowing how to apply it in the everyday living of our daily lives! Ezra had: (every teacher of the Word needs to have!) **A passion for the Word of God! A great, great faith in the power of Word of God to impact people! An absolutely, dominating desire for everyone to hear the Word of God and it impact their lives as it impacted his life!** That everyone would experience having their life so dramatically changes by His Word!

#### **STEPS IN RESTORATION: For a nation or for an individual!**

1. Coming back! (Letter to the Ephesians)
2. Rebuilding the altar – sacrifices, shedding of blood, the cross
3. Back to the House of God - Commencing worship - the body of Christ – service, testimony!
4. Resistance! Enemy offers to join! Compromise; Direct Hindrance; Misrepresentation; Push Through Resistance with God’s Help! The necessity of bringing God’s work back, to stir up revival and ending lethargy.
5. **Revival of the Word of God – Reading/ mediating, hearing, teaching God’s word**

#### **EZRA – Genealogies The priestly line of Ezra:**

**Ezr 7:1 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,**

**Ezr 7:2 son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,**

**Ezr 7:3 son of Amariah, son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,**

**Ezr 7:4 the son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,**

**Ezr 7:5 the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest—**

**Descendants of Levi**

**1Ch 6:1 The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.**

**1Ch 6:2 sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, & Uzziel.**

**1Ch 6:3 The children of Amram were Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. And the sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar,**

**and Ithamar.**

**1Ch 6:4 Eleazar begot Phinehas, and Phinehas begot Abishua;**

**1Ch 6:5 Abishua begot Bukki, and Bukki begot Uzzi;**

**1Ch 6:6 Uzzi begot Zerariah, and Zerariah begot Meraioth;**

**1Ch 6:7 Meraioth begot Amariah, and Amariah begot Ahitub;**

**1Ch 6:8 Ahitub begot Zadok, and Zadok begot Ahimaaz;**

**1Ch 6:9 Ahimaaz begot Azariah, and Azariah begot Johanan;**

**1Ch 6:10 Johanan begot Azariah (it was he who ministered as priest in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem);**

**1Ch 6:11 Azariah begot Amariah, and Amariah begot Ahitub;**

**1Ch 6:12 Ahitub begot Zadok, and Zadok begot Shallum;**

**1Ch 6:13 Shallum begot Hilkiah, and Hilkiah begot Azariah;**

**1Ch 6:14 Azariah begot Seraiah, and Seraiah begot Jehozadak.**

**1Ch 6:15 Jehozadak went into captivity when the LORD carried Judah and Jerusalem into captivity by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.**

#### **TIME LINE – BOOKS OF EZRA – (“Bible Hub” online)**

|  |   |           |
|--|---|-----------|
| 537 BC                                   | The Proclamation of Cyrus               | Ezra 1    |
| <b>537 BC</b>                            | The Exiles Return                       | Ezra 2    |
| 535 BC                                   | Temple Work Begins (70 yrs. from 605BC) | Ezra 3    |
| 534 BC                                   | Adversaries Hinder Temple Work          | Ezra 4    |
| 534 BC                                   | Artaxerxes Orders Work Stopped          | Ezra 4:17 |
| 520 BC                                   | Tattenai's Letter to Darius             | Ezra 5    |
| 520 BC                                   | Temple Work Resumed by Darius' Decree   | Ezra 6    |
| (Books of Haggai & Zechariah occur here) |   |           |
| 515 BC                                   | Completion and Dedication of the Temple | Ezra 6:16 |
| (Book of Esther occurs here)             |   |           |

#### **BOOK OF ESTHER (about 60 yrs. from 1<sup>st</sup> return)**

|               |  |                  |
|---------------|--|------------------|
| 483 BC        | Queen Vashti Deposed   | Esther 1         |
| 478 BC        | Esther Becomes Queen   | Esther 2         |
| 478 BC        | Mordecai Thwarts a Conspiracy  | Esther 2:21      |
| 474 BC        | Haman Seeks Revenge on the Jews  | Esther 3         |
| 473 BC        | Mordecai Informs Esther of Haman's Plot  | Esther 4         |
| 473 BC        | Esther Prepares a Banquet  | Esther 5         |
| 473 BC        | The King Honors Mordecai   | Esther 6         |
| 473 BC        | Haman Is Hanged  | Esther 7         |
| 473 BC        | Xerxes' Edict on Behalf of Esther & Jews   | Esther 8         |
| 472 BC        | Purim Instituted   | Esther 9         |
| 472 BC        | Xerxes' Tribute to Mordecai  | Esther 10        |
| <b>458 BC</b> | <b>Ezra to Jerusalem (147 years from 605; 79 years from 1<sup>st</sup> return; 57 years from last verse of chapter 6!)</b> | <b>Ezra 7</b>    |
| <b>458 BC</b> | <b>Ezra Commissioned by Artaxerxes</b>   | <b>Ezra 7:11</b> |
| <b>457 BC</b> | <b>Families Return to Jerusalem with Ezra</b>  | <b>Ezra 8</b>    |
| 457 BC        | Ezra's reforms   | Ezra 9           |
| 456 BC        | Ezra's Prayer About Intermarriage  | Ezra 10          |

#### **BOOK OF NEHEMIAH (about 100 years from 1<sup>st</sup> return)**

|               |   |                    |
|---------------|---|--------------------|
| 445 BC        | Nehemiah's Prayer for the Exiles              | Nehemiah 1         |
| <b>444 BC</b> | <b>Artaxerxes Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem</b> | <b>Nehemiah 2</b>  |
| 444 BC        | Builders of the Walls Named                   | Nehemiah 3         |
| 444 BC        | Builders Overcome Ridicule                    | Nehemiah 4         |
| 444 BC        | Nehemiah Abolishes Debt and Bondage           | Nehemiah 5         |
| 444 BC        | Sanballat's Plot                              | Nehemiah 6         |
| 444 BC        | Completion of the Wall                        | Nehemiah 6:15      |
| 444 BC        | Census of Returned Exiles                     | Nehemiah 7         |
| 444 BC        | Ezra Reads the Law                            | Nehemiah 8         |
| 444 BC        | Israelites Fast and Repent                    | Nehemiah 9         |
| 444 BC        | Israelites Seal the Covenant                  | Nehemiah 10        |
| <b>444 BC</b> | <b>People Settle in Jerusalem</b>             | <b>Neh. 11, 12</b> |
| 432 BC        | Nehemiah Restores Laws                        | Nehemiah 13        |

#### **Kings of Persia in Ezra-Nehemiah:**

**Cyrus (539-530-9yrs); Darius I (522-486-36yrs); Xerxes (Ahasueres – 485-464-21yrs); Artaxerxes I (464-423-41yrs)**

## **EZRA CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – The Arrival of Ezra; Heads of Families Who Returned with Ezra**

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

### **EZRA CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – The Arrival of Ezra;**

*Ezr 7:1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes (Longimanus) king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,*

*Ezr 7:2 the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,*

*Ezr 7:3 the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,*

*Ezr 7:4 the son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,*

*Ezr 7:5 the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas (Num 25:11-13 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. [12] Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; [13] and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.')*, *the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest—*

*Ezr 7:6 this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he was a skilled (diligent, ready) scribe in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.*

*Ezr 7:7 Some of the children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.*

*Ezr 7:8 And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.*

**v. 1** *Now after these things:* About 57 uneventful years passed between Ezra 6 and Ezra 7. The ruler of Persia at the end of that period was **Artaxerxes** Longimanus, the successor to Xerxes, the king who married Esther. The Book of Esther took place between Ezra 6 & 7. **Son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah . . . the son of Aaron the chief priest:** This list is not all inclusive. The time between Exodus and Ezra exceeded 1,000 years and cannot have been covered by 16 generations. Nevertheless, it shows that Ezra was a descendant both of **Aaron, Phinehas** and also of **Seraiah**, who was the last High Priest before the captivity.

**vs. 2-5** ‘**Zadok**’ was a priest under David whom Solomon appointed chief priest in place of Abiathar, who supported rebellious Adonijah (**1Ki 1:7-8; 1Ki 2:35**). Ezekiel regarded the Zadokites as free from idolatry (**Eze 44:15-16**). Zadokites held the office of high priest till 171 B.C. The Sadducees were named after Zadok, and the Qumran community looked for the restoration of the Zadokite priesthood.

**vs. 6-7** *Ezra* was one of the *later* Jews who returned from the captivity to Judea and Jerusalem. The first great return has been described in chapters 1-2. There were also others who returned in the years following. Ezra stands high in Jewish tradition. He came to be regarded as a second Moses, more than any other showed Israel with its lasting character as the people of a book. **A skilled scribe** – An **expert** in the Law of Moses, someone who **was like a highly trained lawyer in the word of God**, having **three main duties: to preserve the Word of God, to teach the Word of God, and to administrate the Word of God**, interpreting and applying it. There were many scribes by the time of Jesus, but they had degenerated greatly from the ideal originally established by Ezra. Then they generally were active opponents of Jesus and His ministry and targets of His rebukes (**Mat 7:29; Matthew 23**). **The king granted him all his request:** The favor of God towards Jerusalem and the Jewish people **is again evident, because the hand of the LORD his God was upon him.**

**v. 8** Having left Babylon four months earlier, Ezra came to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes reign (458 BC). It is estimated the trip would have been about a 900 mile journey.

**v. 1** Ezra is coming to Jerusalem to instruct the Jews in the law, the Word of God! As credentials for this, we begin with his heritage, his lineage, showing that he is a descendant from Aaron. As a member of the priestly line, he certainly had the blood line. Also we will read that he is a skilled scribe in the law!

**vs. 2-5** This is an abbreviated, not all inclusive list of Ezra’s family line. It shows that he was a descendant both of Aaron and also of Seraiah, who was the last High Priest before the captivity.

**v. 6** **Ezr 7:6** *...according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him;*

**Ezr 7:9** *On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.*

**Ezr 7:28** *and has extended mercy to me before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty princes. So I was encouraged, as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me; and I gathered leading men of Israel to go up with me.*

**Ezr 8:18** *Then, by the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and brothers, eighteen men;*

**v. 8** Considering the difficulty of the 4 month journey, covering about 900 miles, it is amazing to consider the commitment necessary to leave their homes in Babylon and go to Jerusalem. **How many of us would be willing to answer such a call?**

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

*Ezr 7:9 On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.*

*Ezr 7:10 For Ezra had prepared (had set firmly or disciplined) his heart to seek (study, inquire of) the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.*

*Ezr 7:11 This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest, the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of His statutes to Israel:*

*Ezr 7:12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven: Perfect peace, and so forth.*

*Ezr 7:13 I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you.*

*Ezr 7:14 And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand;*

*Ezr 7:15 and whereas you are to carry the silver and gold which the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem;*

*Ezr 7:16 and whereas all the silver and gold that you may find in all the province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and the priests, are to be freely offered for the house of their God in Jerusalem—*

*Ezr 7:17 now therefore, be careful to buy with this money bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem.*

*Ezr 7:18 And whatever seems good to you and your brethren to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do it according to the will of your God.*

**v. 9** According to the good hand of his God upon him: Ezra credited his successful four month journey to God's *good hand* of blessing on him. This short summary of the expedition gives no hint of the initial disappointment, delay, the fasting and prayer, and the dangers of such a journey, which will emerge in the full account.

**v. 10** Ezra... prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD... to do it... to teach: A threefold intention. He came to **seek**, to **do**, and to **teach** God's word. This is necessary for anyone who wants to make an impact on others with the word of God. ...to seek the Law of the LORD. Full impact with God's word is made by those who diligently *seek* after His word and fellowship with God in His word. ...to do it. Full impact is made by those who are not only hearers of the word, but actual *doers* of the word. ...to teach. Full impact is made by those who actually *teach* it to others. What has been learned in the seeking and the doing must be put into effect through the *teaching* of God's word.

**v. 11** The letter of Artaxerxes.

**v. 12** ...the priest, the scribe, the expert in the words of the commandments of the LORD: Ezra was indeed more than a an elevated secretary or copyist. He was a well-trained *expert* in the Word of God.

**v. 13** Who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem: With this, Artaxerxes hoped to encourage others to go with Ezra to increase the chance of his success and to strengthen the province of Judah.

**v. 14** Whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem: This tells us that not only did Ezra go to Jerusalem, he was actually *sent* by Artaxerxes to gather information.

**vs. 15-16** ...to carry the silver and gold: Artaxerxes also authorized the giving of many *silver and gold* gifts to the temple, *along with the freewill offering....*

**v. 17** Providing for the temple and sacrificial expenses.

*Be careful to buy...* Ezra carried with him government money to be spent on sacrificial animals and the promotion of temple worship at the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, what was meant to advance the interests of Artaxerxes. *Whatever seems good to you:* Ezra was to **be careful**, but was given latitude to make his own decisions about how to best spend the money.

**vs. 18-22** Whatever more may be needed.... pay for it from the king's treasury: Artaxerxes was very generous to Ezra and the work in Jerusalem, allowing him to draw on **the king's treasury** for whatever he needed.

**v. 9** Again, recognizing the grace of God on his four month journey, according to the good hand of his God upon him!

**v. 10** To just say that Ezra loved the word of God is such an understatement. Note the four things we see here about him:

1) Had **prepared, set firmly, disciplined his heart!** *2Ch 12:14 And he (Rehoboam) did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD.*

*Ezr 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart*

*Ezr 7:27 Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart Dan 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart*

2) **To seek, to study, to inquire of**, the law of the LORD 3) **To do it!** 4) **To teach** the word of God! That commitment to His word seems to be waning by leader in the church at large today. **Where do you stand in these four areas?**

**v. 12** Artaxerxes, in a sense, was the king of kings, due to his position at that time. Again we see the hand of the Lord working to move even powerful, pagan kings.

**vs. 13-14** *I issue a decree,....* Which, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, when signed, might not be changed. No one shall be forced either to go or to stay. Only those who loves God supremely will avail themselves of this opportunity.

**vs. 15-16** Notice again the importance of “freely offered”. Always so important. **How freely are our offerings being offered?**

**v. 17** We see the necessity of being careful in the handling and protecting king's gifts and resources. How much more should we be careful in our spending of our King's money and resources!

**v. 18** Even the left overs are to be procured and spent as God wills!



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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

*Ezr 7:19 Also the articles that are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem.*  
*Ezr 7:20 And whatever more may be needed for the house of your God, which you may have occasion to provide, pay for it from the king's treasury.*  
*Ezr 7:21 And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are in the region beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, let it be done diligently.*  
*Ezr 7:22 up to one hundred talents of silver (4 tons), one hundred kors of wheat (625 bushels), one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil (600 gallons each-about a 2 year supply), and salt without prescribed limit.*  
*Ezr 7:23 Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it diligently be done for the house of the God of heaven. For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?*

*Ezr 7:24 Also we inform you that it shall not be lawful to impose tax, tribute, or custom on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God.*  
*Ezr 7:25 And you, Ezra, according to your God-given wisdom, set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people who are in the region beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God; and teach those who do not know them.*  
*Ezr 7:26 Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily on him, whether it be death, or banishment, or confiscation of goods, or imprisonment.*

*Ezr 7:27 Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem,*

*Ezr 7:28 and has extended mercy (chêšêd, kheh'-sed, kindness; by implication (towards God) piety; beauty: - favor, good deed,, kindly, loving-kindness, merciful (kindness), mercy, pity, reproach, wicked thing) to me before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty princes. So I was encouraged, as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me; and I gathered leading men of Israel to go up with me.*

**v. 23** *Whatever is commanded by the God...let it diligently be done:* In all this, we see that Artaxerxes went to great lengths to promote the operations of the temple in Jerusalem. *For why should there be wrath against the realm...* Here we see the *motive* of Artaxerxes. Like other monarchs of the Persian Empire, he wanted to placate the gods of the people and the territory that they had conquered. He believed it was good and safe policy to do this.

**v. 24** *It shall not be lawful to impose tax:* To promote the work of the temple in Jerusalem, Artaxerxes commanded that *priests* and other workers at the temple be given tax-exempt status.

**v. 25-26** *Set magistrates and judges:* Artaxerxes gave Ezra significant authority in the civil administration of the province (*the region beyond the River. Teach those...* Artaxerxes gave Ezra authority to teach this generation of returned exiles. Yet he also gave authority - perhaps *too much* authority - to punish those who *did not observe the law of your God and the law of the king.*

**v. 27** *Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers:* Ezra knew that such generous and broad support and authority could only be granted by God who *put such a thing as this in the king's heart.*

**v. 28** *So I was encouraged, as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me:* Ezra was certainly **encouraged**; not so by the king's support but more so because it was all clear evidence of God's support and blessing. Ezra found great encouragement in knowing that *the hand of the LORD* was *upon* him.

**v. 19** The king's decree includes proper handling and delivering in full of all articles given. **Proper stewardship and accountability are always necessary in handling God's resources.**

**vs. 20-22** Yes, the LORD is indeed opening the hand of the king to assist financially! “*salt* (so critically needed and valuable at that time) *without prescribed limit*”

**v. 23** Notice there is a personal motive for the king being given here - *For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?* The king wants to stay on the “good side” of God. How that is almost totally missing today by the unbelieving world! **How important is that to us?**

**v. 24** The Lord even moves the king's hand to give a tax exempt status to the workers in the temple! How amazing!

**v. 25** The king says here, I want you to establish a society; a system of law and order that is based on the laws of your God! So here is a king who knows enough of the Bible to be impressed by what he sees in Ezra- the quality in Ezra that his love for the word produces, that he wants for his people, his subjects to be impacted by this man and by the laws of God. **Do our lives so impact those around us?**

**v. 26** Here the king includes in his decree that the laws of God can be observed even up to having a death penalty of those not observing them!! How is that for giving “teeth” to his decree? How sad that now in our country, there is a disdain against the laws of God and their effect!

**vs. 27-28** Ezra recognizes God is behind all of this! **A great way to live, to recognize that God is behind all our blessings. Is that the way we live?** This is a great example that Ezra shows to us. He's not just an academic man, but his life is vibrantly reflecting his life commitment to the Word! When he gets to Jerusalem, they will realize a whole new standard of Godliness has arrived on the scene!

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

#### Heads of Families Who Returned with Ezra

*Ezr 8:1 These are the heads of their fathers' houses, and this is the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of King Artaxerxes:*

*Ezr 8:2 of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom; of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel; of the sons of David, Hattush;*

*Ezr 8:3 of the sons of Shecaniah, of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah; and registered with him were one hundred and fifty males;*

*Ezr 8:4 of the sons of Pahath-Moab, Eliehoenai the son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males;*

*Ezr 8:5 of the sons of Shechaniah, Ben-Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males;*

*Ezr 8:6 of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males;*

*Ezr 8:7 of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males;*

*Ezr 8:8 of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him eighty males;*

*Ezr 8:9 of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males;*

*Ezr 8:10 of the sons of Shelomith, Ben-Josiphiah, and with him one hundred and sixty males;*

*Ezr 8:11 of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males;*

*Ezr 8:12 of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him one hundred and ten males;*

*Ezr 8:13 of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these—Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah—and with them sixty males;*

*Ezr 8:14 also of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud, and with them seventy males.*

#### Ezra Sends for Levites

*Ezr 8:15 Now I gathered them by the river that flows to Ahava, and we camped there three days. And I looked among the people and the priests, and found none of the sons of Levi there.*

*Ezr 8:16 Then I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, leaders; also for Joiarib and Elnathan, men of understanding.*

**v. 1** *These are the heads of their father's houses:* This list includes those who *went up with Ezra from Babylon*. Here Ezra begins to re-tell the account that was summarized in Ezr 7:1-10.

**v. 2** *Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom . . . Ithamar, Daniel . . .*

*David, Hattush:* These seem to be prominent members of the entourage, coming from prominent families. The interest of this forbidding list of names and numbers is that in every case but one of these groups are finally joining, the descendants of the pioneers from Babylon eighty years before.

**v. 3** *Shechaniah:* “There were three of this name; the second is mentioned in Ezr 8:5, and the third Ezr 10:2. They were all different persons, as may be seen from their fathers' houses.”

**v. 4** *And with him two hundred males . . . three hundred males:* Adding the counts of the male members of the group together, there was a total count of at least 1,496 men in the group. Adding an estimated number of women and children (Ezr 8:21), we can surmise that the total number of the party coming with Ezra in the days of *King Artaxerxes* was something like between 6,000 to 7,000 people.

**v. 15** The lack of Levites in the group...*I gathered them by the river:* Definitely the leader of this group, and in more than a spiritual sense, Ezra led the expedition...*found none of the sons of Levi there:* The Levites were different from the priests, being essential workers for the system of temple worship that Ezra was to promote. Ezra had the money and the authority he needed, but not the men.

**v. 16** Ezra addresses the problem of a lack of Levites.

**v. 1** Ezra is going back with about 1700 men, plus women and children about 79 years after the first group went back with Zerubbabel. Where as they were going back to rebuild the temple, Ezra is going back to teach the word of God to God's people so they will know how to worship.

**vs. 2-14** Families and genealogies were so important in Israel and its history. We have the prophesies of the Messiah being from the tribe of Judah, a descendant of David. We also know that all priests had to be from the tribe of Levi. Here we given the names of the heads of the fathers' houses along with the number of males in each. **How we need to rejoice that our names are written the Book of Life, not according to our earthly genealogies but simply be blood bought by our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**vs. 15-16** How amazing that not one Levite responded initially to the call to go back! As Ezra looked over the group gathering to make the trip, he sees that there are no Levites, which certainly will be necessary in helping establish obedience to the Word of God in Jerusalem.

## EZRA CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – The Arrival of Ezra; Heads of Families Who Returned with Ezra

### OBSERVATION

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

*Ezr 8:17 And I gave them a command for Iddo the chief man at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say to Iddo and his brethren the Nethinim at the place Casiphia—that they should bring us servants for the house of our God.*

*Ezr 8:18 Then, by the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and brothers, eighteen men;*

*Ezr 8:19 and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his brothers and their sons, twenty men;*

*Ezr 8:20 also of the Nethinim, whom David and the leaders had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinim. All of them were designated by name.*

*Fasting and Prayer for Protection*

*Ezr 8:21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.*

*Ezr 8:22 For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him."*

*Ezr 8:23 So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.*

*Priests to Guard Offerings*

*Ezr 8:24 And I separated twelve of the leaders of the priests—Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them—*

*Ezr 8:25 and weighed out to them the silver, the gold, and the articles, the offering for the house of our God which the king and his counselors and his princes, and all Israel who were present, had offered.*

*Ezr 8:26 I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver (25 tons) articles weighing one hundred talents, one hundred talents of gold (3 tons),*

*v. 17 ...a command . . . that they should bring us servants for the house of our God:* With this, Ezra sent back to Babylonia for Levites to come and join the work in Jerusalem. He didn't accept the initial failure of Levites to join the group but kept appealing for help, planning carefully in recruiting the Levites. He specifically chose the recruiters - nine *leaders*, and *two men of understanding* to make the appeal as persuasive as possible. Then he carefully instructed the recruiters as to *what they should say*, and directed them who specifically to make the appeal to (*to Iddo and his brethren*).

*v.18* Indeed, *the good hand of our God* was *upon* the recruitment effort, but it was also upon the *planning* of it. *They brought us a man of understanding . . . namely Sherebiah:* This man responded to the call and led a delegation of Levites.

*v. 19* *Mahli* and *Merari* belong to the same Levitical family.

*v. 20* The number who respond to Ezra's call is small, but symbolically important for the nation's future.

*v. 21* On the journey - A prayer of protection. *I proclaimed a fast . . . that we might humble ourselves before our God:* Ezra called a fast, understanding the spiritual power of fasting, demonstrating single-minded devotion to God and His cause. Therefore he called a fast. *...To seek from Him the right way:* A straight way, unimpeded by any obstacles or dangers.

*v. 22 ...ashamed to request of the king an escort:* Having previously expressed great confidence in the hand of God upon him and his expedition, Ezra did not want to contradict these prior words with later actions, such as in asking the king for *an escort of soldiers and horsemen*. They needed protection because the danger was real, constantly being threatened by robbers and bandits. Yet because of their dependence on God, expressed through prayer and fasting, God protected them.

*v. 23* Seeking the Lord by fasting and prayer for a good and safe journey, they knew God answered their prayer as they came safely to Jerusalem.

*vs. 24-25; 29* *Weighed out to them:* Ezra divided the valuables among the *leaders of the priests*, making each of them responsible for their portion. They were responsible then to *watch and keep them* until they arrived in Jerusalem and delivered them to the *leaders of the priests and Levites* there. The king of Persia sent great treasure to support the ongoing work of the temple, likely worth millions of dollars.

*v. 17* Notice the careful planning by Ezra and correcting the shortage of Levites and others in going forward with the trip.

*v.18* This is the third time Ezra refers and gives credit to *"the good hand of God"*! Ezra is not only an excellent student of the scriptures, but he lives in awareness of God's continual presence and blessing! **How aware are we of this?**

*vs. 19-20* Even though the number responding to Ezra's call is small, they will prove to be important for the nation's future in Israel.

*v. 21* Ezra not only is aware of the presence and blessings of God, but knows how essential prayer is! Note the attention given to fasting, humbling themselves and seeking the Lord the right way for this difficult trip.

**What a model here for here for any significant trip for the LORD! Do we know the absolute necessity of these things and do we do them?**

*v. 22* In a sense, Ezra had put himself in a difficult position with regard to recommended security on this journey. He had told the king that the *"hand of our God is upon those"* who will be making trip. So now it would give the wrong impression in not trusting the Lord, if the king's protection was requested.

*v. 23* What a powerful verse! *We fasted and entreated our God for this and He answered our prayer!* **How often can we make such a statement of fact?**

*vs. 24-27* This is a **great demonstration of stewardship and being totally accountable**. This is the first step in counting and weighing each of the articles as they begin the journey, which will enable the same procedure when they reach Jerusalem to insure that all was delivered.



## EZRA CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – The Arrival of Ezra; Heads of Families Who Returned with Ezra

### OBSERVATION

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*Ezr 8:27 twenty gold basins worth a thousand drachmas, and two vessels of fine polished bronze, precious as gold.*

*Ezr 8:28 And I said to them, "You are holy to the LORD; the articles are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to the LORD God of your fathers.*

*Ezr 8:29 Watch and keep them until you weigh them before the leaders of the priests and the Levites and heads of the fathers' houses of Israel in Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD."*

*Ezr 8:30 So the priests and the Levites received the silver and the gold and the articles by weight, to bring them to Jerusalem to the house of our God.*

*Ezr 8:31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. And the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road.*

*Ezr 8:32 So we came to Jerusalem, and stayed there three days.*

*Ezr 8:33 Now on the fourth day the silver and the gold and the articles were weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; with them were the Levites,*

*Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Ezr 8:34 with the number and weight of everything. All the weight was written down at that time.*

*Ezr 8:35 The children of those who had been carried away captive, who had come from the captivity, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and twelve male goats as a sin offering. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD.*

*Ezr 8:36 And they delivered the king's orders to the king's satraps and the governors in the region beyond the River. So they gave support to the people and the house of God.*

### INTERPRETATION

**v. 30** *So the priests and the Levites received the silver and the gold:* This required a goodly measure of faith, because holding this wealth made them targets for violence by robbers or bandits. They received this responsibility and stewardship.

**v. 31** *And the hand of our God was upon us:* Ezra here repeated what is now a familiar phrase. God's hand was indeed upon them to protect, guide, and bless them. He never fails those who act in fully on dependence on Him and Him alone.

**v. 32** *So we came to Jerusalem:* The fourth-month journey from Babylonia to Jerusalem was completed. Ezra - together with the entire group - was now in the Promised Land, which was the land promised to their ancestors.

**v. 33** *The silver and the gold and the articles were weighed:* Those in Jerusalem expected a proper accounting for what had been sent from Babylon, probably more to *prove* the integrity of the men in Ezra's expedition than to disprove it.

**v. 34** *All the weight was written down...* After three days of rest, they did it all with a careful accounting, as was appropriate for good stewardship and precious things.

**v. 35** These *burnt offerings*, where an entire animal was burnt, were to propitiate for general sin and to show dedication unto the LORD. *Twelve bulls for all Israel:* They offered a bullock for every tribe, as if present. There likely were individuals there from all the twelve tribes, possibly some families of each." The *sin offering* was made mostly for the idea of purification, especially for specific acts of transgression. Taking both sacrifices together, we can see that they addressed both the problem of *sin*, the general sin problem and *sins*, the problem of specific sins.

**v. 36** *...they delivered the king's orders* - especially those commands giving special authority to Ezra (*Ezr 7:25*). *The king's orders*" Likely the documents that accredited Ezra as one who was authorized to administer the Jewish law among his fellow-countrymen in the various regions of the province. *So they gave support...* This reminds us of the great *purpose* of Ezra's expedition. In the final two chapters we will see Ezra administering strict correction as a reformer; but he did not come primarily as a disciplinarian. He came to give *support to the people and the house of God*, and only dealt with the problems of sin and compromise as necessary in the course of this greater goal.

### APPLICATION

**v. 28** The priests themselves are holy to the Lord, set aside for His service. The silver and gold articles have been freely donated into the Lord's service, so they are holy as well. **Consider that all believers are holy and set apart through His blood!**

**vs. 29-30** The holy vessels are rightly entrusted to the priests. They remain in priestly possession until handed over to their counterparts in the temple itself. Notice the **great attention given to his accountability!**

**vs. 31-32** God's protection on this journey from Babylon resembles the ancient exodus of Israel from Egypt. How faithful is He!

**vs. 33-34** This is a **great demonstration of stewardship and being totally accountable**. They not only delivered all articles but weighed each one to insure that nothing had been lost on the trip! What a statement of the faithfulness of God! Delivering millions of dollars of gold and silver over the 900 mile journey without any protection from the king's soldiers!

**v. 35** For these exiles it is the first chance to see and worship at the rebuilt temple. Their sacrifices resemble those made at the first temple's dedication. Notice once again the attention given to the twelve tribes of Israel in that 12 bullocks were offered!

**v. 36** **So what success- totally committed to the LORD!** The journey safely completed! All of the costly items arriving safely with none being lost! Now the great purpose of Ezra's expedition can begin – that of giving *support to the people and the house of God!* Thank You, LORD!

## EZRA CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – The Arrival of Ezra; Heads of Families Who Returned with Ezra

### OBSERVATION

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

**Summary – 1. The importance of knowing, doing and teaching the Word of God – like Ezra!!**

**Never stop growing, never ever, in our relationship with the Lord, until we leave this body behind and see Him face to face. To be as strong spiritually, and as mature, spiritually, not just in the world, but also among God’s people. That we would never stop growing in the Word. Not comparing ourselves or being influenced by the world or even by believers, but comparing ourselves to His standard in the Word of God, so even as He takes us as He took Ezra, that we would challenge even God’s people to a greater greatness and a greater vision than they even realized was possible. May we not put limitations on our walk with the Lord, our influencing others, the plans that He has for our lives! May we learn from Ezra and his commitment to the Word and as he did here!**

**2. Recognizing and giving thanks for the “good hand of the LORD our God”!**

**3. Importance of fasting and prayer in properly preparing and planning any significant mission for the LORD!**

**4. Seeing the LORD turn the hand of kings in accomplishing His will!**

### **STANDING ON THE PROMISES** - Russell Carter – Maranatha Singers

*1 Standing on the promises of Christ the King, through eternal ages let His praises ring; glory in the highest, I will shout and sing, standing on the promises of God.*

*Refrain: Standing, standing, standing on the promises of God my Savior; standing, standing, I'm standing on the promises of God.*

*2 Standing on the promises that cannot fail, when the howling storms of doubt and fear assail, **by the living Word of God I shall prevail, standing on the promises of God.** (Refrain)*

*3 Standing on the promises I now can see Perfect, present cleansing in the blood for me; Standing in the liberty where Christ makes free, Standing on the promises of God. (Refrain)*

*4 Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord, bound to Him eternally by love's strong cord, overcoming daily with the Spirit's sword, standing on the promises of God. (Refrain)*