

EZRA

Author:

According to ancient Jewish tradition Ezra wrote this book, Nehemiah, and both books of Chronicles. Ezra was a descendant of Phineas who was a grandson of Aaron (Ezra 7:1-5).

Date:

About 440 BC.

Theme:

The return of the Jews to Jerusalem and Judah; the rebuilding of the temple; the opposition faced by the Jews, their victory; the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra.

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1 Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to make a proclamation throughout his whole kingdom, and also to put it in writing, saying:

²“Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: The LORD God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has ordered me to build a house for him at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³Whoever *there is* among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and may he go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. ⁴And the men of any place where any survivor is living are to help him with silver and with gold and with goods and with livestock, besides the freewill offering for the house of God in Jerusalem”.

⁵Then the heads of the fathers’ households of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, all those whose spirit God had moved, rose up to go up to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. ⁶And all those who were about them assisted them with articles of silver, with gold, with goods, and with livestock, and with valuable things, besides all that was given as a freewill offering. ⁷Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the LORD which Nebuchadnezzar

had brought from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his gods, ⁸and Cyrus, king of Persia, brought them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and counted them out to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

⁹And this was the number of them: thirty gold dishes, a thousand silver dishes, twenty-nine knives, ¹⁰thirty gold basins, four hundred and ten silver basins of a second kind, and a thousand other articles.

¹¹All the articles of gold and silver were five thousand four hundred. Sheshbazzar brought all of these up with the exiles who were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

2 Now these are the people of the province who went up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and who came back to Jerusalem and Judah, each one to his city. ²These came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:

³The children of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two; ⁴the children of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two; ⁵the children of Arah, seven hundred and seventy-five; ⁶the children of Pahath-Moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve;

1:1 “First year”— 5:13-14; 6:3; 2 Chron 26:22-23; Jer 33:7-13. Cyrus was king of Persia (Iran) from 559 B.C., but in this verse the first year means the year beginning with his conquest of Babylon in 538 B.C.

“Jeremiah”— Jer 25:11-12; 29:10.

“Spirit of Cyrus”— God will always fulfill His word, and to do so will use the kings of the earth or any other instrument He pleases (v 5; Prov 21:1; Gen 50:20). In the case of Cyrus, at least 150 years previously the Lord had foretold that He would use him to deliver His people (Isa 44:28—45:4).

1:2 “God of heaven”— note at Dan 2:18.

“Given me”— this was true (Isa 45:1. Compare Dan 4:31-32).

1:4 “Survivor”— Jews scattered throughout the empire of Cyrus, principally in Babylonia.

1:5 “Levites”— Judah, Benjamin, and Levi composed the chief part of those carried away into exile by the Babylonians. Note on Levites at Num 1:47-51; 8:19.

“God had moved”— v 1; Ex 35:20-22; Hag 1:14. Many of the Jews had settled down into the alien society of Babylon. They were not eager to face the difficulties of a four month journey

(7:9; 8:21-23) of more than one thousand kilometers to Jerusalem, or the prospect of starting life again in a ruined city, or the insecurity of the unknown. It required a special work of God in their hearts to make them willing to go.

1:6 Many other Jews helped those willing to return to Jerusalem, even though they did not wish to go themselves.

1:7 5:14; 6:5; 2 Kings 24:13; 2 Chron 36:7,10; Jer 52:17-19.

1:8 “Sheshbazzar”— v 11; 5:14,16. Scholars dispute whether he was the same as Zerubbabel (2:2; 3:2,8; 4:2-3; 5:2). Zerubbabel was the civil leader of the people.

1:11 “Five thousand four hundred”— not all the gold and silver articles are listed in vs 9,10.

2:1-70 Neh 7:6-73.

2:1 2 Kings 24:14-16; 25:11; 2 Chron 36:20.

2:2 “Jeshua”— the same person as the Joshua of Hag 1:1; and Zech 3:1.

“Nehemiah”— not the Nehemiah of Neh 1:1 who came to Jerusalem later.

“Mordecai”— not the same person who appears in the book of Esther.

⁷the children of Elam, a thousand two hundred and fifty-four; ⁸the children of Zattu, nine hundred and forty-five; ⁹the children of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty; ¹⁰the children of Bani, six hundred and forty-two; ¹¹the children of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-three; ¹²the children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred and twenty-two; ¹³the children of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-six; ¹⁴the children of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty-six; ¹⁵the children of Adin, four hundred and fifty-four; ¹⁶the children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; ¹⁷the children of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-three; ¹⁸the children of Jorah, a hundred and twelve; ¹⁹the children of Hashum, two hundred and twenty-three; ²⁰the children of Gibbar, ninety-five; ²¹the children of Bethlehem, an hundred and twenty-three; ²²the men of Netophah, fifty-six; ²³the men of Anathoth, a hundred and twenty-eight; ²⁴the children of Azmaveth, forty-two; ²⁵the children of Kirjath-Arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three; ²⁶the children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred and twenty-one; ²⁷the men of Michmas, a hundred and twenty-two; ²⁸the men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred and twenty-three; ²⁹the children of Nebo, fifty-two; ³⁰the children of Magbish, a hundred and fifty-six; ³¹the children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred and fifty-four; ³²the children of Harim, three hundred and twenty; ³³the children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-five; ³⁴the children of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five; ³⁵the children of Senaah, three thousand six hundred and thirty.

³⁶The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-three; ³⁷the children of Immer, a thousand and fifty-two; ³⁸the children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred and forty-seven; ³⁹the children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

⁴⁰The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy-four.

⁴¹The singers: the children of Asaph, a hundred and twenty-eight.

⁴²The children of the gatekeepers: 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 and thirty-nine.

⁴³The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, ⁴⁴the children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon, ⁴⁵the children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, ⁴⁶the children of Hagab, the children of Shalmal, the children of Hanan, ⁴⁷the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, ⁴⁸the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, ⁴⁹the children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, ⁵⁰the children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim, ⁵¹the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, ⁵²the children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, ⁵³the children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah, ⁵⁴the children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

⁵⁵The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda, ⁵⁶the children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, ⁵⁷the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami.

⁵⁸All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, *were* three hundred and ninety-two.

⁵⁹And these *were* those who went up from Telmelah, Telharsa, Cherub, Addan, *and* Immer, but they could not show *evidence* of their father's house, and their descendants, whether they *were* of Israel: ⁶⁰The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred and fifty-two; ⁶¹and of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai (who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name).

⁶²These searched *in the registers* of their ancestors *for their names*, but they were

2:40 Many priests but few Levites returned. The Levites had to do the more menial work of the temple. Note on priests at Ex 28:1.

2:41 "Asaph"—1 Chron 25:1; 2 Chron 5:12; 35:15;

Ps 50; 73—83.

2:42 "Gatekeepers"—1 Chron 9:26; 2 Chron 23:4; 35:15; Neh 12:25.

2:43 "Nethinims"—temple servants.

2:61 "Gileadite"—2 Sam 17:27-29; 19:31-39.

not found, so they were removed from the priesthood as if unclean. ⁶³And the governor told them that they should not eat *any* of the most holy things until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim.

⁶⁴The whole congregation together was forty-two thousand three hundred *and* sixty, ⁶⁵besides their male and female servants, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven. And among them *were* two hundred men and women singers.

⁶⁶Their horses *were* seven hundred and thirty-six; their mules, two hundred and forty-five; ⁶⁷their camels, four hundred and thirty-five; *their* donkeys, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

⁶⁸And *some* of the heads of the fathers' households, when they came to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in its place.

⁶⁹According to their ability, for the work they gave into the treasury sixty-one thousand gold drachmas, and five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly garments.

⁷⁰So the priests, and the Levites, and *some* of the people, and the singers, and the gatekeepers, and the Nethinims, lived in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

3 And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel *were* in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. ²Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and

Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as *it is* written in the law of Moses the man of God.

³And they set up the altar on its foundation, despite the fear *that came* on them because of the people of those countries; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both morning and evening burnt offerings.

⁴They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, as *it is* written, and *offered* the daily burnt offerings in the required number for each day, according to the ordinance. ⁵And afterwards *they offered* the continual burnt offering, also *offerings* at the new moons and all the appointed feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and *those* of everyone who willingly offered a freewill offering to the LORD. ⁶From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not yet been laid.

⁷They also gave money to the masons and to the carpenters, and food and drink and oil to the *men* of Sidon and Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon on the sea to Joppa, in accordance with the permission they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

⁸Now in the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak and the rest of their brethren, the priests and the Levites and all those who had come from the captivity to

2:62 "*Unclean*"— that is, not fit for the priesthood because their descent from Aaron was not proved. See Num 3:10; 16:40. Now, in this New Testament era, priesthood has nothing to do with ancestors and genealogies, but only with a living relationship with the Lord Jesus by faith (Heb 10:19-22; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6).

2:63 "*Thummin*"— Ex 28:30.

2:64 A higher figure than the total of all the figures listed in vs 3-60. The difference of 12,542 may be the number of wives who came, or perhaps men of tribes other than Judah, Benjamin and Levi (1:5).

2:68 "*Offered freely*"— compare Ex 25:1-2; 35:5,20; 1 Chron 29:3-6,9.

2:69 "*Drachmas*"— the total comes to about 500 kilograms.

"*Minas*"— the total of this was about 2.9 metric tons.

3:2 "*Shealtiel*"— see 1 Chron 3:19.

"*Altar*"— they began with the altar as being the first essential for offering the sacrifices prescribed

under the law— Ex 20:24; Deut 12:5-6. Notes on burnt offerings at Leviticus chapter 1.

3:3 "*Fear*"— 4:4. They did not let the fear of man prevent them from doing what they knew was right. Compare 1 Sam 15:24; Ps 56:3,11; Prov 29:25; Isa 51:12; John 12:42-43; Acts 4:18-20; 5:29.

"*Offerings*"— Ex 29:39; Num 28:1-8.

3:4 "*Feast of Tabernacles*"— Ex 23:16; Lev 23:33-43.

3:5 "*Newmoons*"— Num 10:10; 28:11; 1 Sam 20:5,24.

3:6 The re-establishing of the offerings and the worship of God, came before the building of the temple. They had their priorities right. In Bible history the altar and offerings appear long before tabernacle or temple— Gen 8:20. The devotion of His people is far more important to God than any building.

3:7 "*Trees*"— 1 Kings 5:6,10; 2 Chron 2:3,8,16.

3:8 "*Second year*"— probably 536 B.C.

"*House of God*"— the place where the house of God, the temple, had stood. The new temple was built in the same place.

Jerusalem, began *the work*, and appointed the Levites, twenty years old and over, to oversee the work of the house of the LORD. ⁹Then Jeshua, *with* his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, arose together to supervise the workers in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, *with* their sons and their brethren the Levites.

¹⁰And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their apparel *stood* with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph stood with cymbals, to praise the LORD, in accordance with the ordinance of David king of Israel. ¹¹And they sang together by turns, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, because *he is* good, for his mercy *continues on* forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout as they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD had been laid. ¹²But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' *households* were old men who had seen the first house. When the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, they wept with a loud voice. But many shouted aloud for joy, ¹³so 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 far off.

"*Twenty years*"— 1 Chron 23:24; 2 Chron 31:17. **3:10** 1 Chron 6:31-32; 16:4-6,42.

3:11 1 Chron 16:34; 2 Chron 5:13; 7:3; Ps 47:1; 95:1; 136:1-26.

3:12 "*First house*"— the temple built by Solomon was very magnificent; the temple built after the Babylonian captivity was plain and ordinary — Hag 2:3. The Jews wept to think of the former splendor gone and God's judgment which had fallen on His people; they rejoiced that God had brought them back to the land and given them a chance to make a new beginning. In any time it is better to be among those who rejoice, and to look forward rather than backward — Phil 3:1,13; 4:4.

4:1 "*Adversaries*"— these people were originally foreigners, not Israelites. Their offer to help did not come out of good motives, as was soon evident (vs 4,5). Sometimes the method Satan uses to hinder or ruin a work of God is to bring false "helpers" into it. Compare Matt 13:24-30,37-39; 2 Cor 11:13-15; 2 Pet 2:1-2. Believers do not need any such helpers and should be on their guard against them.

They professed to seek the God of Israel

4 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the *returned* exiles were building the temple to the LORD God of Israel, ²they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the fathers' *households*, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God, just as you *do*, and we have been sacrificing to him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here".

³But Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of the fathers' *households* of Israel, said to them, "You can have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God, but we alone will build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us".

⁴Then the people of the land attempted to discourage the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, ⁵and hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

⁶And in the reign of Ahasuerus, at the beginning of his reign, they wrote *to him* an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

⁷And in the days of Artaxerxes Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia, and the text of the letter was written in the Syrian script, and translated into the Syrian language.

but they had many gods of their own. See 2 Kings 17:25-34.

4:3 The leaders of the Jews wanted no help from those who worshiped other gods and did not follow the instructions God gave in the law of Moses. Believers now should have the same concern to be a holy, separate people — 2 Cor 6:14-18.

4:4-5 If the enemies of a work of God do not succeed in hindering it in one way they will try another. Cyrus reigned 559-530 B.C. Darius began his reign in 522.

4:6-23 This section deals with opposition to the Jews' plan for rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Chronologically it belongs between chapters 6 and 7 and is like a parenthesis in the narrative here. Verse 24 takes up the story from v 5.

4:6 "*Ahasuerus*"— Esther 1:1 — better known as Xerxes. He reigned 486-465 B.C.

4:7 "*Artaxerxes*"— 7:1,7,21. He ruled Persia 465-424 B.C.

"*Syrian language*"— Aramaic, the language spoken by Syrians and others (including the Jews after the Babylonian captivity). In the Hebrew Old Testament Ezra 4:8 — 6:18 is in Aramaic.

⁸Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king, of the following kind. ⁹Then Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions, the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, ¹⁰and the rest of the nations whom the great and honourable Osnapper brought over and placed in the cities of Samaria, and the rest *who are* at this time on this side of the river, *wrote*.

¹¹This is a copy of the letter that they sent to him, to Artaxerxes the king: “We are your servants, men who are at this time on this side of the River. ¹²Be it known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have come to Jerusalem, and are building that rebellious and evil city, and are restoring its walls and repairing the foundations.

¹³“Be it known now to the king that if this city is built and the walls restored, *then* they will not pay tax, tribute, and duty, and so the kings’ revenue will be damaged. ¹⁴Now because we are receiving support from *the king’s* palace, and it is not right for us to see the king’s dishonour, we have sent and informed the king, ¹⁵that search may be made in the record books of your fathers so you can discover in the record books and know that this city *is* a rebellious city, and harmful to kings and provinces, and that within it in former times they have incited rebellion. For this reason this city was destroyed. ¹⁶We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt, and its walls restored, through this you will have no portion on this side of the River”.

¹⁷*Then* the king sent an answer to Rehum

the chancellor and to Shimshai the scribe and *to* the rest of their companions who live in Samaria, and *to* the rest *living* beyond the River, “Peace at this time.

¹⁸“The letter which you sent to us has been clearly read in my presence. ¹⁹And I gave a command, and a search has been made, and it has been found that in former times this city made insurrection against kings, and *that* rebellion and revolt were made in it. ²⁰There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem who have ruled over all *the countries* beyond the River, and tax, tribute, and duty were paid to them. ²¹Now give an order to stop these men, that this city not be built, until *another* command is given by me. ²²Now take heed that you do not fail to do this. Why should the damage increase to the harm of the kings?”

²³Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes’ letter was read in the presence of Rehum and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they quickly went up to Jerusalem to the Jews, and made them stop *work* by force of arms.

²⁴Then the work of the house of God at Jerusalem stopped. So it stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

5 Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *who was* over them. ²Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, rose up and began to build the house of God in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God *were* with them helping them.

4:8 “Chancellor”— here means an official appointed by the Persian king to represent him.

4:10 “Osnapper”— also known as Ashurbanipal. He was the last powerful Assyrian king, ruling 669-627 B.C. From this verse together with v 2 and 2 Kings 17:24 we learn that outsiders were sent by three different Assyrian kings at three different times to live in the region of Samaria. **4:13-16** These enemies of the Jews tried to get the king to support them by using this economic argument. What ruler wants to suffer financial loss?

4:20 1 Kings 4:21; 1 Chron 18:3-6.

4:22 The economic argument (vs 13-16) was successful, as it usually is in the world’s affairs. The world always cares more for money than for

truth and justice. See 1 John 2:16.

4:23 “Made them stop”— that is, stop trying to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

4:24 The author returns to events of vs 4,5 which took place prior to the reign of Artaxerxes.

5:1 “Haggai”— Hag 1:1.

“Zechariah”— Zech 1:1. In the year 520 these two prophets began their ministry to the Jews in Judah.

5:2 “Zerubbabel”— this man was the grandson of king Jehoiachin (1 Chron 3:17), and an ancestor of the Lord Jesus (Matt 1:12-13).

“Jeshua”— 2:2.

“Began to build”— the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah had this success (Hag 1:13-14).

³At the same time Tatnai, governor on this side of the River, and Shethar-Boznai, and their companions, came to them and said this to them: “Who has commanded you to build this house and to restore this wall?”

⁴Accordingly we then told them what the names of the men who were constructing this building were. ⁵But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, so that they could not make them stop *the work* until the matter came before Darius, and then a written reply was returned concerning this *matter*.

⁶*This is* a copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side of the River, and Shethar-Boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, who *were* on this side the River, sent to Darius the king. ⁷They sent a letter to him, in which this was written: “To Darius the king, all peace.

⁸“Be it known to the king that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is being built with large stones, with timber being placed in the walls; and this work is going ahead quickly, and prospering in their hands.

⁹“Then we questioned those elders, *and* said this to them: ‘Who commanded you to build this house, and to restore these walls?’ ¹⁰We also asked their names, to inform you, that we might write the names of their chief men.

¹¹“And they replied to us, saying, ‘We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and rebuild the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished. ¹²But after our fathers had provoked the God of heaven to wrath, he gave them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. ¹³But in the first year of

Cyrus the king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to build this house of God. ¹⁴And also the articles of gold and silver *belonging* to the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple that was in Jerusalem and brought into the temple of Babylon, these Cyrus the king took from the temple of Babylon, and they were handed over to a *man* whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor. ¹⁵And he said to him, “Take these articles *and* go. Carry them to the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be built in its place”. ¹⁶Then this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundation of the house of God in Jerusalem, and from that time until now it is being built, but it is *still* not finished.’

¹⁷“Now, therefore, if *it seems* good to the king, let there be a search made in the king’s treasure house there in Babylon, *and* see whether it is *true* that a decree was made by King Cyrus to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his wish to us concerning this matter”.

6 Then Darius the king issued an order, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. ²And a scroll was found at Ecbatana, in the palace that *is* in the province of the Medes, and in it a record was written as follows:

³“In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree *concerning* the house of God at Jerusalem, ‘Let the house be built, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let its foundations be firmly laid. Its height *is to be* sixty cubits, *and* its width sixty cubits, ⁴*with* three rows of large stones, and a row of new timber. And let the expenses be paid from the king’s house. ⁵And also let the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the

5:3 4:4-5. Tatnai was the Persian governor.

5:5 “*Eye*”—2 Chron 16:9. God would not encourage them through His prophets and stir them to do the work only to let their enemies stop them.

5:8 “*Great God*”—it is interesting that they should say this and then try to stop His work.

5:11 “*God of heaven*”—1:2; 6:9; Neh 1:5; 2:4; Dan 2:19; Rev 11:13.

“*King of Israel*”—Solomon.

5:12 “*Provoked...to wrath*”—2 Chron 34:25; 36:16-20. Notes on God’s anger at Num 25:3; Ps 90:7-11.

5:13 “*Cyrus*”—1:1. Notice that Cyrus, king of Persia, is here called “king of Babylon”. This is

because he conquered Babylon and ruled over it. **5:14** 1:7-8.

5:16 3:8-10.

6:2 “*Ecbatana*”—also called Achmetha. The Persian empire had four capital cities. This was one.

“*Medes*”—Isa 13:17; Jer 25:25; Dan 5:28,31; Acts 2:9.

6:3 “*Sixty cubits*”—this dimension is far greater than that of Solomon’s temple which was only 9 meters wide. The Persians authorized a temple of this size, but the one the Jews built was surely much smaller (Hag 2:3).

6:5 1:7-11.

temple at Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple at Jerusalem, *each one* to its place, and put *them* in the house of God.’

⁶“Now *therefore*, Tatnai, governor beyond the River, Shethar-Boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, who *are* beyond the River, stay at a distance from there. ⁷Let 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.

⁸“Moreover, I issue this decree *concerning* what you must do for the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: expenses from the king’s goods, from the taxes beyond the River, are immediately to be given to these men, so that they are not hindered. ⁹And let what they need, both young bulls and rams and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, in accordance with the appointment of the priests who *are* at Jerusalem, be given them day by day without fail, ¹⁰so that they can offer fragrant sacrifices to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and of his sons.

¹¹“Also I have issued a decree, that whoever alters this word, let timber be pulled down from his house and set up, *and* let him be hanged on it, and let his house be made a refuse heap for this. ¹²And the God who has caused his name to dwell there, destroy all kings and people who take in hand to change *and* destroy this house of God at Jerusalem. “I Darius have issued a decree.

6:6-12 This portion gives the letter King Darius wrote to the governor.

6:6 5:3.

6:7 Once again God moved on the heart of a foreign ruler to accomplish His purposes (1:1; Prov 21:1).

6:8-9 God so worked that the plot of enemies to stop the work was turned to a means of actually helping the work go forward. Such is God’s great and wise sovereignty over the affairs of men. Compare Gen 50:20.

6:10 The Persian rulers usually had a tolerant attitude toward religion. They encouraged the building or restoration of temples in other lands as well as Judah. They were not devoted to the God of Israel, but merely thought that all nations should have the religion and the gods they chose and be able to worship without hindrance. Their object was the well being of themselves and the empire.

Let it be done with speed”.

¹³Then Tatnai, governor on this side the River, Shethar-Boznai, and their companions, quickly acted in accordance with *the message* Darius the king had sent. ¹⁴And the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built, and finished *it*, in accordance with the commandment of the God of Israel, and in accordance with the command of Cyrus and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. ¹⁵And 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.

¹⁶And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, observed the dedication of this house of God with joy, ¹⁷and offered at the dedication of this house of God a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and, as a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, in accordance with the number of the tribes of Israel. ¹⁸And they appointed the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses.

¹⁹And the children of the captivity kept the Passover on the fourteenth *day* of the first month. ²⁰For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them *were* clean, and they killed the Passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.

6:11 7:26; Dan 2:5; 3:4-6,29; 6:7-8. Emperors in ancient times usually did not take a tolerant view of disobedience to their commands.

6:13 “*Tatnai*”– 5:3; 6:6.

6:14 “*Zechariah*”– 5:1-2. The Persian rulers and the Jewish elders supported the rebuilding of the temple, but the mainstay of the work was the ministry of God’s Word.

“*Artaxerxes*”– this man became king half a century after the rebuilding of the temple. He is mentioned here probably because he later contributed to the maintenance of the temple (7:21-26).

6:15 “*Darius*”– the temple was completed in 516 or 515 B.C.

6:17 “*Sin offering*”– notes at Leviticus chapters 4 and 5.

6:19 Notes at Ex 12:1-13; Lev 23:5.

6:20 “*Clean*”– note at Neh 12:30.

²¹And the children of Israel who had come back from captivity, and all those who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, ate *it* with them, ²²and joyfully kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days. For the Lord had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

7 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, ²the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, ³the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, ⁴the son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, ⁵the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest, ⁶this Ezra came 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 everything he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him. ⁷And some of the children of Israel and of the priests and the

Levites and the singers and the gatekeepers and the Nethinims came up to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.

⁸And he arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month, in the seventh year of the king. ⁹For on the first *day* of the first month he started his journey up from Babylon, and on the first *day* of the fifth month he arrived in Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. ¹⁰For Ezra had prepared his heart to search out the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach *its* statutes and judgments in Israel.

¹¹Now this *is* a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, a scribe learned in the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes *given* to Israel:

¹²“Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, and perfect *peace be with you now*.

¹³“I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and of their priests and Levites in my realm who are willing to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you. ¹⁴For you are sent by the king, and by his seven

6:21 “*Separated themselves*”– 9:11-12; Ex 19:5-6; Deut 7:6; 14:2; Neh 9:2; 10:28; 2 Cor 6:14-18; 1 Pet 2:9.

6:22 “*Unleavened Bread*”– Ex 12:15; 13:6-7; Lev 23:6.

“*Assyria*”– the king of Persia is here called also the king of Assyria because Assyria had been conquered and was ruled by Persian kings. Compare 5:13.

7:1 “*After these things*”– more than fifty years elapsed between the events of chapters 6 and 7. The temple was finished by 515 B.C. Ezra came to Jerusalem probably in 458. During this interval the events of the book of Esther took place.

“*Ezra*”– Ezra was a priest in the family line of Aaron who was the first high priest of Israel after the building of the tabernacle (Ex 28:1).

“*Son of*”– in Hebrew these words, and “children of”, frequently mean merely “descendant(s) of”, and many generations may have lived between the times of the two persons named. Here Ezra, giving his own genealogy, omits names of his own ancestors given in 1 Chron 6:3-15. This is further evidence that in Hebrew “son of” can mean grandson or other descendant further down the line.

7:6 Ezra was born and grew to manhood in Babylon among the exiles taken there by king Nebuchadnezzar.

“*Skilled*”– vs 10,11. Ezra’s knowledge of the law of Moses and his godly character indicate that among the Jews in Babylon at that time there was some vigorous spiritual life and study.

“*On him*”– the hand of the Lord on him suggests almighty power and guidance working with Ezra – vs 9,28; 8:18,22,31; Neh 2:8,18.

7:9 God’s almighty and gracious hand protected Ezra through the trials and dangers of a four month journey.

7:10 “*Ezra*”– vs 6,11. Notice the three aspects of Ezra’s life and ministry. He learned; he practiced; he taught. All three are very important, and their order is also important. We have all seen far too many who tried to teach without learning much themselves, and without practicing what they taught. Compare Rom 2:17-24; 1 Tim 1:5-7. To be and do what Ezra was and did one must devote oneself to them as he did.

7:12 The text of Ezra 7:12-26 is in Aramaic in the Hebrew Old Testament.

“*King of kings*”– he called himself this because he had conquered other kings and ruled over them. But there is only One who is ruler of all the kings of earth (1 Tim 6:15; Rev 1:5; 17:14; 19:16).

“*God of heaven*”– 1:2. These kings used such language, but how much they understood the real meaning of their own words, we cannot say.

counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in accordance with the law of your God which *is* in your hand, ¹⁵and to carry the silver and gold which the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling place *is* in Jerusalem, ¹⁶and all the silver and gold that you can 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 in Jerusalem, ¹⁷so that you can quickly buy with this money bulls, rams, lambs, with their food offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God which *is* in Jerusalem.

¹⁸“And whatever seems good to you, and to your brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do that, according to the will of your God. ¹⁹Also the articles that are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver *them* into the presence of the God of Jerusalem. ²⁰And whatever more is needed for the house of your God, which you may have occasion to supply, supply it out of the king’s treasure house.

²¹“And I, I Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers who *are* beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, requires from you, let it be done speedily, ²²up to a hundred talents of silver, and a hundred measures of wheat, and a hundred baths of wine and a hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing *how much*. ²³Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done diligently for the house of the God of heaven. For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? ²⁴Also we inform you, concerning all of the priests and Levites, singers, gatekeepers, Nethinims, and ministers of this house of God, it will not be lawful to impose tax,

7:14 “Seven counselors”— Esther 1:14.

7:20 “Treasure house”— 6:4. It is probably that the favor shown to the Jews by the kings of Persia can be traced partly to the influence on them by people like Daniel, Esther, Mordecai, Ezra and Nehemiah.

7:22 “A hundred talents”— one talent equals about 34 kilograms.

“Measures”— in Hebrew “kors”— one kor equals about 6 bushels or 220 dry liters.

“Bath”— one bath equals about 22 liters.

7:23 6:10; 8:22. This generosity had a motive of

tribute, or duty on them.

²⁵“And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which *is* in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who can judge all the people who *are* beyond the River, all those who know the laws of your God. And teach those who do not know *them*. ²⁶And whoever will not do the law of your God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily on him, whether *it be* for death, or for banishment, or for confiscation of goods, or for imprisonment”.

²⁷Blessed *be* the LORD God of our fathers who put *such a thing* as this in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem, ²⁸and *who* has extended mercy to me in the presence of the king and his counsellors, and before all the king’s mighty princes. And I was strengthened because the hand of the LORD my God *was* on me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to come up with me.

8 These *are* now the heads of their fathers’ households, and *this is* the genealogy of those who came up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king: ²of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom; of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel; of the sons of David, Hattush; ³of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh, Zechariah, and with him were registered a hundred and fifty males; ⁴of the sons of Pahath-Moab, Elihoenai the son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males; ⁵of the sons of Shechaniah, the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males; ⁶and of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males; ⁷and of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males; ⁸and of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him eighty males; ⁹of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel,

self-interest. This is all too often the case even in Christian circles.

7:25 The king gave considerable authority to Ezra in both religious and secular matters.

7:27 “Blessed be the LORD”— Ezra gave praise to God for the way He worked in the king’s heart. Compare 1:1; 6:22; Prov 21:1.

7:28 “Mercy to me”— for the first time in this book Ezra speaks directly of himself.

“Hand of the LORD”— vs 6,9.

8:1 7:7.

and with him two hundred and eighteen males; ¹⁰and of the sons of Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah, and with him a hundred and sixty males; ¹¹and of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males; ¹²and of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him a hundred and ten males; ¹³and of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them sixty males; ¹⁴and of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai, and Zaccur, and with them seventy males.

¹⁵And I gathered them together at the river that flows toward Ahava, and for three days we stayed there in tents. And I looked among the people and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi. ¹⁶Then I sent 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, and for Joiarib and for Elnathan, men of understanding. ¹⁷And I sent them with an order to Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say to Iddo and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring to us ministers for the house of our God. ¹⁸And by the good hand of our God on 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 his brethren, eighteen men; ¹⁹and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty men; ²⁰also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims. All of them were designated by name.

²¹Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a right way

for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. ²²For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is on all those who seek him, *bringing* good, but his power and his wrath are against all those who forsake him". ²³So we fasted and prayed to our God for this, and he heard our prayer.

²⁴Then I separated twelve of the leading priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, ²⁵and weighed out to them the silver and the gold and the articles, the offering for the house of our God, which the king and his counsellors and his lords, and all Israel *there* present, had offered. ²⁶I weighed out into their hands six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver articles *weighing* a hundred talents, and one hundred talents of gold, ²⁷and twenty gold basins worth a thousand drachmas, and two articles of fine bronze, precious as gold.

²⁸And I said to them, "You are holy to the LORD. The articles are also holy, and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to the LORD God of your fathers. ²⁹Watch and keep *them*, until you weigh *them* in the presence of the chief priests and the Levites, and heads of the fathers' households of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD". ³⁰So the priests and the Levites took the weighed silver and the gold and the articles to bring *them* to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

³¹Then we set out from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem, and the hand of our God was on us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and of those who lie in wait along the way. ³²And we came to Jerusalem, and stayed there three days.

³³Now on the fourth day the silver and the

8:15 "Ahava"—a place in Babylonia. "River" here may mean a canal that was connected with either the Euphrates or Tigris river.

8:21 "Fast"—Jud 20:26; 1 Sam 7:6; 2 Chron 20:3; Neh 9:1; Esther 4:3; Ps 69:10; Joel 1:14; 2:15.

8:22 There are possible dangers lurking every time a child of God makes a journey. It is a wise thing to commit every journey to God and pray for His protection. Compare Ps 20:7; 33:17-19; 34:15,22; 118:6-7; Rom 8:31. Ezra's life matched the principles he preached. He was concerned that he should have a consistent testimony before others. He saw that asking

the king for protectors for the journey would be an expression of doubt that God would protect them.

8:23 Ps 65:2.

8:29 "Watch and keep them"—anyone entrusted with anything belonging to God should be more careful to guard it than to guard things belonging to himself. Alas, that often in Christian circles things and money offered to God are misused, neglected, or even stolen by those who have the oversight of them.

8:31 "Hand of our God"—7:6,9,28.

8:33 8:26,30.

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; and with them were Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites. ³⁴Everything was counted by number and by weight, and the whole weight was written down at that time.

³⁵Also the offspring of those who had been carried away, 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, twelve he-goats as a sin offering. All *this* was a burnt offering to the LORD. ³⁶And they delivered the king's orders to the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side of the River. And they gave assistance to the people and to the house of God.

9 Now when these things had been done, the leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, *behaving* according to their abominations, *those* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. ²For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves, and for their sons, so that the holy race has mingled with the people

of *those* lands. Yes, the leaders and rulers have been foremost in putting their hand to this trespass".

³And when I heard this matter, I tore my garment and my cloak, and plucked out the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down appalled. ⁴Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me, because of the transgression of those who had been exiled, and I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.

⁵And at the evening sacrifice I got up from my humiliation, with my clothes and my cloak torn, and I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God, ⁶and said, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to raise my face to you, my God, for our evil deeds have risen over *our* head, and our trespass has grown up to the heavens. ⁷From the days of our fathers to this day our guilt *has been* great, and for our evil deeds we, our kings and our priests, have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to be like plunder, and to confusion of face, as *it is* this day.

⁸"And now for a little while grace has been *showed* from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may give light to our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. ⁹For we were slaves, yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage, but

8:35 Notes on offerings at Leviticus chapters 1-4. **8:36** 7:21-24.

9:1 "Not separated"— Ex 19:5-6; Lev 18:24-30; 20:7,23.

9:2 "Wives"— Ex 34:15-16; Deut 7:3-6. Israel was called to be a distinct, separate people, a "holy race", whose holiness of life would be in marked contrast to the sinful lifestyle of the world around. The same is true of believers now (2 Cor 6:14-18; 1 Pet 2:9). The tragedy is that so often those who profess to know the Lord want to be the same as everyone else, to fit into godless society instead of being a witness for God and His holy character. This compromise with the fallen world is seen not only in Ezra's time but in many places in Scripture, and is only too evident in the churches today.

9:3 Gen 37:34; Josh 7:6; Jud 11:35; 2 Sam 13:19. The depth of Ezra's love for God and His people is seen here. Those who are closest to God will be most alarmed by sin. Compare Ps 119:136. Ezra knew that a continued refusal to be a separate people and to follow God's laws would mean punishment for the people and dishonor to God's name.

9:4 "Trembled"— Ps 119:120; Isa 66:2. In all times God has His remnant through whom His purposes are worked out. See v 8; 2 Kings 19:30; Isa 1:9.

9:5 "Sacrifice"— Ex 29:41.

9:6-15 Although guiltless in the matter that so appalled him, Ezra identified himself with the people in their sin. Compare Neh 9:6-38; Isa 64:5-7; Jer 3:25. He did not stand aloof and condemn them. We can learn something of true intercession from this prayer.

9:6 "Ashamed"— Jer 3:25; 31:19; Dan 9:7. Contrast Jer 3:3; 6:15; Zeph 3:5; 1 Cor 5:2. See Ps 51:17.

9:7 "Fathers"— 2 Chron 29:6; Ps 106:6-43; Jer 2:27; Ezek 23:35.

"Handed over to"— 2 Chron 36:15-20. Ezra was afraid the same thing might happen again if the people were not willing to obey God.

9:8 "Grace"— Ex 34:6-7.

"Remnant"— v 4.

"Light"— Ps 4:6; 13:3; 19:8; 36:9.

9:9 "Slaves"— Neh 9:36. They were not slaves put to hard labor, but they were under the kings of Persia and unable to have their own king or to handle their own affairs without supervision from them.

has extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to raise up the house of our God and to repair its desolations, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.

¹⁰“And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, ¹¹which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying, ‘The land which you are going to possess is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations. They have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. ¹²Now, therefore, do not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons, or seek their peace or their wealth at any time, so that you may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave *it* as an inheritance to your children forever.’

¹³“And after all that has come on us for our evil deeds and for our great trespass, since you, our God, have punished us less than our evil deeds *deserve*, and have given us *such* deliverance as this, ¹⁴should we again break your commandments, and join in marriage with the people of these abominations? Would you not be angry with us till you had consumed us, so that *there would be* no remnant or survivor? ¹⁵O LORD God of Israel, you *are* righteous, for we remain as a remnant, as *it is* this day. See, we *are* before you in our trespasses, for we cannot stand before you because of this”.

“*Kings of Persia*”— all of them from Cyrus to Artaxerxes showed favor to the Jews.

9:10-12 Lev 18:24-27; Deut 7:3-4; 9:4; 11:8-9.

9:13 “*Deserve*”— they had been punished with famine and sword, and great destruction of their land and cities and people, and with bondage in a foreign country. Yet in Ezra’s eyes this was less than they deserved. This is a truth the spiritually wise among men will understand (Ps 103:10). Those who are spiritually blind will put the blame for man’s sufferings on God and think God is unjust to punish men for their sins.

9:14 “*Marriage*”— Neh 13:23-27. Marriage between believers and unbelievers is contrary to God’s Word and is a very serious matter indeed.

“*Angry*”— Deut 7:4; 11:16-17; 29:26-28; Josh 23:16; Jud 2:20. Notes at Num 25:3; Ps 90:7-11.

9:15 “*Righteous*”— a truth taught everywhere in the Bible – Gen 18:25; Deut 4:8; 1 Sam 12:7; 2 Chron 12:6; Ps 4:1; 51:4; 129:4; 145:17; Isa 24:16; Jer 12:1; Rom 3:25; Rev 15:3-4; 16:7.

“*We cannot stand before you because of*

10 Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a very great congregation out of Israel, of men and women and children, gathered around him, for the people wept bitterly. ²And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said to Ezra, “We have trespassed against our God, and have taken foreign wives of the people of the land. Yet now, in spite of this, there is hope for Israel. ³Now, therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and those who have been born to them, according to the counsel of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the law. ⁴Arise! For *this* matter is your *responsibility*. We also *will be* with you. Be courageous, and do *it*”.

⁵Then Ezra got up, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, swear that they would do according to this word. And they swore. ⁶Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the room of Johanan the son of Eliashib. And *when* he went there, he neither ate food nor drank water, for he was grieving because of the transgression of the exiles.

⁷And they made a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the children of the captivity, that they should assemble at Jerusalem, ⁸and that whoever would not come within three days, in accordance with

this”— compare Ps 51:1-6; Isa 6:5; Jer 3:25. Contrast this attitude with the one seen in Luke 18:9-12.

10:1 Ezra felt deeply the sin of the people and the danger that could come to them because of it. And he wanted them to understand the seriousness of the situation.

10:2 Ezra waited for repentance to have its work in the people’s hearts and for them to say what was in their minds. He knew that nothing of spiritual value could be done unless the people were with him.

“*Hope*”— there is always hope for those who will repent and turn to God with their whole heart – 2 Chron 7:14; Isa 55:7.

10:5 “*Swear*”— 2 Chron 15:12-15; Neh 5:12; 13:25.

10:6 “*Water*”— Deut 9:18; Ps 42:3; Jonah 3:7.

10:7-8 Because of the influence of Ezra’s teaching, example, and prayers, the leaders of the Jews acted as they should have to put away that evil from the people. Ezra’s method accomplished more than a show of authority on his part would have done.

the counsel of the leaders and the elders, all his property would be forfeited, and he would be separated from the congregation of the exiles.

⁹Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered together at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth *day* of the month, and all the people were sitting in the square before the house of God, trembling because of *this* matter, and because of a heavy rain. ¹⁰And Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have transgressed, and have taken foreign wives, increasing the trespass of Israel. ¹¹Now, therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do what pleases him, and separate yourselves from the people of the land and from the foreign wives”.

¹²Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, “We must do as you have said. ¹³But the people *are* many, and *it is* the rainy season, and we are not able to stand outside. And *this is* not the work of a day or two, for there are many of us who have transgressed in this matter. ¹⁴Let now our rulers, of the whole congregation, stand, and let all those in our cities who have married foreign wives come at appointed times, and with them the elders of each city and its judges, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter is turned away from us”. ¹⁵Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite supported them.

¹⁶And the exiles did as *agreed*. And Ezra the priest, *with* some heads of the fathers’ households, for each of their fathers’ households, and all of them by *their* names, were separated and sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. ¹⁷And they finished *dealing* with all the men who had taken foreign wives by the first day of the first month.

¹⁸And among the sons of the priests there were found those who had married foreign wives; *namely*, of the sons of Jeshua, the son of Jozadab and his brothers Maaseiah, and Eliezer and Jarib and Gedaliah.

¹⁹And they gave their hands *in pledge* that they would put away their wives, and since *they were* guilty, *they offered* a ram from the flock for their trespass.

²⁰And of the sons of Immer, Hanani and Zebadiah; ²¹and of the sons of Harim, Maaseiah and Elijah and Shemaiah and Jehiel and Uziah; ²²and of the sons of Pashur, Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad and Elasa; ²³also of the Levites: Jozabad and Shimei and Kelaiah (he is the same as Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer;

²⁴Of the singers also: Eliashib. And of the gatekeepers: Shallum and Telem and Uri.

²⁵And others of Israel: of the sons of Parosh, Ramiah and Jeziah and Malchiah and Miamin and Eleazar and Malchijah and Benaiah; ²⁶and of the sons of Elam, Mattaniah, Zechariah and Jehiel and Abdi and Jeremoth and Eliah; ²⁷and of the sons of Zattu, Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah and Jeremoth and Zabad and Aziza; ²⁸of the sons also of Bebai, Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai and Athlai; ²⁹and of the sons of Bani, Meshullam, Malluch and Adaiah, Jashub and Sheal and Ramoth; ³⁰and of the sons of Pahath-Moab, Adna and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel and Binnui and Manasseh; ³¹and of the sons of Harim, Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, ³²Benjamin, Malluch and Shemariah; ³³of the sons of Hashum, Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh and Shimei; ³⁴of the sons of Bani, Maadai, Amram and Uel, ³⁵Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh, ³⁶Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, ³⁷Mattaniah, Mattenai and Jaasau, ³⁸and Bani and Binnui, Shimei, ³⁹and Shelemiah and Nathan and Adaiah, ⁴⁰Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, ⁴¹Azareel and Shelemiah, Shemariah, ⁴²Shallum, Amariah and Joseph; ⁴³of the sons of Nebo, Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau and Joel, Benaiah.

⁴⁴All of these had married foreign wives, and *some* of them had wives by whom they had children.

10:9 “*Rain*”— perhaps it was also cold, since the Jewish ninth month (includes parts of November and December) is the beginning of the cold season in Israel.

10:10-11 Ezra came to the point immediately.

Compare Isa 58:1. Such teachers and preachers are needed in every generation.

10:12-14 When leaders take an open stand against evil the results are often good.

10:19 “*Trespass*”— notes at Leviticus chapter 5.