

11/3/19

When God Guides, He Provides!
Ezra 7:1-28

We come to the return to Jerusalem under Ezra, as God continues to be faithful to His word to bring the nation of Israel back to the land and Himself. Ezra 7-10

We want to look at the mission of Ezra to lead the people back to join the restoration at Jerusalem, which is characterized by three things. Ezra 7:1-27

- I. The preparation for the return to Jerusalem. vs. 1-10
 - II. The documentation for the return to Jerusalem. vs. 11-20
 - III. The allocations for the work arriving at Jerusalem. vs. 21-28
- I. The preparation for the return to Jerusalem. vs. 1-10**
- A. The lineage and commission of Ezra. vs. 1-6
 - 1. The historical time of Ezra, “Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia.” vs. 1a-b
 - a. This is Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) 465-424 B.C. Ezra 7:1; Neh. 2:1; 5:14
 - 1) Cyrus the Great 536-530 B.C. who began to reign in 557 B.C. over the Medo-Persian empire. Ezra 1:1a

* Cyrus made Darius (Gobryas) a co-regent with him. Dan. 6:2, 28

- 2) Next came Cambyses is Ahasuerus, 530-522 B.C. Ezra 4:6, 21
 - 3) Then Guamata (pseudo-Smerdis) Artaxerxes 522 B.C. reign for only 9-10 months. Ezra 4:7
 - 4) Then came Darius I (Hystaspis) 522-486 B.C. decreed the return to build of the temple. Ezra 4:24; 5:6, 6:1, 3
 - 5) Xerxes I followed, 486-465 B.C. is Ahasuerus of Esther. Esther 1:1
 - 6) Bringing us to Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) indicated in our text, 465-424 B.C. Ezra 7:1; Neh. 2:1; 5:14
- b. This then is the year 457 B.C.
- 1) Sixty years since the temple had been finished in four years. Ezra 6:15
 - 2) Darius I gave the decree in 520 B.C. to March 3, 516 B.C. the day is adjusted to the Jewish calendar. Ezra 6:1; Hag. 1:1
2. The priestly geneology line of Ezra. vs. 1c-5
- a. “Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah”, was the chief priest taken captive in 586 BC. in 2Kings 25:18. vs. 1c-d
 - b. “the son of Hilkiah, the son of Shallum”, Hilkiah was a high priest under Josiah in 2Kings 22:4. vs. 1e

- c. “the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub”, Zakok was put as high priest by Solomon in 1Kings 2:35. vs. 2a-b
- d. Ezra’s genealogy goes all the way back to Aaron, but not the high priest line, “the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, the son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest.” vs. 2c-5
 - 1) Phinehas was the grandson of Aaron.
 - 2) There are 16 generations of priests listed, 17 with Ezra.
- 3. The priestly commission of Ezra. vs. 6
 - a. The place of Ezra’s birth is stated, “this Ezra came up from Babylon.” vs. 6a
 - b. The profession and qualification of Ezra is also stated, “and he was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses.” vs. 6b
 - 1) The word skilled “mahiyar”, means quick and swift, ready, prompt, well prepared.
 - 2) Scribe “caphar”, means to count, recount, a secretary in the sense that he studied, interpreted, taught and copied the word of God.
 - 3) To Ezra is attributed the organization of the Great-Synagogues and the compiling of the canon.

- 4) Shaphan was a scribe under Josiah and Bruch wrote down the dictations of Jeremiah. 2Kings 22:3; Jer. 36:32
- c. The origin and imparting of the Law of Moses is indicated, “which the LORD God of Israel had given.” vs. 6c
 - 1) God gave Moses on Mount Sinai the Ten Commandments, literally the Ten words, all the civil and religious laws, precepts, statutes and judgments. Ex. 19-24
 - 2) The Law of Moses often indicated the Pentateuch, the first five books.
- d. The vested authority of Ezra was from Artaxerxes, “The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.” vs. 6d-e
 - 1) The king is Artaxerxes I Longimanus, 465-424 B.C. Ezra 7:1; Neh. 2:1; 5:14
 - 2) The covenant God Yahweh directed Artaxerxes to have His prophecy fulfill and His will, like Cyrus.
 - 3) The hand of the LORD is a key phrase. vs. 6, 8, 28; 8:18, 22, 31
- B. The people returning with Ezra. vs. 7-10
 - 1. The particular groups of people accompanying Ezra. vs. 7
 - a. Their national identity is stated, “Some of the children of Israel.” vs. 7a

- * Forty times the word “Israel” is found in Ezra, all twelve tribes.
- b. The religious men to officiate in the temple follow, “the priests, the Levites.” vs. 7b-c
 - c. Next the men to lead worship in the temple, “the singers.” vs. 7d
 - d. Then the porters of the temple, “the gatekeepers.” vs. 7e
 - e. The last group are the servants of the temple, “and the Nethinim came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.” vs. 7f
 - 1) Nethinim “Nathiyn” the temple slaves assigned to the Levites and priest for service in the sanctuary like the Gibeonites that carried water and cut wood for the sanctuary.
 - 2) They became an establish group and order for the care of the temple and associated with the children of Solomon’s servants. Josh. 9; Ezra 2:43-58; Neh. 10:28; Deut. 29:11-13
 - 3) The 7th year of Artaxerxes is **457 B.C.**
2. The date Ezra arrived to Jerusalem is given, “And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.” vs. 8
 - a. The long and perilous journey came to an end in August 1, **457 B.C.** vs. 9b

- b. This was the first time Ezra saw Jerusalem with his own eyes.
3. The date Ezra began his journey from Babylon is also stated, “On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon.” vs. 9a
 - a. The month is April the first, **457 B.C.**
 - b. The months are 30 day months based on the lunar callendar.
 - c. There are over 200 travel texts from Perepoli and the travel-ration texts report the daily operatio of a highly developed system of travel, transport, and communication. (Expositors Bible Gaebelein:653)
 4. The date Ezra arrived at Jerusalem, “and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.” vs. 9b-c
 - a. He arrived to Jerusalem on the first day of August, the Jewish religious calendar.
 - 1) The first day of August they traveled four 30-day months to the day.
 - 2) 120 days, minus 12 days is 108, divided into 900 miles equals 8.3 miles a day. Ezra 8:15, 31
 - 3) It was slow with Families, children and son elderly.
 - b. The credit and glory is given to Yahweh for His caring protective hand,

“according to the good hand of his God upon him.”

- 1) The second return was of God as much as the first with Zerubbabel.
 - 2) The faithful, merciful protectiveness of God.
5. The mission of Ezra was to teach the people of God, the word of God. vs. 10
- a. The long dedication in training, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD.” vs. 10a
 - b. The purposfull dedication to live out the word, “and to do it.” vs, 10b
 - c. The passinate commitment to the people, “and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” vs. 10c
- * Ezra was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses”. vs. 6b

Illustration

Would you be attending Calvary Chapel Pasadena and consider me your Pastor, if in my preparations to run the church I did not study to teach you the word of God, but instead told you humorous and moving stories, appointed unsaved individuals to teach your children and teens, then hired some labors standing out in Home Depot to serve as ushers?

* This is kind of what is going on in the church today!

Application

1. How important it is for the church to have godly men to lead the people in the church.
 - a. Pastor-teachers that are men of the word.
 - b. Pastors that live out the word of God.
 - c. Pastors that care for the people of God.
 - d. Pastors that do not water-down or compromise the word of God.
 - 1) “Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I am against the **shepherds**, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the **shepherds** shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.” Ezk. 34:10
 - 2) “**Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief **Shepherd** appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” 1Pet. 5:2-4
2. How important is it for the people that make up the church be godly as they serve in the church.
 - a. Being a man or woman of the word and prayer.
 - b. Being a man or woman that lives out the word.
 - c. Being a man or woman that serves out of their love for the Lord and their spiritual gifts.

- d. Being a man or woman that is consistently committed to the church body, praying for the unbelievers that will hear the gospel.
- 1) “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ **doctrine** and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Acts 2:41-42
 - 2) “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be **found faithful**.” 1Cor. 4:2

This was the preparation for the return to Jerusalem!

II. The documentation for the return to Jerusalem. vs. 11-20

- A. The vested authority for the mission of Ezra was recorded in a letter from Artaxerxes. vs. 11-14
1. The superscription of the letter. vs. 11
 - a. The letter was not the original one, “This is a copy of the letter. vs. 11a
 - b. The letter of commendation was from the king to Ezra, “that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest.” vs. 11a
 - c. The profession of Ezra, “the priest, the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of His statutes to Israel.” vs. 11b-d

- 1) The word priest “kohen” a mediator for Yahweh.
 - 2) The word scribe expert “caphar”, means to count, recount or relate, proficient as an interpreter and teacher of the commands of God’s word and statutes “choq” ordinances of the law.
2. The introduction and greeting come first, “Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven: Perfect *peace*, and so forth.” vs. 12
 * The text is written in Aramaic from this verse to verse 26.
- a. The title “king of kings” was used by the Babylonians also. Dan. 2:37; Ezk. 26:7
 - b. The king Artaxerxes ascribed the highest authority to God, not man, “the God of heaven”. vs. 12a
 - c. The greeting of blessing was perfect peace “g@mar”, it means complete, with the idea of well being in every way towards Ezra, present and future. vs. 12b
3. The intent and purpose of the letter to Ezra is stated. vs. 13
- a. The proclamation of intent, “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.” vs. 13
 - 1) Notice “Israel”, all 12 tribes united.

- 2) The decree permitted anyone to go, but did not compel them to do so, it was of one's own free-will!
 - b. The provisional authority for his commission was given to Ezra, "And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors." vs. 14a
 - 1) The Greek historian Herodotus attests to the seven counselors that advised Artaxerxes.
 - 2) That means God dealt with Artaxerxes and the influential advisers.
 - c. The specific commission of Ezra, "to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand." vs. 14a-b
 - a. Jerusalem is found 43 times in Ezra.
 - b. This is the focal point of God, His city where the temple had been rebuilt.
- B.** The provisions from Babylon, instructions and regulations for the journey. vs. 15-20
- 1. The first offerings were of the king and counselors, "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." vs. 15
 - a. Notice Artaxerxes acknowledged the inseparableness of the God of Israel and Jerusalem.

- b. For emphasis he declared God's dwelling is in Jerusalem.
- 2. The second offerings were from those in Babylon, the Jews and their priests. vs. 16
 - a. Ezra had the permission to collect from all, "and whereas all the silver and gold that you may find in all the province of Babylon." vs. 16a
 - b. Ezra did not compel anyone by force, but rather receive as they gave of their own will, "along with the freewill offering of the people and the priests, are to be freely offered for the house of their God in Jerusalem." vs. 16b-c
- 3. The detailed instructions for these gifts. vs. 17-20
 - a. Ezra was to use money to purchase offerings, "now therefore, be careful to buy with this money bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings." vs. 17a-e
 - b. Ezra was to offer sacrifices in the worship of Yahweh, "and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem." vs. 17f
 - c. Ezra was given personal discretion to spend surplus money according to his will and God's, "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.” vs. 18

- 1) The heart of the king had complete confidence in Ezra.
 - 2) The amount of money was not even considered, unbecoming.
- d. Ezra was responsible for the prompt and safe delivery of the articles for the temple, “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.” vs. 19
- e. Ezra was given a benevolent open account by the king for any other needs, “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.” vs. 20

Illustration

Paul told the Corinthians, “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?” 2Cor. 3:1

We have the greatest letter of commendation for Jesus, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” 2Cor. 5:17

Application

1. We as believers have been blessed richly in and by Christ Jesus for our journey to heaven.

- a. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Eph. 1:3
- b. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” Eph. 1:7
- c. “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Eph. 1:18
- d. “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Eph. 2:7
- e. “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.” Eph. 3:16

2. We as believers have specific instructions about our worship of Jesus in the Bible on our way to heaven.

- a. Jesus told the woman of Samaria, “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” Jn. 4:23
- b. Paul warned against Jewish legalism, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the

Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Phil. 3:3

- c. Paul warned about emotional and carnal worship, “Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and **worship** of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.” Col. 2:18-19
- 4. The only excepted worship is of and to Jesus, “The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and **worship** Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.” Rev. 4:9-11
 - 1) All cast their crowns before the throne in gratitude and adoration. Four times the elders fall down and worshipped. Jesus. Rev. 4:10; 5:8, 14; 19:4
 - 2) The worship in heaven is of Jesus, so it is to be on the earth!

This was the documentation for the return to Jerusalem!

III. The allocations for the work arriving at Jerusalem. vs. 21-28

- A. The provisions from the trans-Euphrates for the temple were to come from taxes. vs. 21-24
 - 1. The decree was directed to all the regional treasurers west of the Euphrates. vs. 21
 - a. The authority was a royal one, “And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree.” vs. 21a-d
 - b. The people under the mandate are indicated, “to all the treasurers who are in the region beyond the River.” vs. 21d
 - c. The absolute obedience to Ezra is to be unquestioned, “that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, let it be done diligently.” vs. 21e-g
 - 2. The allowed amounts were stipulated. vs. 22
 - a. Silver, “up to one hundred talents of silver” 3 ¾ tons.” vs. 22a
 - b. Wheat, “one hundred kors of wheat”, 600 bushels. vs. 22b
 - c. Wine, “one hundred baths of wine”, 600 gallons. vs. 22c
 - d. Oil, “one hundred baths of oil”, 600 gallons. vs. 22d
 - e. Salt, “and salt without prescribed limit.” vs. 22e
 - 3. The humble submission of the king to the will of Yahweh. vs. 23
 - a. There is no limit, “Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven.” vs. 23a

- b. There was to be no procrastination to his orders, “let it diligently be done for the house of the God of heaven.” vs. 23b
 - c. The motive and reason given by Artaxerxes was self-protection, “For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?” vs. 23c
 - * Egypt revolted against the Persians in 460 B.C. and Greece later.
 - 4. The provisional addendum was to be exempt from taxes for the returnees was ordered, “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.” vs. 24
- B.** The provisions for the administrative and judicial authority. vs. 25-28
- 1. The king had complete trust in Ezra’s ability through God, “And you, Ezra, according to your God-given wisdom.” vs. 25a-c
 - * Divine wisdom imparted to Ezra as Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged of Daniel.
 - 2. To set up provisional governors and judges, “set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people who are in the region beyond the River.” vs. 25d
 - a. Royal judges had life-time tenure, but were put to death for misconduct.

- b. Jewish governors were to implement the laws and judges to stop those breaking the law and secure the safety of the land.
- 3. The qualifications, “all such as know the laws of your God.” vs. 25e
 - * The righteous standard of God for man for the order and benefit of society.
- 4. The general civil duty, “and teach those who do not know them.” vs. 25f
 - * This would normalize the society and make it safe!
- 5. The absolute power and authority behind the magistrates and judges. vs. 26
 - a. The warning about disobedience to two laws, “Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king.” vs. 26a
 - b. The consequences, “let judgment be executed speedily on him.” vs. 26b
 - c. The degrees of punishment, “whether it be death, or banishment, or confiscation of goods, or imprisonment.” vs. 26c-f
- 6. The commendation of God by Ezra for doing all this, “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.” vs. 27
 - * The Aramaic ends and goes back to Hebrew. vs. 12-26
 - a. The text goes back to Hebrew at this point.

- b. Haggai prophesied the glory of this house would exceed the glory of the former. Hag. 2:9
 - c. The first had the Shekinah glory, but the second would have the Son of God walk in it, the Word would become flesh and mankind would see the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. Jn. 1:14
7. The gratefulness of Ezra to God, “and has extended mercy to me before the king and his counselors, and before all the king’s mighty princes.” vs. 28a-b
- a. Mercy “cjeced”, literally lovingkindness.
 - b. It is a covenant word of the Jews.
8. The confident strength of Ezra, “So I was encouraged, as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me.” vs. 28c-d
- a. The word encouraged “chazaq”, means to strengthen by and through “the hand of the LORD”.
 - * The same word for Pharaoh when God strengthened his rebellious attitude and heart against God continuously. Ex. 7:3
 - b. The personal relationship is the key “my God”.
9. The resolve of Ezra, “and I gathered leading men of Israel to go up with me.” vs. 28e
- a. God always picks a man to be use for His purposes and glory.

- b. God then gathers other men to come alongside and be part of the work God wants to do!

Illustration

The late Pastor Chuck Smith constantly taught, “Where God guides, He provides”, and he never begged from the pulpit of radio, this has been our moto for 40 years.

Application

1. Interesting that our Constitution provides a 501-c-3 exemption to churches from paying certain taxes.
- a. Churches have always been seen in our nation as an asset to families, community and nation.
 - b. Churches that teach the word see the lives of so many transformed that once cost the state all kinds of many, but now they are productive.
 - c. The IRS and Congress in the last 60 or so years have been threatening and trying to remove this exemption, since we are denying the existance of God more and more.
 - d. The church that preaches the gospel and teaches the word of God makes people uncomfortable and angry today, due to their ungodly, immoral and Politially Corrcet life-styles of humanism and relativeism.
 - * Peter says, “knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the **promise** of His **coming**? For

since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” 2Pet. 3:3-7

2. Another interesting thing to observe is that the majority of our laws are based on the Judeo-Christian biblical standard.
- a. Every society that has every implemented the moral and eithical laws of the Bible has reaped a great benefit.
 - b. A respect and protection of women and children.
 - c. A respect and honor of marriage and the family.
 - d. A commitment to objective truth, right and wrong.
 - e. A firm conviction of punishing law-breakers and those that endager individuals, society and the nation.
 - f. Sadly our nation has moved away from every one of these under relativeism, ecumenicalism and world citizenship.
 - g. The Politiacal Correctness and the victim mentality of blaming everyone but the perpetrator of the wrong, has eroded the pillars

of our Republic through the Trojan-Horse of education, nulifying and conflatin our justicial, legislature and executive brances in many ways.

- 1) “Because the sentence against an **evil work** is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do **evil**.” Eccl. 8:11
- 2) “For God will bring every **work** into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or **evil**.” Eccl. 12:14

This was the allocations for the work arriving at Jerusalem!

Conclusion

The mission of Ezra to lead the people back to join the restoration at Jerusalem was characterized by:

- I.** The preparation for the return to Jerusalem!
- II.** The documentation for the return to Jerusalem!
- III.** The allocations for the work arriving at Jerusalem!