

EZRA 7-8

Ezra 7 – Ezra Returns and the Letter of Artaxerxes

A) *Ezra returns to Jerusalem (vv. 1-9)*

- 1) During reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia (sixty years after end of chapter six)
- 2) Ezra's priestly genealogy goes back to Aaron; was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses
- 3) Blessings of return credited to the "hand of the Lord his God" (7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31)
- 4) Returned to Jerusalem in seventh year of king Artaxerxes (457 BC)

B) *Ezra prepares his heart to go to work (v. 10)*

- 1) Seek the Law of the Lord
 - 2) Do the Law of the Lord
 - 3) Teach statutes and ordinances in Israel
- principles in restoring the original pattern

C) *The letter of Artaxerxes to Ezra (vv. 11-26)* [response to Ezra's requests of king – v. 6]

- 1) Decreed that all who voluntarily wanted to go to Jerusalem could go
- 2) Provided money to buy animals to offer on the altar of God
- 3) Authority to purchase whatever was necessary for service in the temple
- 4) Commission to teach and judge people by the law of God

D) *Ezra very pleased at king's command; gives God credit for king's actions (vv. 27-28)*

Ezra 8 – Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem

A) *Listing of families that return with Ezra (vv. 1-14)* [eighty years after first return]

- 1) Many names same as ones listed in 2:3-15; members of families reunited

B) *Camped by the river of Ahava for three days (vv. 15-30)*

- 1) Looked for the sons of Levi but found none
- 2) Sent men to bring them and many Levites decide to go with returning remnant
- 3) Proclaims a fast for people to humble themselves before God; seek from God the right way to go to be safe from enemies on the road; God answered their prayer
- 4) Enormous treasures entrusted to priests to bring safely to the house of God

C) *Journey and arrival in Jerusalem (vv. 31-36)*

- 1) Departed on the twelfth day of the first month; God kept them safe on the journey
- 2) Arrived in Jerusalem the first day of the fifth month (see 7:8-9)
- 3) Treasures weighed and recorded
- 4) Burnt offerings offered to God
- 5) King's orders delivered to surrounding rulers, who then gave support

Questions

- 1) How can we be *sure* that Ezra was a priest (cf. 2:62)?
- 2) What phrase is used over and over to indicate God's help along the way?
- 3) Why did Artaxerxes' letter make Ezra so happy?

- 4) Why were the sons of Levi needed for the journey back to Jerusalem?

- 5) Why did the Jews refuse the king's protective escort for their journey back to Jerusalem? Compare this with Nehemiah 2:9 and comment on whether praying for protection *and* taking steps to protect oneself is contradictory.