

## The Book of Ezra

### I. THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM UNDER ZERUBBABEL (EZRA 1-6).

- A. The king, proclaiming.
  - 1. The writing (1:1-4). God places a desire in Cyrus' heart to issue his return decree.
  - 2. The rising (1:5-11). God plants a holy desire in the hearts of many Hebrew people to return. A remnant of the Jews in captivity (some 42,000) respond to this decree and begin the trip to Jerusalem, carrying with them 5,400 golden and silver vessels Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple. They also took:
    - a. The Urim and Thummim (2:63).
    - b. 7,337 servants (2:65).
    - c. 200 singers (2:65).
    - d. 736 horses (2:66).
    - e. 245 mules (2:66).
    - f. 435 camels (2:67).
    - g. 6,720 donkeys (2:67).
    - h. 277,550 ounces of gold: approximately \$167 million (2:69).
    - i. 6,250 pounds of silver; approximately \$1.5 million (2:69).
    - j. 100 priestly garments (2:69).
- B. The people, reclaiming.
  - 1. Their genealogy (2:1-57). The family trees of those who returned were carefully recorded for posterity. Especially to be noted was their leader, whose name was Zerubbabel. This humble man was the grandson of Jehoiachin (2:1).
  - 2. Their theology (3:1-13).
    - a. After they reached Jerusalem the altar was built and the sacrificial system reinstated, led by Jeshua, grandson of Israel's last high priest before the Babylonian captivity. This was the first day of the seventh month, the beginning of the feast of trumpets (3:1-6).
    - b. The feast of tabernacles was then celebrated, from the fifteenth to the twenty-second of the seventh month (3:4).
    - c. In June of 535 B.C. work was begun on the Temple. When the foundation was laid a great ceremony was held (3:10-13).
- C. The devil, defaming. Satan tried his best to prevent the Temple from going up.
  - 1. He tried compromise (4:1-3). Judah's enemies suggested they all have a part in building some kind of universal house of worship. Zerubbabel and Jeshua refused.
  - 2. He tried slander (4:4-5). Their enemies then wrote lies concerning them to the Persian officials. They reminded the king (Cambyses) of Jerusalem's history as a hotbed of rebellion and suggested he stop all building action. Cambyses agreed and issued the order to halt (4:24).
- D. The Lord, sustaining. In spite of all this, God was at work!
  - 1. Both Haggai and Zechariah begin their comforting ministry at this time (5:1-2).
  - 2. The new Persian king, Darius the Great, takes a personal interest in the matter. A search soon reveals the original title decree of Cyrus, which gave the Jews permission to rebuild their Temple. Darius therefore orders the work to continue and decrees the construction cost to be paid from the treasury of some of his own officials (6:1-12).
  - 3. On February 18, 516 B.C. the Temple was completed (6:15). In April the Passover was celebrated in Jerusalem, the first time in over sixty years (6:19).

### II. THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM UNDER EZRA (EZRA 7-10).

Between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra there is a period of some sixty years. During this time Ezra is born. Thus, the first part of his book is historical (1-6) while the final part is biographical (7-10).

- A. The cooperation from the king (Ezra 7). The Persian monarch Artaxerxes greatly aided Ezra in his plans to leave Babylon by issuing an official letter addressed to three parties.
  - 1. To all Jews in Babylon: Artaxerxes invited as many as desired to return to Jerusalem with Ezra (7:11-20).
  - 2. To all Persian officials west of the Euphrates River:
    - a. They were to contribute to the upkeep of the Temple (7:21-23).
    - b. They were forbidden to impose tax upon the Temple (7:24).
  - 3. To Ezra himself: He was to select and appoint his own officials, and to rule the Jewish people west of the Euphrates River (7:25-26).
- B. The preparation for the trip (Ezra 8).
  - 1. Ezra leaves from Babylon in mid-March of 455 B.C. with approximately 1500 men (8:1).
  - 2. En route the group assembles at the Ahava River (a tributary of the Euphrates River) for a roll call. Ezra is amazed to discover that not one Levite has volunteered to come (8:15).
  - 3. He then hurriedly sends a delegation to return and persuade some Levites to make the trip (8:16-20).
  - 4. Ezra then proclaims a fast there by the river (8:22-23).

- C. The supplication of the scribe (Ezra 9).
  - 1. Ezra soon learns that the Jews already in the Holy City have compromised their testimony by practicing heathen customs and even marrying their pagan women (9:1-2).
  - 2. The great Bible teacher immediately goes into deep mourning and pours out his soul to God concerning this tragic situation (9:3-15).
- D. The purification of the people (Ezra 10).
  - 1. Soon conviction of sin settles down upon the hearts of the leaders (10:1).
  - 2. A proclamation goes out throughout all Judah (10:2-9).