I. INTRODUCTION

A. The man:

1. Ezra means "Help"; there are several ways Ezra helped his people.
   
a. A priest who traced his ancestry back to Aaron, 7:1-5
b. Assembled the Old Testament
   
   (1) Scribal duties would have encouraged this
   
   (2) May have made the transition from one alphabet (as on the Moabite Stone) to the more modern "square" characters of today.
   
   (3) From Ezra's day back to Moses is similar to our looking at English poetry of 1000 years ago.
   
c. May have organized the early Sanhedrin, the who governed Israel even in Jesus' day.
   
d. Tradition links Ezra to the beginnings of the "Scribes and Pharisees" of Jesus' day.

2. Ezra's devotion, purpose and method:

   a. NRS Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel.

   b. NRS Nehemiah 8:1-3 all the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel. Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding.

This was on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

B. The Book and the Man:

1. Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther — not in the history books of Hebrew Bible — Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings

2. Rather in Writings
   a. NRS Luke 24:44 ¶ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you-- that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled."
   b. The Early Prophets = Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings
   c. Latter Prophets
      (1) Major Prophets = Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
      (2) Minor Prophets = Hosea to Malachi, The Twelve

3. History and Prophecy are often combined in Hebrew Bible
   a. Note above a lack of division between "historical" and "prophetic" books
   b. Joshua is remembered as a prophet; he was a successor to Moses, Deut 18:15ff.
   c. Samuel, the last of the judges, was also a prophet, 1 Sam 3:20
   d. Elijah and Elisha, and other prophets, are found in 1 and 2 Kings

4. But Ezra was a priest.
a. He exercised civil authority

(1) \textit{NRS Ezra 7:6} this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the LORD the God of Israel had given; \textit{and the king granted him all that he asked}, for the hand of the LORD his God was upon him.

(2) \textit{NRS Ezra 7:21} "I, King Artaxerxes, decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: \textit{Whatever the priest Ezra, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence}

(3) \textit{NRS Ezra 7:25} "And you, Ezra, according to the God-given wisdom you possess, \textit{appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River who know the laws of your God}; and you shall teach those who do not know them.

b. Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel's classification among the writings is an indication of the rank of these people.

C. \textit{Authorship:}

1. Like the "I" passages in the Book of Acts, Ezra's "I" passages identify Ezra with the writing of at least part of the book.

2. This author is a participant in the latter part of the book and wrote the 1\textsuperscript{st} part also in order to make the 2\textsuperscript{nd} part of the account understandable as it fit with the sequence of developing events.

3. 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26 are in Aramaic

a. Ezra was equally at home in both cultures

b. This section deals with Persian court affairs and records, which would normally be in Aramaic.

D. \textit{Time:}

1. The book traces events beginning in 536 B.C., when Cyrus of Persia instituted procedures for Israel's return from Captivity
2. Cyrus had conquered Babylon in 538.

3. Ezra is introduced in the narrative at chapter 7:1.

4. So the date of writing must have been during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.).

5. The events in the book fit into two time slots:

a. 1st identified with Israel's return from Captivity

b. 2nd following a gap of: 133 from 2nd exile of 598; 121 from 3rd of 586

   (1) The returned captives, small in number, were disheartened and struggled

   (2) Ezra accompanied another band of the returnees (7:7) to help bring encouragement and to assist in re-establishing the institutions of the Law of Moses.

c. Once again note our chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Began Reign</th>
<th>King</th>
<th>Length of Reign</th>
<th>Event/Prophet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)606/605</td>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar</td>
<td>43 years</td>
<td>1st Exile; Jehoiakim Exiled; Jeremiah, Daniel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) 598</td>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar</td>
<td>43 years</td>
<td>2nd Exile; Jehoiachin Exiled; Jeremiah, Ezekiel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)587/586</td>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar</td>
<td>43 years</td>
<td>3rd Exile; Zedekiah; Jerusalem Destroyed; Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>562</td>
<td>Evil Merodach</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>Lifted up Jehoiachin from Prison, setting his throne above all other kings, 2 Kgs 25:27-30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²E. J. Young, An Introduction to the O.T., 406
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ruler</th>
<th>Reign</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>556</td>
<td>Neriglissar</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Killed Evil Merodach; Daniel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>555</td>
<td>Laborosoarchad</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>554</td>
<td>Nabonidus</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>Married Daughter of Nebuchadnezzar; Belshazzar, his Son, is Co-Regent; Daniel 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>538</td>
<td>Belshazzar</td>
<td></td>
<td>Belshazzar Killed; Daniel 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>538-536</td>
<td>Darius The Mede</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rules Babylon Until Cyrus Arrives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)536/535</td>
<td>Cyrus</td>
<td>7/9 years</td>
<td>1st Return—Cyrus issued decree for return under Zerubbabel Exactly 70 Years from 1st Exile of 606/605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>529</td>
<td>Cambyses</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6; Not Esther's Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>522</td>
<td>Pseudo Smerdis</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>521</td>
<td>Darius Hystaspes</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>In his 2nd yr Hag/Zech prophesied to complete temple; it was completed in Darius' 6th year (516) Exactly 70 Years from the 3rd Exile of 587/586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>485</td>
<td>Xerxes/Ahasuerus</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>Husband of Esther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)465</td>
<td>Artaxerxes-Longimanus</td>
<td>41 years</td>
<td>2nd Return—Ezra travels to Jerusalem in 7th year (458)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) 445</td>
<td>Artaxerxes-Longimanus</td>
<td>41 years</td>
<td>3rd Return—Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem in 20th year (445); returned to Susa &amp; later returned to Jerusalem; Malachi, last book of OT written</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Contemporary Political Scene
1. Zerubbabel, the "Son of David," is mentioned:
   a. This implies the survival of David's line
   b. However Zerubbabel quickly vanishes from view
   c. *Genesis 49:10* predicted that "Judah would continue till Shiloh"
   d. Even so, he is mentioned in the lineage of Jesus, Matt. 1:12, 16
   e. *Jer 22:30* records that King Coniah/Jehoiachin/Jechoniah should be considered "childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days; for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David, and ruling again in Judah.
   f. Coniah/Jechoniah/Jehoiachin too is mentioned in the lineage of Jesus, Matt 1:12, 16
   g. So, while one prophecy indicates that the royal line would continue, the other indicates that it would not.

2. Possible explanations of why this happened.
   a. The prophecies cannot be pressed to mean that a king must always be on the throne
      (1) Centuries elapsed after the prophecy of Gen 49:10 before Israel had a king.
      (2) Then it was of the tribe of Benjamin, not Judah, 1 Sam 10:20ff.
   b. Scripture provides for the interruption.
      (1) Zech 3:5-7 states that the priests beginning with Jeshua would rule the nation as long as they walked in God's ways.
      (2) NRS Zechariah 3:5 *And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with the apparel; and the angel of the LORD was standing by.*
Joshua, saying 7 “Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.

(3) This signified a return to prominence of the priesthood that had been forfeited with by Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons, 1 Sam 2, 8

(4) With Jesus the priesthood changes again, for Jesus is both king and priest, though not of the priestly tribe, cf. Heb 2:17; 7:11-15

II. SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF EZRA

A. The Captives Return Under Zerubbabel, 1-2

1. Authority is given by King Cyrus, and the captives who wish are allowed to return to Israel, 1

2. A list of the leaders and groups among the returnee, 2

B. The Temple is Rebuilt, 3-6

1. The altar is built, and the foundation laid, 3
2. The work is interrupted by Israel's enemies, 4
3. The work is resumed in the reign of Darius, 5
4. The Temple is completed and dedicated, 6

C. Ezra Becomes Involved in the Restoration, 7-10

1. Ezra leads a second band of returnees back to Israel and thanks God, 7
2. Lists are given of returnees, and treasures returning with them, 8
3. Ezra hears about some current sins, particularly foreign marriages, 9
4. The community is cleansed, and a list of the offenders is given, 10

D. Structure Showing Narrative Flow of 1:1-622

______________________________

3Mark A. Throntveit, Ezra-Nehemiah (Louisville: John Knox, 1992), 21
A Hebrew version of Cyrus' edict to rebuild the temple, 1:1-11
B List of returnees, 2:1-70
C Altar worship restored (time of Cyrus), 3:1-6
   [Temple begun (time of Darius), 3:7-4:3]
D Building stops, 4:4-5a; sum. Notation of 3:1-4:313
   [prolepsis to events in Darius's reign, 5:1ff.; 4:5bff]
X Opposition to building the walls, 4:6-23
D’ Building stops (rep. resumption of 4:4-5 in 4:24)
C’ Temple building resumes, 5:1-2
B’ Demand for list (cf. vv. 3ff., 10; 5:3-17)
A’ Aramaic version of Cyrus Edict; temple rebuild, 6:1-22

1. Highlights both continuity and opposition
2. The "repetitive resumption" resumes the narrative after a digression

III. Reoccurring Themes
A. The Exodus Theme — the text continually uses Exodus terminology in order to portray these events as a 2nd Exodus
B. Restoration — the people, the temple, the wall (Nehemiah), the law were being restored
C. We will highlight these as we proceed

IV. THE CAPTIVES RETURN UNDER ZERUBBABEL, 1:1-2:70
A. Preliminary Questions:
   1. How did it come about that a completely defeated people were freed to return to their homeland and to rebuild?
   2. What types, and what percentage, of the people do you think actually took advantage of the opportunity to return?
   3. What might have motivated Cyrus to this generosity?
   4. What help did the returnees get from their kinsmen who chose to remain where they were?
B. Outline:
   a. Cyrus issues a decree, 1:1-4
   b. The people return and begin to rebuild, 1:5-11
2. List of Leaders and Groups of the Returnees, 2:1-70

C. **Overview:** these indicate that God is fulfilling what he had promised through the prophets:

1. **NRS Jeremiah 29:10** ¶ For thus says the LORD: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.
2. The exiled community is to conceive of themselves as reborn.
3. God had been faithful to his promises

D. **Cyrus Issues a decree, 1:1-4:**

1. **Verse 1** is nearly identical to 2 Chron 36:22-23; this "catch line" is strong evidence that both books have the same author.
   a. This author is interested in history and a chronological framework
   b. *In the first year of King Cyrus* = the year following Babylon's conquest
   c. *The word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah* refers to Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10 — both of which state the captivity would be 70 years
   d. Remember the captivity can be figured from the 1st Exile (605) to the 1st Return here (535) or from the 3rd Exile (587/6) to the completion of the temple in the 6th year of Darius (517/6)
   e. The basis for Cyrus' decree is that God *stirred up* Cyrus's spirit

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⁴Throntveit, 15.
f. Josephus credits Isaiah's "prophecy from 140 years before the temple was demolished" (cf. Isa 44:28)

g. **in a written edict** is a technical for public inscriptions

2. **Verse 2** is actually citing Cyrus' regular policy for all conquered people.

   a. He makes similar references with the Babylonian Gods, seeking to ingratiate himself to all gods.⁶

   b. The Cyrus inscription shows this to be regular policy — speaking of "the cities (beyond) the Tigris, whose sites have been founded of old— the gods who dwelt in them I returned to their places, and caused them to settle in their eternal shrines. All their people I assembled and returned them to their dwellings. . . . May all the gods, whom I have returned to their cities, pray before Marduk and Nabu for the prolonging of my days, may they speak a kind word for me."⁷

3. **Verse 3** is the actual decree giving permission for the Israelites to return and rebuild their Temple at Jerusalem; the language reflects Cyrus' polytheism — **may their God be with them** — implying his belief that there is one god who presides in Jerusalem, and other gods in other lands.

4. **Verse 4** encourages the Israelites who remain in land of their captivity to contribute to the returnees for two purposes: to finance their journey, and to make offerings to the Temple; thus having a share in these two projects.

E. **A 2nd Exodus — The people return and begin to rebuild, 1:5-11:**

1. **2nd Exodus Highlights:**⁸

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⁷G. A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, 485

⁸Throntveit, 15.
a. Connections with Isaiah 43:14-21; 48:20-21; 51:10; 52:12


c. Freewill contributions by Israelites, Exod 25:2-9; Ezra 2:68ff.

d. Livestock accompanies the people, Exod 12:38; Ezra 2:64-67

e. Cultic vessels Nebuchadnezzar had taken, Cyrus returned, 1:7-11

   A  Vessels carried from Jerusalem are brought out, v. 7
   B  Vessels counted out to Sheshbazzar, v. 8
      X  List of vessels, 9-11a
   B' Vessels brought up by Sheshbazzar, 11b
   A' With exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem, 11c

f. Exodus differences:

   (1) Egypt did not give permission; Persia did
   (2) Exodus was liberation; Return was not
   (3) Exodus created a nation; Return created "congregation"

2. **Verse 5:** the people begin to get ready to go to Jerusalem; they had been blessed in Babylon; these "good figs" (Jer 24:2ff. Cf. 29:4-7) had not fared so badly in Babylon; they were able to own their own homes, operate their own businesses, continue their previous religious practices at least in a limited way, educate their own children, and live quite normal lives.

   a. Many preferred to remain there; to others this represented a "New Exodus"

   b. Those who chose to return would be largely motivated by religious reasons — **everyone whose heart God stirred . . . to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD.**

   c. Isaiah and others had foreseen the return of a "purified remnant," i.e., the most Godly who returned
d. Health, age, or other callings (Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther) may have prevented the return of many equally religious persons.

e. These were primarily from *Judah and Benjamin, priests and Levites*, tribes which had been closest to the Temple:

3. **Verse 6** mentions two categories of gifts taken with them:

a. First, those which would assist in financing the journey

b. Second, those which are offered to God, possibly to be used in sacrifice and in reconstruction of the Temple.

c. The list of vessels taken from the Temple, but now restored to Israel (cf. Vv. 7, 9-11), are a reminder of the splendor of the Temple in previous times.

d. If the number of vessels seems excessive, we need to remember that:

(1) They were for the use of the entire community of priests

(2) Temples in ancient times were often used as the "government banks," as repositories for the wealth of the state.

4. **Verse 7**: Cyrus himself brought out the vessels of the house of the LORD "shows his seriousness in respecting his subjects' religion and customs."  

5. **Verses 8, 11: Sheshbazzar** — Who is this fellow? 3:8-10 and 5:16

a. *Sheshbazzar has been identified with Zerubbabel* from Josephus' day (Ant. xi. 1. 5.).

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9Breneman, 72.

(1) Both held the position of Governor (*Pechah*), Ezra 5:14; Hag 1:1; 2:2

(2) Both are said to have laid the foundations of the Temple in 536 B.C. (Ezra 3:8f.; 5: 16).

(3) But, if both are the same individual, there is no need for the Chronicler to introduce Zerubbabel as a fresh character in Ezra 3.

(4) So the Chronicler could not have thought of them as the same individual.

(a) In Ezra 5, when Zerubbabel was actually engaged in building the Temple, the Jews refer to Sheshbazzar as to one who is obviously dead, and virtually unknown to the opponents of the building.

(b) In v. 14 Cyrus delivered the sacred vessels to 'one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor'.

(5) Both *Sheshbazzar* and *Zerubbabel* are Babylonian names, indicating two different individuals, and not as with Daniel and his friends, where the one name is Hebrew and the other Babylonian.

(6) Therefore, unless other things force us to this conclusion, we ought not to identify *Sheshbazzar* with *Zerubbabel*.

b. **Others, on the strength of the foreign name, have regarded Sheshbazzar as a Persian official**, appointed by Cyrus to superintend the return and the resettlement of the Jews.

(1) This runs counter to his title "the prince of Judah" in Ezra 1:8

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(2) This can imply royal linage, but אֱלֹהִים, "Prince," has a wide use, and might indicate here no more than that he was put in a position of authority over Judah.

c. **Others have identified Sheshbazzar with Shenazzar**, a son of king Jehoiachin, who occurs in the genealogy of I Chronicles 3:18.

(1) This would mean that Sheshbazzar was the uncle of Zerubbabel, who appears in the same genealogy, though, curiously enough, as the son of Pedaiah, and not the son of Shealtiel, as he is designated elsewhere (e.g. Ezra 5:2; Hag 1:14; I Esdras 5:5).

(2) This identification has been defended and denied on linguistic grounds, since its 1st proposal by Imbert in 1888.

(3) Note also that Shenazzar is the only member of Jehoiachin's family with a foreign name.

(4) Perhaps this pagan name with its apparent allusion to Sin, the moon-god, and presumably his record, showed him to be a safe man who would work happily with both parties.

(5) However, these facts would hinder his work among the nationalists.

(6) Once they were back in their own country, they preferred the leadership of Zerubbabel.

(7) Further, Sheshbazzar "... was likely and old man when he returned to Jerusalem, and Zerubbabel would have been his nephew (cf. 1 Chr 3:19)."¹¹ This explains:

(a) Zerubbabel's prominence under Sheshbazzar

(b) Zerubbabel's longevity in Jerusalem as compared to Sheshbazzar.

A logical reason for Zerubbabel's appointment as governor following his uncle's term of office.

"Thus Sheshbazzar and Zerrubabel worked together as the acknowledged leader and the Davidic leader of the Judeans."12

Sheshbazzar represented to Tettenai, a Persian official, the individual responsible for laying the temple's foundation, Ezra 5:14-16

Zerubbabel represented the Davidic royalty and was actively in charge of the project (4:1-3), which also explains why the prophets refer to him as the builder of the temple, Zech 4:9

Verse 9-10: The author

a. Must have had a copy of the inventory list

b. Mentions basins, ἀνώνυμα, and knives, ἀνώνυμα, which only occur here, but quite logically refer to the implements used for temple rituals

Verse 11 lists the total number of articles as 5400

a. The list in the previous two verses only adds up to 2499.

b. The most likely explanation is that Ezra only named major articles in verse 9 and 10, but included many others in the final total this verse.

Themes and Word Studies

1. Motifs of the Exodus: providence, priests, Levites, articles for the temple

2. נָרָא, Ezra: derives from a verb meaning to surround or enclose: to protect, as with a wall

12 Steinmann, "A Chronological Note," 520.
a. Thus, Ezra was a help, or aid; the word, in feminine form, is used of woman as man's "helper" (Gen 2:18)

b. "Ebenezer," "stone of help" in 1 Sam 7:12, where Samuel raises a monument to memorialize God's having helped them against the Philistine armies.

3. כִּירָסָן, Cyrus: probably the Persian word for the sun
   a. In Greek the same consonants produce the word "Lord," Κύρος
   b. Cyrus is the one foreigner referred to as a "Messiah"

G. Summary:
1. During the first full year that Israel was under the rulership of Cyrus
2. Cyrus, was led by God to publish a decree allowing exiles to return to their homeland and rebuild their Temple.
3. This was a fulfillment of prophecies by Jeremiah that the nation would survive the captivity and be restored (cf. Jer 32-35).
4. Those who did not choose to return should contribute to bear the expenses of those who did, and to finance offerings and repairs to the Temple.
5. A number of exiles, chiefly of Judah Benjamin, and Levi (including priests) subsequently set out, bringing with them approximately 5500 valuable items from the first Temple
6. Exodus motifs are used indicating a 2nd Exodus

H. Review Questions
1. Who, and what kind of person, was Cyrus?
2. Who was Sheshbazzar?
3. What nation freed the Jewish captives?
4. What other nation or nations were involved?
V. THE LIST OF THE LEADERS AND GROUPS AMONG THE RETURNEES, 2:1-70

A. Preliminary Questions

1. Why do you suppose this list of names and numbers was regarded as important enough to be included in the Bible?

2. Does this list give you any mental image of the kinds of people that made the trip?

3. Do you suppose they all remained after they arrived?

4. What can you figure out about their financial status?

5. How does their number compare with those who came originally from Egypt into the Promised Land under Moses and Joshua?

B. Outline

1. Their leaders, 1-2a
2. Men of the people, 2b-20
3. Men of certain towns, 21-35
4. Men of certain classes, priests, Levities, temple servants, 36-58
5. Some whose ancestral records were lost, 59-63
6. Totals, 64-65
7. Number of their livestock, 66-67
8. Their offering for restoring the temple, 68-69
9. Their location in the land

C. The names of the leaders, 2:1-2a:

1. The modern reader usually skips this material finding it boring, yet it is very significant

   a. "The answers to many important biblical issues is found in the various genealogical lists."

      (1) The author is concerned with continuity between the pre-exile and the post exile

      (2) The covenant must be continued
(3) Purity must be maintained

(4) A "running commentary on the status of the community in relation to the developing situation of reform."\(^{13}\)

b. **More specifically**: "If its there, its there for a reason." Three general ones follow:

(1) **Names and events are a part of the fabric of history**, and their inclusion is a reminder that the events were historical — that one generation at least could have verified or questioned their authenticity.

(2) **Archaeologists, philologists, etc., find these to be amazingly informative;**

   (a) The captivity produced a complete break with the past since few of these names resemble those from the earlier parts of the Bible

   (b) This is corroborated by the fact that many foreign words and the Babylonian names outnumber the Hebrew names.

(3) **People whose family names were listed here found this quite interesting**

   (a) Cf. lists on which you have found your family name

   (b) Similarly, God is concerned with the individual but the Holy Spirit of God may value them quite highly.

2. This list seems to be a composite of various lists; it honors these people as the 1\(^{st}\) to return.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\)Throntveit, 18.

\(^{14}\)Breneman, 24-25.
3. **Verse 1:** Now these were the people refers to the total list of v. 63, people of the province indicates they are not free

a. Though this can be regarded as a 2nd Exodus, there are significant contrasts

   (1) They are still a province of Persia, a subdivision of the 5th Persian Satrapy

   (2) The Exodus produced the birth of the nation

   (3) This represents only a migration within the boundaries of an empire, sanctioned by the ruler — the people were not delivered from servitude.

   (4) Yet there was enough new freedom that they could think of themselves as returning to the "promised land."

b. No account is given of the people who had been left in the land, and who may or may not have been on hand to greet those now returning.

c. The ones who had come through the experience of the Captivity preferred to ignore those who had remained in Judah, and to treat them as inferiors.

d. **All to their own towns**

   (1) Represented a continued link with the pre-exilic community through inheritance

   (2) Jerusalem was the end of the expedition, but only the 1st center at which they arrived.

e. Many of the ancient settlements were not re-occupied, indicating they were a pitifully small number compared with the pre-exilic population.

4. **Verse 2a:** The omission of two names may be as significant as the eleven which are included.
a. **Sheshbazzar:** In 1:8 he was referred to as the *prince of Judah* to whom the holy articles were committed by the Persian treasury,

(1) Yet his name is not included here.

(2) Has he died in the interim? Or is he simply called by the name Zerubbabel?

(3) Either he is one and the same person or these are two individuals (cf. 5:16)

b. **Nahamani:** Nehemiah 7:7 mentions an almost identical list of names, but with the addition of one "Nahamani." who for some reason is omitted here.

(1) Was his name dropped because of some action which he took later on?

(2) Did he fail to complete the trip, or forsake the returnees soon after the return to Babylon?

(3) Did he die or become incapacitated before he completed his duties?

(4) This last reason is the most likely one.

c. **Zerubbabel,** or **Zerubbabel:**? The KJV has the colon, while the NRSV and many newer translations has the comma.

(1) The semicolon indicates "leadership"

(2) The comma indicates he is equal with the entire group — The Hebrew can be translated either way.

d. Likely this is a description of one historic event, at one point in time, and that these were the leaders who shared in that one event.

D. **2:1-20:** The "Laymen," *the number of the Israelite people*

1. **The List:**
2b The number of the men of the people of Israel:

b. 3 the sons of Parosh, 2,172;
c. 4 the sons of Shephatiah, 372;
d. 5 the sons of Arah, 775;
e. 6 the sons of Pahath-moab of the sons of Jeshua and Joab,
f. 7 the sons of Elam, 1,254;
g. 8 the sons of Zattu, 945;
h. 9 the sons of Zaccai, 760;
i. 10 the sons of Bani, 642;
j. 11 the sons of Bebai, 623;
k. 12 the sons of Azgad, 1,222;
l. 13 the sons of Adonikam, 666;
m. 14 the sons of Bigvai, 2,056;
n. 15 the sons of Adin, 454;
o. 16 the sons of Ater of Hezekiah, 98;
p. 17 the sons of Bezai, 323;
q. 18 the sons of Jorah, 112;
r. 19 the sons of Hashum, 223;
s. 20 the sons of Gibbar, 95;

2. Sons of could mean descendants of

E. 2:21-35: those identified by towns:

1. The List:

a. 21 the men of Bethlehem, 123;
b. 22 the men of Netophah, 56;
c. 23 the men of Anathoth, 128;
d. 24 the sons of Azmaveth, 42;
e. 25 the sons of Kiriath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, 743;
f. 26 the sons of Ramah and Geba, 621;
g. 27 the men of Michmas, 122;
h. 28 the men of Bethel and Ai, 223;
i. 29 the sons of Nebo, 52;
j. 30 the sons of Magbish, 156;
k. 31 the sons of the other Elam, 1,254;
l. 32 the sons of Harim, 320;
m. 33 the sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 725;
n. 34 the men of Jericho, 345;
o. 35 the sons of Senaah, 3,630.
2. **Observations:**

   a. Again, the material shows connections with the pre-exile

   b. **The men of** and **the sons of** are used interchangeably

   c. The writer himself indicates that he is aware of similarities for in verse 31 he states **the other Elam** (v. 31)

   d. **Bethlehem** (v. 21), the ancestral home of David and his royal descendants

   e. **Anathoth** (v. 23), once the home of Jeremiah, who bought a piece of property here (Jer 32) just prior to the exile to illustrate his faith that God would ultimately bring the people back — he has been vindicated

   f. **Ramah** (v. 26); Samuel had judged his people at Ramah (1 Sam 7:17); Saul set up the kingdom of Israel. Most likely Geba and Ramah are grouped together because they were close to each other

   g. **Bethel** (v. 28) would recall the lives of Abraham and Jacob; both of them had built altars there (Gen. 12:7; 35:1).

   h. **Nebo** (v. 29), across the Jordan, afforded Moses his only view of the Promised Land before he died (Deut 34:1); here, however, it probably denotes a small town in Judah.

   i. The walls of **Jericho** (v. 34) had echoed the march of Joshua and all Israel shortly after (Joshua 6).

   j. So the people who returned would have remembered many other hallowed events from their past, as they took up residence once more in the land of their ancestors.

F. **Certain people connected with the Temple and religious worship, 2:36-58**

1. **36-39—The Priests:** approximately 10% of the returnees
a. 36 the sons of Jedaiah of the house of Jeshua, 973;
b. 37 the sons of Immer, 1,052;
c. 38 the sons of Pashhur, 1,247;
d. 39 the sons of Harim, 1,017.

e. The 1st rank of the 4 clans, of which 3 may be identified as being among the 24 courses established by David, 1 Chron 24:7, 8, 14.

(1) Thus many of these go back to the time of David.

(2) Jeshua, the high priest, is identified with the clan of Jedaiah (v. 36).]

(3) Both Haggai (1:1) and Zechariah (3:1) mention him, though the spell his name "Joshua."

(4) He and the governor Zerubbabel successfully completed the reconstruction of the Temple.

2. **40—The Levites:** 40 the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah, 74

a. Only 74 are mentioned.

b. The Jeshua mentioned here is apparently a 2nd man by that name, rather than the priest

c. Ezekiel 44:9-16 predicts the demotion of the Levites from some of their responsibilities because of their previous sins

(1) This reduction may be a consequence.

(2) Also, since their functions were primarily teaching instead of ritual, many of them would probably remain in Persia to furnish needed instruction to the majority of their brethren who remained there.

3. **41-54—The Singers:**

a. 41 The sons of Asaph, 128.
b. These would be important to ancient worship, as attested by Egyptian plaques found at Megiddo in Israel.\(^\text{15}\)

(1) **Asaph** goes back to the organization of the worship in David's time, 1 Chron 15:17, 19)

(2) The name, either of the individual or his descendants, is identified with the authorship of twelve of the Psalms, 50, 73-83.

4. **42—The sons of the gatekeepers:** the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, in all 139 — These may not have had a lofty calling, but they had their significance; every job is important.

5. **43-54—The temple servants:**

   a. 43 the sons of Zija, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth, 
   b. 44 the sons of Keros, the sons of Siaha, the sons of Padon, 
   c. 45 the sons of Lebanon, the sons of Hagabah, the sons of Akkub 
   d. 46 the sons of Hagab, the sons of Shalmai, the sons of Hanan, 
   e. 47 the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, the sons of Reaiah, 
   f. 48 the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, the sons of Gazzam, 
   g. 49 the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, the sons of Besai, 
   h. 50 the sons of Asnah, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephihaim, 
   i. 51 the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harbur, 
   j. 52 the sons of Bazluth, the sons of Mehauda, the sons of Harsha, 
   k. 53 the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah, 
   l. 54 the sons of Neziah, the sons of Hatipha

   m. These would have even a humbler task; these may include descendants of people whom Israel had subjected either by war or by treaty, e.g., Midianites (Num 31) and Gibionites (Josh 9:27)

6. **55-57—The Sons of Solomon’s Servants:**

   a. 55 the sons of Sotai, the sons of Hassophereth, the sons of Peruda, 
   b. 56 the sons of Jaalah, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel,

\(^{15}\text{ANET, 263.}\)
c. 57 the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the sons of Ami

d. These were apparently a similar group added later to the temple servants, with whom they are classed (v. 58).

(1) Solomon reduced some of Canaan's former tribesmen to servitude, 1 Kgs 9:20, 21

(2) If the pattern set in Num. 31 was followed, then a percentage of these also, along with other war captives added from time to time, ended up in the service of the Temple, and their descendants would be included among the voluntary returnees from captivity.

(3) If this is the case, then ironically:

(a) Many of the free citizens of Israel chose to stay in the land of their captivity

(b) Some who had been enslaved by Israel freely chose to return to the land which had enslaved them.

(4) This would give some indication of the treatment they had received from Israel, and of the spiritual appeal of service in the Temple,

(5) They still wanted to maintain their identity with Israel though it began as forced servitude.

(6) There are surely parallels today

7. **All the Temple Servants**: 58 the sons of Solomon's servants, were 392

G. **Those whose ancestral records had been lost, 2:59-63**

1. **59-61**: the settlements in Babylon from which they came are mentioned (v. 59); then the names of their families, first of the common people in (v. 60), then those who claimed to be of the priesthood (v. 61)
2. **62-63:** Some were unable to establish their credentials

   a. Those claiming priestly backgrounds, because they would be presiding over Israel's religion and supported by it, must insure their correct religious background

      (1) No foreigners could be prophet or king (Deut 17:15; 18:15, 18).

      (2) The priests were to be descendants of Aaron, Exod 28:1ff.

      (3) Wisdom for such representatives is seen even in U.S. Constitution — President

   b. **63:** Thus until their credentials could be established by **Urim and Thummim**

      (1) *Urim and Thummim* are mentioned only in 5 other places (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Deut 33:8; Neh 7:65)

      (2) This form of communication seems to have been lost during the Captivity

      (3) This verse may mark a restoration of God's communication with the high priest in this manner

H. **The Totals of the Returnees, 2:64-65:**

1. **64** The whole assembly numbered 42,360,

2. **65** besides 7,337 male and female servants and 200 singers

3. This total of 49,897 may be contrasted with

   a. 601,730 + 23,000 Levites in Num 26:51, 62, or,

   b. 1,570,000 + of Levi and Benjamin in David's army, 1 Chron 21:5

   c. It was only a remnant, a few survivors, cf Isa 1:9; 10:20f.

   d. **Singers** are different from those in v. 41; the list is partial

I. **The List of livestock, 2:66-67**

1. 66 736 horses; 245 mules;

2. 67 435 camels; 6,720 donkeys
3. This is not a very large number in relation to the amount of people
   a. All of the animals are beasts of burden
   b. And at best, there is but 1 for every 6 persons,

J. *The offerings for restoring the Temple, 2:68-69*

1. 61,000 Drachmas/dardics = 1,133 lbs; 5000 minas = 6,250 lbs

2. The *drachma* is a Persian coin, a subtle reminder they are part of Persia

3. The *mina* is a unit of weight used in Israel, Babylon, and Persia.

4. V. 68 indicates *some of the heads of families made freewill offerings* for the construction of the temple

5. V. 69 indicates they gave *according to their resources* or ability

K. *The location in the land, 2:70:*

1. Their dwelling within (walled) cities was probably required by the need for mutual defense, assistance, and encouragement.

2. They think of themselves as *all Israel*, not a remnant of a few tribes.

L. *Word Studies*

1. Zerubbabel (v. 2): יְרֵほֹבֵב, "a seed of Babylon," a reminder that God preserved a seed of His people through the Babylonian Captivity, from which His nation would once again spring to life,

2. Temple Servants (v. 43): נְצָהִים, lit., "the ones given," indicating persons given to the priests to assist with the menial tasks of preparing for sacrifice and worship.


4. mina (v. 69): מִנָּה, the basic meaning is to divide out, or measure out, or number.
a. Money originally had to be measured, or weighed, at each transaction.

b. This is the word "Mene," מֵ֖נֶּ, in the handwriting on the wall, in Dan 5:25f.

c. Note that the consonants are the same as those in our word "money," and in reverse order, the first two consonants in "number."

M. **Summary:**

1. These individuals bravely faced a challenge to their meager resources and the dangers of the trip

2. They will be joined by others who will come in small groups as time goes on

3. When the NT opens they are still a small, weak nation, with a disproportionate number of priests (ration 1:10)

N. **Review Questions:**

1. Is Ezra named among the returnees?
2. Who is the one most prominent person mentioned?
3. What groups of people were mentioned?
4. How would you have changed the order of these groups, if you had been writing this story?
5. What reminder is in the list of a prophecy of Jeremiah? Cf. Jer 32-35
6. What reminder is in the list of a prophecy of Isaiah? Cf. Isa 1:9

VI. **THE TEMPLE IS REBUILT, 3:1-6:22**

A. **Preliminary Questions:**

1. How much time has passed since the events beginning in Ezra 1:1?
2. How much time is consumed by the events in Ezra 3?
3. According to 3:1, the people gathered, literally "as one man unto Jerusalem." Does this mean that everyone came, or that those who came had one will and purpose?

4. Why do you suppose they started their rebuilding with the altar, instead of some other structure?

5. How many things that they did in this chapter reflect a knowledge of God's Law given through Moses, or of other sacred institutions?

B. This chapter begins the topic of the Temple's reconstruction

1. It describes
   a. The building of the altar
   b. The making of the first regular sacrifice
   c. The construction of the foundation.

2. These actions emphasize the centrality of sacrifice to worship
   a. The altar was the reason for erecting all of the rest of the building
   b. Similarly, Jesus is our Temple (John 2:19-21), whose great work was to be our altar, Heb 13:10, 12
   c. We, too, are building a temple, as described in 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19f. and 1 Peter 25
   d. We are that temple and offer specific sacrifices for God, Heb 13:13-16

C. The altar and the sacrifices are restored, 3:1-7

1. Verse 1: When the 7th month came corresponds to September
   a. No year is stated indicating the same year as the previous events
   b. Verse 8 refers to the beginning of the 2nd year
c. They barely had time to set up residence in cities when this busiest month of the year in terms of religious obligation arrived.

d. Ezra 7:8, 9 indicates the trip from Babylon required 4 months.

e. Prior to this they had to get ready.

f. The number 7 is significant: 7th day — Sabbath; 7 weeks separated Passover and Weeks; 7th month marked particular religious observances; 7th year a Sabbath year; 7 Sabbath years = Year of Jubilee.

2. **Verse 2:** Jeshua and Zerubbabel begin to build the altar . . . to offer burnt offerings.

   a. This altar was built as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God.

   b. This indicates the captivity has taught them well, since one of the reasons for their bondage was that the Law had been neglected.

3. **Verse 3** speaks of setting up the altar on its foundation, indicating continuity with the past.

   a. The reason given for it is because they were in dread of the neighboring peoples.

   b. Stated positively, they were convinced that if they would complete this obligation to God, He would protect them from their enemies.

4. **Verses 4-5** indicate they offered the daily burnt offerings morning and evening, . . . according to the ordinance.

   a. **Verse 4** mentions the Feast of Booths as the 1st feast they observed after they had started up their rituals.

   b. **Verse 5** speaks of the offerings at the new moon and at all the sacred festivals of the LORD, monthly or new moon offerings and freewill offerings, the spontaneous giving out of gratitude.
5. These verses also describe offerings which came each day, each month, each year

6. Verse 6 indicates the priority they placed on proper worship of God — they began worshiping even though the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.

7. Verse 7 indicates the preparations made, the gathering of materials, for the beginning of construction.
   a. The citizens are paid with money for their work
   b. The foreigners receive goods (food, drink, and oil) instead, which would be more useful to them.
   c. The materials were brought from Lebanon, as the materials had been originally in Solomon's time with Hiram of Tyre
   d. Then Hiram of Tyre and Solomon had been bound together by friendship
   e. Now both lands were under the control of Cyrus.
   f. Joppa was the seaport closest to Jerusalem.

D. The foundation of the new temple is laid, 3:8-13

1. Verse 8 is the following year, the 2nd month, or April/May
   a. No work had been done during the winter months
      (1) With the arrival of seasonable weather the construction began
      (2) This was also the month Solomon began building, 1 Kgs 6:1
   b. Zerubbabel and Jeshua, this time in reverse, perhaps emphasizing their equality in importance and honor.
      (1) Assisted by relatives and Levities
(2) No restriction on the other tribes' entering the Temple till it was dedicated.

c. Levites were put to work at the age of 20

(1) Previously it was 30 (Num 4:46ff.) or 25 (Num 8:24) — 5 years of training?

(2) David reduced this age to 20, 1 Chron 23:3, 24-27

(3) Assigning the Levites to positions of overseers made good sense because they were more familiar with the services for which the Temple.

2. **Verse 9:** indicates how the high priest and his relatives set the example for others

3. **Verses 10-11:** Upon the completion of the foundation the people responded by giving praise and thanks to God — one of the functions of the temple resumed without waiting for the building to be completed.

a. The words (v. 11) are similar to Psalms 106:1, 118:1, and 136.

b. "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel."

4. **Verse 12:** Two groups of people produce two different reactions.

a. "Old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house"

b. "Though many shouted aloud for joy"

c. Only about 50 years had transpired since Solomon's temple was destroyed

d. For some, what had just been built must have been a pitiful reminder that splendid Temple
Haggai 2:3  Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing?

e. For others this new beginning meant the end of 50 years of frustration.

f. Some wept and some rejoiced — mixed feelings.

5. **Verse 13:** concludes by describing the mixture of the rejoicing and weeping into one indistinguishable but impressive tone. For in worship there is a

6. **Word Studies:**


   (1) Legalism is not in the word.

   (2) Contains the idea of "direction," "instruction," or "rule."

   (3) The kind of loving instruction a father gives to his children to help them avoid unhappy consequences of bad choices, or to enable them to live happy lives.

b. מָכָה (vv. 2,3): The verb from which it is taken means "slaughter," either for food or for sacrifice.

   (1) Most of the meat or food which was sacrificed in Israel was eaten by the offerers or the priests (Lev 7).

   (2) This included:

      (a) The peace and thank offerings
      (b) The meal or grain offerings,
      (c) The trespass or guilt offerings
      (d) Even certain sin offerings

   (3) Only burnt offerings were excluded
Sacrifice in Israel was a time of festivity and fellowship.


c. הַסְּמָכָה (v. 4): "Feast of Booths."

(1) Tent, booth, hut, or temporary shelter made of green boughs.

(2) This was the housing of the Israelites on their trek from Egypt to Canaan.

(3) They were commanded to keep it fresh in their memories by living in such structures one week of each year.

d. **Summary:**

(1) There exists a variety of material in this chapter:

(2) The prompt and effective religious action of the people and their leaders.

(3) The one most important article in the holy surroundings — the altar.

(4) Stressed the part played by the Law of the Lord in their renewal.

(5) A brief but detailed review of the ancient ritual.

(6) The gathering of materials and workmen, and the beginning of construction of the new Temple.

7. **Review Questions:**

a. How long was it after Israel returned before they began?

b. Who were the individuals most responsible for the restoration of worship?

c. What observances or ceremonials did they keep?
d. What part did music fulfill in their renewal?

E. *The Work is Interrupted by Israel's Enemies, 4:1-24*

1. **Preliminary Questions:**

   a. What would have been the result if Israel had accepted the help of their neighbors?

   b. What was the most effective tool which Satan used to stop the Lord's work?

   c. Can you find any errors in the letter written by their enemies, and if so, how do you account for them?

   d. Why was the Persian king so easily influenced?

   e. Do you see any ways in which the people of Israel could have improved their methods?

2. **Outline:** The work is interrupted by Israel's enemies, 4:1-24

   a. Opposition develops, 1-5
   b. Israel's enemies write letters to prevent rebuilding, 6-16
   c. Artaxerxes replies and orders the work stopped, 17-22
   d. This brings the restoration to a halt, 23, 24).

3. **Opposition Develops, 4:1-5:**

   a. *Verse 1:* the adversaries are described more fully in verses 2, 9, 10

      (1) In the NT they are primarily known as Samaritans

      (2) This and other OT passages provide background to the racial tension between Jews and Samaritans in the NT.

   b. *Verse 2:* These people said *we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of King Esar-haddon of Assyria who brought us here.*
They claimed they worshiped the same God as Israel, yet they understood His nature in a much different way.

They had worshiped God since the days of King Esarhaddon of Assyria who brought us here.

That was 150 years earlier.

Israel had been conquered by the Assyrians in 722 or 721.

The Assyrians had taken 90% of the people and imported other conquered peoples into Israel as a means of discouraging revolt.

2 Kings 17:24-33 relates the story:

Sargon was the 1st Assyrian king to deport Israelites.

Sennacherib and Esar-haddon continued this policy.

Those speaking in verse 2 identify themselves as among the later groups imported into Israel's former territory, possibly after the fall of Tyre to Assyria in 671 B.C.

These peoples and their successors continued to use only the books of Moses in their religious practices, even to modern times.

The Samaritan woman whom Jesus meets furnishes an illustration of some of their likenesses and differences compared to Judea, John 4:20, 25) — in fact John 4 fulfills Hosea 3.

By joining the new Jewish group in their venture the Samaritans may have sought identification with them and thus a salvaging of something of their political position.

c. Verse 3, the response You shall have no part with us in building a house to our God was based on specific issues:
(1) The intermarriage with the people of the land, the Canaanite, and intermingling of Israel's religion with her pagan neighbors had brought about the nation's downfall

(a) In the conquest, Judg 1:27ff; 2:11ff
(b) Solomon, 1 Kings 11:4-11

(2) The leaders of Judah and Benjamin had already shown a willingness to use the help of foreigners

(a) The people of Tyre and Sidon had already given assistance, Ezra 3:8
(b) This was not the issue
(c) The real problem apparently was the character of the building, i.e., its control and leadership, and worship to which it would be put.

(3) The Samaritans' sincerity is open to question since they had not restored the Temple during their sole possession of the land.

d. Verse 4: the work is completely stopped due to discouragement and fear

e. Verse 5: bribed officials may be compared to lobbyists today — during the reigns of Cyrus to Darius they were hired to influence those who form government policies

4. Israel's enemies write letters to prevent rebuilding, 4:6-16

a. Verse 6: Ahasuerus = Xerxes?

(1) "Ahasuerus" is probably a title — we will see it again in Esther — it was used of an earlier king in Dan 9:1 1

(2) The accusation letter was probably ignored by the king.

b. Excursus: Chronological issues
(1) Because the author was more interested in opposition theme than chronological issues.

(2) Breneman summarizes: "... the mention of Darius in v. 5 looks ahead to 4:24, thus marking the intervening verses as an excursus. The author actually only took up the opposition to the building of the temple again in chaps. 5-6, which refer to events in the reign of Darius I (522-386). The rest of the chap. 4 (note v. 16) refers to later opposition, not to temple building but to the building of the walls under the reigns of Xerxes (486-465) and Artaxerxes I (464-423). However, the author included it to stress his theme of persistent opposition."16

c. Verse 7: Artaxerxes refers to Artaxerxes Longimanus, i.e., Artaxerxes I17

(1) And in the days of was a time of major concern for Artaxerxes.

(2) "A major concern for the first half of... [Artaxerxes’] reign was the Egyptian revolt that began in 460 and was supported by the Greeks, who continued to fight the Persians until the Peace of Callias in 448... This was a major challenge to Persian control in the eastern Mediterranean and would have caused Artaxerxes to listen seriously to such charges of sedition as he was receiving from Samaria."18

(3) Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel were apparently various officials of the Persian territory between the Euphrates River and the Mediterranean Sea (v. 11)

(a) Their letter is reproduced in verses 11-16.

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16Breneman, 98.
17Breneman, 101.
18Breneman, 101.
(b) In vv. 8ff. they involved the officials Rehum and Shimshai

d. **Excursus: Narrative flow of 4:8-23 — opposition was reoccurring**¹⁹

   A Narrative frame listing participants, 8-10
   B Rehum's letter, 11-16
      — address and greeting, 11
      a Jews are rebuilding the city, 12
      b not tribute, custom, toll, impairing the royal revenue, 13
      c records search show city's seditious nature, 14-16
   B' Artaxerxes' reply, 17-22
      — address and greeting, 17
      c' records search show city's seditious nature, 18-19
      b' tribute, custom, and toll to kings of Jerusalem, 20
      a' decree: the city is not to be rebuilt, 21-22
   A' Narrative frame listing participants, 23

e. **Verses 8-16** are in Aramaic

(1) **Aramaic:**

   (a) Probably the bulk of it is taken from official Persian documents, to which Ezra had access.

   (b) Aramaic was used by the Persians for their international correspondence

   (c) Aramaic is related to Hebrew as:

      i) Dutch is to German
      ii) Portuguese is to Spanish
      iii) Latin to French and Spanish

   (d) During the Captivity the exiles began to speak in Aramaic

¹⁹Throntveit, 26-27
Consequently the Hebrew spoken in Judea in the NT was actually Aramaic (Matt 5:22; 16:17; Mark 5:41; 7:34)

(2) **Verse 8:** Rehum is not the same man as Ezra 2:2 — the title, royal deputy/commander made him a counselor of the Persian king.

(a) Shimshai the scribe was the royal secretary.

(b) Rehum and Shimshai were more influential figures, closer to the king.

(3) **Verses 9-10** are the salutation of the letter. Erech, Babylon, and Elam were some of the conquered peoples whom the Assyrians settled in Samaria

(a) Osnappar is probably a shortened form of Ashurbanipal, Esar-haddon's successor.

(b) The region Beyond the river is the territory ruled by Persia between the Euphrates River (Babylon) and the Mediterranean Sea, and under one general administration.

(c) And now were used in Aramaic correspondence to mark the transition between the salutation and the body of a letter.

(4) **Verse 11** summarizes the salutation and concludes again with the customary phrase, and now. This is followed by Your servants, which contrasts them with the disloyalty which they claimed to warn him against.

(5) **Verse 12** shows the bias and exaggeration of these foes.

(a) Rebellious and wicked city are an attempt to discredit — Israel's actions did not warrant such
(b) **finishing the walls and repairing the foundations**
    attempts the same

(c) The accusation passes over entirely the actual work being done — rebuilding the Temple

(d) The accusation highlights that part — **finishing the walls and repairing the foundations** — which would incite the Persian king

(e) Rebuilding the Temple would not raise such an alarm

(6) **Verse 13** reveals the false assumptions drawn from the first falsehood.

(a) **Tribute, custom, and toll** are different forms of taxes

(b) Their method thus was to aim at the king's self-concern.

(7) **Verse 14** Now because we share the salt of the palace is an idiomatic way of stating their recognition of their dependence on the king

(a) The preserving nature of salt made it an element of covenant ceremonies, Num 18:19; 2 Chr. 13:5

(b) They were claiming that they were bound by covenant loyalty to reveal these threats to the king.

(8) **Verse 15** asserts that a check of the **annals of your ancestors** would verify their charges.

(a) The "Babylonian Chronicle" even lists food rations for the captives from Judah, including Jehoiachin by name.
(b) Also, note there is no charge of contemporary wrongdoing in this part of the letter, for which they claim any substantiation.

(c) The charge is that from long ago Jerusalem caused problems and On that account this city was laid waste.

(9) **Verse 16** concludes that allowing the rebuilding would undermine the Persian government's control of the total area from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean.

(a) It credits the people of Jerusalem with tremendous military power or influence far beyond reason.

(b) The building of an army does not necessarily lead to military action or revolt.

f. **Artaxerxes replies and orders the work stopped, 4:17-22**

(1) **Verse 17** is the heading and salutation of the letter.

(a) Rehum and Shimshai are identified with Samaria and its neighbors.

(b) **Greeting/Peace**, אֲלֵיכֶם שלום, is the common greeting of their culture.

(c) **And now**, separates the salutation from the body of the letter.

(2) **Verse 18** acknowledges receipt of the Samaritans' letter.

(a) No defense is offered by the Jews in Jerusalem.

(b) Artaxerxes accepted the letter from Jerusalem's enemies at face value and only made a superficial search.

(3) **Verses 19-20** give us the results of the superficial search.
(a) Evidently the search was just long enough to find the evidence desired.

(b) Any city would have a record in which at some point had not resisted its conquerors.

(c) Jerusalem's history however reflected that much of the resistance and rebellion had been useless and ill-advised.

(d) The Prophets, and specifically Jeremiah, had cautioned against it from the times of Jehoiakim to Zedekiah, Jer 21:8, 9; 27:1-23

(e) Their disobedience to God at that point surely added to their burden now.

(f) More than a half century has passed, and God's people still pay a price for the sins of their leaders.

(g) 

(1) Verse 20's mighty kings most likely were David and Solomon.

(2) Apparently Artaxerxes thought that David and Solomon's collecting tribute, custom and tolls justified the charge made in vs. 13, that a healthy Jerusalem would endanger his ability to collect these for himself from this whole territory.

(4) Verses 21-22 order the official issuance of the command to stop all work, and require strict compliance in carrying it out, bringing the work comes to a halt.

(g) The Work Comes to a Halt, 4:23-24.

(1) Verse 23 says the work was stopped by force and power, indicating that in 530 the enemies had finally accomplished what they had started 9 years before in 539 (cf. vv. 4ff.)
Verse 24 indicates that the work on the house of God . . . stopped and was discontinued when the accusation of v. 12 says, mentions the rebuilding of the city with its walls and foundations.

Nehemiah, upon hearing of this situation will be roused to action. Cf. Nehemiah 1

5. Word Studies:
   a. Discourage (v. 4), פָּרַע, Pi. Ptc. Mpl., from לֶרֶךְ "to slacken, allow to fall, weaken"; the participial form indicating continuity, i.e., they "continuously again and again weakened the hands."
   b. Tribute (v. 13), מַתָּאָה contains the basic idea of a gift measured out; it is always used of another nation, for example to avoid military attack.
   c. Custom (v. 13), בָּלָא refers to payment in kind; i.e., a portion of the crops; this tax would usually be paid by a nation's own citizens.
   d. Toll (v. 13), מָלֵא refers to payment for passage through a land.
   e. Salt (v. 14), יְלָל was used to preserve and thus was a symbol of an enduring, permanent agreement, forever sacred and inviolable. Salt must always accompany offerings (Lev 2:13), as a symbol of a perpetual bond of friendship and loyalty.

6. Summary:
   a. The Samaritans and other neighbors of Jerusalem offer their assistance to rebuild the Temple, but their help is refused.
   b. They therefore seek to interrupt the project by using influence in the Persian court, especially by having a deceptive letter written.
   c. Their complaint was that the people were rebuilding walls as a threat of rebellion; they made no mention that the Temple was being built.
d. This resulted in a sixteen-year period of progressively intensified delay, and the eventual order to stop all work.

e. The report of the stoppage in verse 24 may be intended to cover more than one single incident; it was the objective of the continued efforts throughout the time period of this chapter, and was the result of all these incidents.

f. Thus matters stood till the second year of Darius' reign.

7. **Review Questions:**

a. Of what nationality were the people most opposed to the building?

b. What four kings of Persia are named?

c. What is meant by "beyond the River"?

d. How long was the work stopped?

e. What past kings of Judah were the cause of an extra burden to them now.

F. **The Work is Resumed by the Reign of Darius, 5:1-17**

1. **Excursus:** The structure of the correspondences in the next two sections highlight the question of authority — "Who authorized this work?" There exists a "point-by-point" reply in each of the inquires:

2. A Haggai and Zechariah encourage rebuilding the temple, 5:1-2
   B Tattenai, et al. Inquire about authorization, 5:3-5
   C Tattenai's letter of inquiry to Darius, 5:6-17
   C' Darius' letter of reply to Tattenai, 6:1-12
   B' Tattenai et al. comply with authorization, 6:13
   A' Temple rebuilt as encouraged by Haggai and Zechariah, 6:14-15

3. A Tattenai's letter of inquiry, 5:7-17

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\(^{20}\text{Throntveit, 31, 32}\)
a. Report: "Work is being done diligently," 5:7-8
   b. Inquiry as to authorization, 5:9-10
   c. Reply of Jews Elders: Cyrus Edict, 5:11-16
   d. Request: search for Cyrus Edict, 5:17

A'. Darius' letter of reply, 6:1-12
   d'. Successful search for Cyrus Edict, 6:1-2
   c'. Text of Cyrus Edict, 6:3-5
   b'. Darius' authorization, 6:6-12a
   a'. Decree: "Let it be done with all diligence," 6:12b

4. **Preliminary Questions**

   a. What historical events or changing circumstances made possible the resumption of construction?

   b. How does Darius' character compare with the previous king's?

   c. What part did the people credit to God in their varying fortunes?

   d. Do you think the letter of Tattenai was written to seek instruction and information or to direct and influence opinions: to help or to hinder the reconstruction?

5. **Outline**

   a. The work is resumed by the reign of Darius, 5:1-17
      (1) The work gets under way, vss. 1-5
      (2) A letter is sent to clarify the situation, vss. 6-17


   a. *Verse 1* mentions the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah which prodded the people into resumption of the Temple reconstruction.

      (1) Read Hag 1:4-11 and Zech 1:16-17

      (2) Note that *prophesied* also means "preaching" or "forthtelling" as well as foretelling
(3) In the name of meant more than affixing His name to the proclamation; rather "character," thus reflecting the character of God

b. Verse 2 indicate that the combined efforts of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Haggai, and Zechariah worked to resume the rebuilding of the House of God

(1) Darius may have assumed the Persian throne
(2) He was a man of much greater stature and nobility than the previous two kings21
(3) A new confidence might have grown that the Jews would receive more generous treatment and support in the future.

c. In verses 3-4 Tattenai and Shethar-bozenai see to be requesting information — as government officials they had a "right" to know.

d. Verse 5 relates God's approval and power was responsible for the continuation of the work.

7. A letter is sent to clarify the situation, 5:6-17

a. Verse 6 indicates that what follows is an actual copy of Tattenai's letter.

(1) It is not accusative nor angry; in fact, it praises Israel's workmanship.
(2) It appears to be an honest inquiry concerning a situation which had arisen, for which the governor had insufficient instruction to act.
(3) Associates, found in most modern translations is transliterated in the KJV, "Apharsachites."

21Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage, 353 designates Darius the greatest monarch whom Persian ever produced.
(a) The transliteration would refer to an unknown tribe.

(b) But the Aramaic אֲדַכָּרְךָנִי contains the article thus indicating that it should be translated — associates.

b. Verse 7 gives the heading and salutation of the letter.

c. Verse 8 states the problem which caused the letter to be written:

(1) The temple was being rebuilt

(2) The basic material was stone with wood beams

(3) The writer also speaks with commendation for the quality and dispatch of the construction work — is being done diligently and prospers in their hands.

d. Verse 9 shows their dilemma and repeats their question from verse 3 — Rulers must be in charge of everything in their realm;

e. Verse 10 demonstrated to their superiors in Persia that they were faithfully looking after Persian interests.

f. Verses 11-16 conveys the answer which the Jews gave to justify their actions.

(1) Three reasons are cited.

(a) Their action was a service to the Supreme God over all — the God of heaven and earth, v. 11

(b) They were only repeating what one of their great kings (Solomon) had previously done — we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished, v. 1

(c) By the authority of Cyrus — King Cyrus of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, made a
decree that this house of God should be rebuilt, v. 13.

(2) **Verse 12** is an answer to an unspoken theological question:

(a) If their God is supreme, why had He permitted His Temple to be destroyed in the first place, and made necessary the work they were doing at present?

(b) Their answer, **because our ancestors had angered the God of heaven**, shows that they finally believed the message of their prophets (cf. Amos 2:4, 5)

(3) **Verse 13** gives the information for which the letter seeks confirmation or disproof — they are obey the decree of Cyrus

(4) **Verse 14** repeats the information of Ezra 1:7, 8 regarding the temple utensils.

(5) **Verse 15** records the instructions that Cyrus gave to Sheshbazzar about the disposition of the utensils — **Take these vessels; go and put them in the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site.**

(6) **Verse 16** closes with the information that the Temple **is not yet finished**

(7) **Verse 17** requests **a search made in the royal archives there in Babylon, to see whether a decree was issued by King Cyrus for the rebuilding of this house of God in Jerusalem** — the logical place to look would be Babylon

8. **Word Studies**


(1) The main idea is wholeness; the verb form is used of being whole, sound, safe, secure, or perfect.
(2) Some verses where it is used emphasize health; some, completion; some, peace or friendship; and others, prosperity or reward.

(3) Thus the whole round of things, physical and spiritual, that comprise one’s well-being, are included in this word.

b. Jerusalem, ירושלים, possibly derived from a phrase meaning either, "Possession of Peace," or "Foundation of Peace."

c. Jew, בן יהודה, the gentilic, adjective form of Judah, meaning "celebrated, lauded, praised" of God.

d. Israel, ישראל, "Warrior (soldier) of God."

(1) The first three letters — יִשָׂרָאֵל — mean to set in a row: hence, when used of people, to strive or contend (as arrows of soldiers do).

(2) The ending — אלה — is the title, God.

(3) The person who would set troops in rows would be their chief, or prince: hence the name can mean, "Prince of God," or "God is Chief."

9. **Summary**

a. After years of inactivity, work on the Temple was resumed when two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, showed this to be God's will.

b. This raised questions among the next echelon of officials between them and Persia.

c. The Jewish builders did not back down, but insisted that they had authority from the highest Persian ruler for their action, and that their subjection to the Supreme God further required it.

d. A check of official documents was therefore initiated, while the construction work continued.
10. **Review Questions** — Identify the following persons, showing how they were related to the reconstruction of the Temple

a. Cyrus  
b. Darius  
c. Haggai  
d. Nebuchadnezzar  
e. Sheshbazzar  
f. Tattenai  
g. Zechariah  
h. Sethar-bozenai

G. **The Temple is Completed and Dedicated, 6:1-22**

1. **Preliminary Questions**

a. How did the building that Cyrus authorized compare with the one which Solomon had built?

b. Can you find anything which Darius did, which Cyrus had not done?

c. What do you see in the story that reflects the religious training which was maintained during the captivity?

d. How did the sacrifices compare with those made at the dedication of the first temple?

e. What feasts or offerings are particularly mentioned, and how were they appropriate for the occasion?

f. What help did God give them in this enterprise?

2. **Outline**

a. The Temple is completed and dedicated, 6:1-22

   (1) The Royal Edict authorizing construction was found, 6:1-5

   (2) Darius consequently issued a decree directing the construction, 6:6-12

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(3) The work was completed and the building was dedicated, 6:13-18

(4) Services were resumed, especially the Passover, 6:19-22

3. The Royal Edict authorizing construction is found, Ezra 6:1-5

   a. Verse 1 states Darius decreed they search the archives where the documents were stored in Babylon.

   b. Verse 2 gives the location where the document was found — Ecbatana

   c. Verses 3-5 are either an extract or the full official written version of Cyrus' original order

(1) Verse 3 gives the proposed dimensions of the reconstructed temple — **height . . . sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits** — twice as high, and three times as wide as Solomon's original (1 Kgs 6:2).

   (a) Since this is much larger than what was actually constructed, these figures must have been intended as maximums.

   (b) Its size would have been most imposing: 90 ft. high, and 90 ft. wide; the length is not stated, but would presumably be double the width.

   (c) The length of the former building would have become the width of the new.

(2) Verse 4 duplicates the details of construction of the original building (1 Kgs 6:36).

   (a) The work was to be financed **from the royal treasury**

   (b) This detail apparently was never carried out.
(3) Verse 5 relates the order for the restitution of the temple furnishings, which the first returning captives brought with them in 1:7-11).

(a) Darius would honor this decree of Cyrus given in 1:7

(b) The reason being that the law of the Medes and Persian could not be altered

4. Darius’ Decree Ordering the Reconstruction, 6:6-12

a. Verse 6-7 begins abruptly, suggesting that the introduction of Darius' letter has been omitted, to get immediately to the issue.

(1) In effect, Tattenai and Shethar-bozenai are commanded not to interfere.

(2) Keep away (v. 6) apparently was an Aramaic legal formula

b. Verse 8

(1) Specifies that tax money is to be provided from the general area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates River to pay the total cost.

(2) Verse 10 explains why Darius would give first priority to this project — that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his children

c. Verse 9 lists the various items for Israel's sacrifices that were also to be furnished daily and financed from the public treasury.

(1) Day by day because every day was to begin and end with a burnt offering, Num 28:3-6

(2) Wine, or oil — wine was a frequent part of offerings (Exod 29:40ff; Lev 23:13); and so was oil (Exod 29:2ff; Lev 8:30).
Darius is known to have ordered a similar list of supplies for the Hebrew community in Egypt. This list corresponds exactly with instructions in Leviticus: bulls, rams, lambs (Lev 1:5, 10), accompanied by wheat and salt (Lev 2:1).

d. Already noted verse 10 lists 2 reasons for Darius' action — They.

  (1) **May offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven**

  (2) **May pray for the life of the king and his children.**

  (3) The surprise is that the mighty Persian ruler would request a handful of subjugated, impoverished people whom he was befriending to pray to their strange God for him!

e. Verse 11 threatens any violator with painful death, and the reduction of his home to an outhouse.

  (1) This comes as a shock if we have become acclimated to expecting kindness from the Persians.

  (2) The Assyrians and Babylonians were noted for their sadism, including the impaling of victims on pointed posts to induce lingering death

  (3) **Excursus: Archaeological inscriptions** have been found of the Mesopotamian civilizations which confirm that impaling victims on stakes was a method of execution cf. Lachish Reliefs.

    (a) Impalement is a term that refers to situations in which objects are driven through the body, causing deep stabbing wounds.
(b) It can refer either to accidental events or to deliberate wounding used as a method of torture or execution.

(c) Impalement as a method of torture and execution involves a person being pierced with a long stake.

(d) The penetration could be through the sides, through the rectum, through the vagina, or through the mouth.

(e) This method leads to a painful death; sometimes taking days.

(f) The stake would often be planted in the ground, leaving the impaled person suspended to die.

(4) In some forms of impalement, the stake would be inserted so as to avoid immediate death, and would function as a plug to prevent blood loss, thus extending the person's agony for as many as three days.

(a) After suitable preparation of the victim, including public torture and rape, the victim was stripped and an incision was made in the groin between the genitals and rectum.

(b) A stout pole with a blunt end was inserted.

(c) The blunt end would push vital organs to the side where a sharp end would pierce them, hastening death.

(d) A conveniently suitable branch was often used.

(e) The pole would often come out of the body at the top of the sternum and be placed against the lower jaw so that the victim would not slide farther down the pole.
(f) Often, the victim was hoisted into the air after partial impalement.

(g) Gravity and the victim's own struggles would cause them to slide down the pole. Death could take many days.

(h) The use of impalement as a form of execution in civilizations of the Ancient Near East (Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greeks, Romans, Middle Ages, etc.).

(i) Crucifixion was one form of impalement
(j) The Persians did these things also, but at the general policy was benevolence toward their enemies to encourage rapid surrender.

f. Verse 12 invokes a curse in the name of Israel's God on anyone who would change his decree so that the temple would be destroyed.

   (1) The God who has established his name there reflects Deuteronomy 12:5, 11 and 1 Kings 5:5

   (2) "Name" means more than something written on a building

   (3) It is a promise of his personal presence

5. The completion of the building, and its dedication, 6:13-18

   a. Verse 13 shows that Darius' degree was meticulously obeyed.

   b. Verse 14 lists all the people responsible for the construction, from the God of Israel who commanded it, through three administrations of kings, two prophets, Israel's governor and high priest, and down to the elders.

      (1) The name of Artaxerxes raises questions.

      (2) This cannot be the Artaxerxes of 4:7, 23, who held up construction.

      (3) It may be the Artaxerxes of the 7:12, 21, whose cooperation gave life to the ceremonies in the new building

      (4) Finally, it may be that all three names may be different titles for Darius.

   c. Verse 15 gives the date for its completion.

      (1) Adar would be the 12th month — February-March.

      (2) Construction occupied 4.5
d. Verse 16 the description of the dedication begins.

(1) No tears as in 3:12, only joy.

(2) Dedications after extensive repairs had also been conducted by Josiah (2 Chron 30:17) and Hezekiah (2 Chron 35:11).

e. Verse 17 mentions 2 kinds of sacrifice.

(1) Dedication offering = the burnt offering, Lev 1 — all edible meat of the animals would be consumed in fire, thus representing total consecration.

(2) Sin offering closes the suffering in exile because of their sins, as they celebrate God's forgiveness.

(3) All Israel indicates for this was the first time in almost four centuries, since the division of the nation under Rehoboam and Jeroboam, that all Israel had been able to worship together in one temple.

f. Verse 18 reinstates the priests and Levites to their duties in the Temple as Moses legislated, Num 3:6, 10; 8:9 — this verse ends the Aramaic portion of Ezra.

6. The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread observed, 6:19-22

a. Verse 19 records the observance of the Passover in the following month, as legislated in Exod 12

(1) The fourteenth day of the first month

(2) A reminder of the event which gave birth to their nation

(3) Now they were celebrating its rebirth.
b. **Verse 20** because the priests and Levites **had purified themselves** they offered the sacrifices for those who were still ritually impure, something that had happened before, cf. 2 Chron 30:15-17

c. **Verse 21**, does not specify whether **the people of Israel** and those **separated themselves from the pollutions of the nations** are the same or two different groups.

   (1) This could refer to Israel and to the Gentile proselytes or else Jewish backsliders.

   (2) Or the text could be commenting on the fact that Israel was now at last cleansed from her impure associations with the heathen.

   (3) Since the 2\textsuperscript{nd} group joined the 1\textsuperscript{st}, to seek Israel's God, the more reasonable answer is they represent foreigners, similar to the mixed multitude (Exod 12:38) when Israel left Egypt, who joined with them now in the worship of the true God.

   (4) Thus the NRSV translation, **and also by all who had joined them and separated themselves from the pollutions of the nations**

d. **Verse 22**, records that the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** followed and was a continuation of the Passover.

7. **Word Studies:**

   a. **Darius**: Preserver, conservator.

      (1) His name very aptly describes the character of his reign.

      (2) Cyrus had brought the nation to greatness

      (3) Darius preserved and extended that which Cyrus had begun.

   b. **Burnt Offering**, קִרְבּות, "that which ascends," from the verb "to ascend."
(1) The base of this word appears in the "al" of Israel's airline, "El Al"

(2) The "dedication" offering of 6:17

(3) The image is that the total offering ascended in smoke to God

c. **Passover,** הָסַּפָּר, "to leap over, pass over," the word "Paschal" comes from this

(1) When God passed over the doors of the Israelites, they were spared, or delivered (Exod. 12:13, 27)

(2) Therefore the word almost always refers to this sparing or deliverance.

d. **Unleavened,** וָקָּצָם, producing the word "matzoth."

(1) Used by many churches for communion bread.

(2) The word imitates the sound of sucking something out with relish, i.e., something sweet, unleavened or unfermented.

8. **Summary:**

a. Darius initiated a search that turned up Cyrus' original order for the rebuilding of the Temple with government funds

b. He therefore ordered the co-operation of the officials in the total Beyond-Euphrates area, of which Israel was a part, in collecting funds and in permitting the reconstruction.

c. Violators were to be punished with the full severity of which the law was capable.

d. All ranks of leaders in Israel, religious and secular, institutional (priests) and individual (prophets), got behind the project and speeded it to completion in a little more than four years.
e. With joy the citizens of Israel celebrated at the dedication ceremonies, sin offerings, and renewal of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.

f. All of these were done to follow the pattern of worship handed down by Moses.

g. The completion of the Temple in 516 (6th year of Darius) marked exactly 70 years from the 3rd exile of 586.

9. Review Questions:

a. How was Cyrus involved in the Temple's restoration?
b. Where was Cyrus' decree found?
c. How had Cyrus wanted the work to be financed?
d. How long did it take to complete the work?
e. Whose writings guided them in their sacrifices?

VII. EZRA BECOMES INVOLVED IN THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL, 7:1-10:44

A. Excursus: the structure of chapters 7-8 illustrate the reuniting of Israel and the qualifications of Ezra23

A  Journey to Jerusalem, 7:1-10
B  Commissioning of Ezra, 7:11-26
C  Prayer, 7:27-28a
  D  Leaders gathered for journey, 7:28b
  X  Israel Reunited, 8:1-14
  D' Leaders gathered for journey, 8:15-20
  C' Prayer and Fasting, 8:21-23
B' Commissioning of Vessel Bearers, 8:24-30
A' Journey to Jerusalem, 8:31-26

B. Preliminary Questions

1. Why do you suppose Ezra put so much emphasis on his credentials? Who would have questioned them?

2. Why do you suppose Ezra wanted to go on this mission?

23Throntveit, 38
3. What qualifications did he have for the assignment?

4. What help did he get from God?

C. Outline:

1. Ezra leads a 2nd band of returnees back to Israel and gives God thanks, 7:1-28
   a. Who Ezra was and what he was doing, 1:1-10
   b. Authorization from King Artaxerxes, 1:11-26
   c. Ezra's thanksgiving and compliance, 1:27-28

D. Who Ezra was, and what he was doing, 7:1-10

1. Verses 1-10: Ezra lists at least 6 qualifications or credentials which authorized his action.
   a. Verses 1-5: He traces his ancestry back to Aaron, from whom all priests must be descended.
      (1) After this comprises a 57 year break between the close of chapter 6 (515) and the beginning of chapter 7 (458 B.C.)
         (a) Takes up the story then with Artaxerxes (Longimanus), son of the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther.
         (b) The events of the book of Esther have taken place.
         (c) Israel has been spared once more, and has responded by introducing the Feast of Purim.
         (d) Ezra for the first time is mentioned as a participant of the events in the book.
   b. Verse 6: he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses

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24Breneman, 125.
(1) This is the 1st mention of a scribe in the Bible
(2) Ezra may have helped create this group
(3) Scribes functioned not simply to make copies of the law, but to be an expositor of its meaning.
(4) They are mentioned frequently in the NT

c. Verse 6: the king granted him all that he asked for the hand of the Lord his God was upon him

d. Verses 7-9 say he was successful in leading this group
   (1) It was similar to the 1st group recorded in chapter 1, wh
   (2) Their arrival date is just 4 months after their departure.
   (3) Approximately 9 miles a day.

e. Verse 10 states he was adequately prepared — he set his heart
   (1) To study the law of God
   (2) To do it
   (3) To teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel

E. The Letter of Artaxerxes, 7:11-26

1. Verse 11 introduces us to Artaxerxes' letter giving Ezra his authority; Ezra is identified in full, by both of his positions, as the priest . . . the scribe

2. Verse 12 is the letter's salutation
   a. Verses 12 through 26 are in Aramaic,
   b. They indicate that Ezra has inserted an official document

3. Verses 13-14, give Ezra authority to go
a. He is accompanied by as many as desired, of his brethren


4. **Verses 15-20** portray the articles which they were to transport

a. Verse 15 emphasizes the silver and gold that king and his counselors . . . freely offered

b. Verse 16 adds the freewill offerings of the people and the priests in the whole province of Babylon

c. Verse 17 recommends that they purchase necessary materials for sacrifice — the list resembles that in 6:9.

d. Verse 18 allows the returnees to use their own judgment with the rest of the silver and gold

e. Verse 19 specifies that these articles must be faithfully delivered in Jerusalem.

f. Verse 20 authorization to call upon the king's treasury — a "blank check."

5. **Verses 21-24** instruct all the treasurers of the surrounding provinces to give Ezra their co-operation, within the limits specified.

a. Verse 22:

(1) The 100 silver talents = 650 pounds
(2) The 100 cors of wheat = 1167 bushels
(3) The 100 baths of wine and oil = 900 gallons each
(4) Salt is unlimited

(5) Government warehouses would have these stockpiled
b. **Verse 23** explains the reason for this generosity is the Persian ruler did not want *wrath* to come upon the realm of the king and his heirs

(1) Egyptian records reveal similar Persian policies there.

(2) Persian policy attempted to keep their subject peoples contented, to assure the continued peace and prosperity of their empire.

c. **Verse 24** exempts religious officials from any form of taxation

6. **Verses 25-26** are directed directly to Ezra

a. He was to be guided according to the God-given wisdom you possess (the law) in appointing magistrates and judges

b. This places Ezra over all the Jews

c. He could judge all the people in the province . . . who know the laws of your God

d. He should teach those who do not know them.

e. He was given full authority administer justice and execute punishment on any that were disobedient

F. **Ezra's Thanksgiving and Compliance, 7:27-28**

1. **Verse 27** Ezra praises God for bringing this about

2. **Verse 28** continues Ezra's thanks, personalizing it, being encouraged because the hand of the LORD my God was upon me

G. **Word Studies:**

1. *Scribe*, סcribe (Hebrew), הscribe (Aramaic), a secretary or one skilled in the sacred books and in the law.

2. *Teach*, לומד, v.10, to teach, involves the idea of discipline
3. **Teach**, (עִמּוֹ, v. 25), to cause to know, inform.

H. **Summary:**

1. Ezra chose to go up to Israel from Babylonia
2. He was qualified as a leader since he was a priest, descended from Aaron.
3. He had further prepared himself by study and practice, in order to be a leader of his people.
4. God gave him favor before the king, who recognized his capabilities, approved his mission, and contributed substantially to the fund for supplies and furnishings for the Temple.
5. Ezra proved his qualifications because the trip was successful
6. He brought the returning exiles, with the contributions from both the government and private sources, to Israel.
7. King Artaxerxes furnished Ezra with a letter permitting the transportation of all these materials, and ordering the full co-operation of the neighboring tribes in the province in providing supplies for the expedition.
8. Ezra was put in charge of selecting officials and judges to govern Israel and to teach his religion throughout the community.
9. Ezra expressed his gratitude to God, whose will he saw being done in all of this.

I. **Review Questions:**

1. Who was the king who commissioned Ezra to go to Israel?
2. List the three goals that Ezra had set for his life.
3. What responsibilities of government were placed upon Ezra?
4. What two reasons did Ezra have to be thankful to God?

VIII. **LISTS OF THE RETURNEES AND TREASURES WHICH THEY BROUGHT, 8:1-36**
A. **Preliminary Questions:**

1. Do you think the figures in vss. 3-14 are round numbers or exact numbers? How many do not end in a zero?

2. Do you think Ezra would suggest (vs. 22) that the church rely less on government help, and more on God's care? Are the two always mutually exclusive?

3. Note the meticulous care that Ezra takes to organize everything, and to put others in charge of all valuables. For who was he doing this?

4. How was God's help apparent to them in making this trip?

B. **Outline**

1. Lists are given of returnees, and treasures which they carried back; the treasures are delivered.
   a. The list of exiles returning with Ezra, 8:1-14
   b. Addition of Levites to the company, 8:15-20
   c. Leave-taking ceremonies, 8:21-23
   d. The treasures, and how they were handled, 8:24-30.

C. **The list of exiles returning with Ezra, 8:1-14**

1. **Verse 1** states the intention of listing only the names of heads of households, and identifying the families, or clans, from which they were descended.

2. **Verse 2** begins the list with three persons in a special category:
   a. **Priests and royalty.**
   b. Chapter 2 began with priests
   c. Two lines of priests descended from Aaron:
      (1) One through his 3rd son, Eleazar and his grandson, **Phinehas — Gershom**
(2) Ezra was included in this line, 7:1-5.

(3) The other was through Eleazar's younger brother, Ithamar — Daniel.

(4) Both lines had a representative here.

d. Royalty was represented by a descendant of David — Hattush

e. Although no numbers are given, there were obviously other members in these 3 families — 12 other priests are alluded to 8:24.

3. **Verses 3-14** apparently name the leading men mentioned in 7:28.

a. 12 groups are included, possibly as reminders of the twelve tribes, though not necessarily descended from them

b. No effort is made to link each with a separate specific tribe.

c. The names of individuals are new

d. All but one of the clans are among those mentioned in Ezra 2:1-15.

e. The total of all the families is 1496, plus Ezra and the 3 names of verse 2.

D. **Levites are added to the Company, 8:15-20**

1. **Verse 15** names the staging area — the river to Ahava.

a. Cannot be identified, it may have been a canal Babylon

b. The Israelite worshipers may have customarily met here for worship, cf. Psalm 137:1

c. **There none of the descendants of Levi.**

d. Ezra, as a priest, would be painfully conscious of this omission.

2. **Verse 16** gives his solution to the problem — leaders were chosen to seek out recruits.
3. **Verse 17**, these leaders are sent to Casiphia (location unknown) where a number of Levites and temple ministers resided.

4. **Verses 18-20** lists the result — the names of the leaders and those who decided to accompany them — 258

E. **Leave-taking Ceremonies were Conducted, 8:21-23**

1. **Verse 21** mentions they fasted to seek from God a safe journey for ourselves, and our children

2. **Verse 22** states Ezra's reticence to ask the king for any help
   a. He had told the king, that the hand of our God is gracious to all who seek him
   b. Asking for a guard would imply distrust in God's power to protect.
   c. Ezra's trust in God was greater than any trust in human help

3. **Verse 23**, indicates that God confirmed this decision — he listened to our entreaty.

F. **They took along certain treasures, which were entrusted to priests on the journey and were delivered safely at Jerusalem, 8:24-30**

1. **Verses 24-27** Ezra put all the valuables into the hands of others in order to
   a. Assure their safe arrival
   b. Avoid being suspected of dishonesty
   c. As a matter of record to give account to his Persian superiors.
   d. His choice of priests as the custodians may have been governed by several factors.

   (1) If anyone were trustworthy, they would be.
   (2) The articles were all for the use of the priests later on
   (3) They might as well have them in their keeping now
   (4) He may have felt that marauders would be more hesitant to attack priests than ordinary citizens.
2. **Verses 28-30** relate Ezra's charge to the twelve priests.
   a. Holy utensils must only be handled by holy men
   b. The money was given as an offering to God.
   c. They were responsible for them till delivery was made to the priests, Levites, and leading citizens at the Temple in Jerusalem.

**G. The journey is made and the goods are delivered at Jerusalem, 8:31-36**

1. **Verse 31** resumes the journey after 11 days.
   a. Ezra observes **the hand of our God was upon us**
   b. He attributes this as delivering them **from the hand of the enemy and from ambushes along the way**.

2. **Verse 32** they came to Jerusalem and **remained there three days** — quite natural

3. **Verses 33-34** record the great care in insuring the valuables were properly dispensed.
   a. Four men are named and identified by family and position.
   b. Everything is weighed as it is changing hands.
   c. Every piece receives a number, and all information is recorded on the spot.
   d. **Meremoth son of Uriah** raises some interesting speculation.
      (1) Here he is called the son of Uriah the priest
      (2) Nehemiah 3:4 and 21 designates him as the grandson of Hakkoz.
      (3) The sons of a man by the same name are mentioned in 2:61 as unable to supply genealogical records; therefore they were excluded from the priesthood until the deficiency
could be amended by God's answer through Urim and Thummim.

(4) Perhaps:

(a) They were able to find the missing records

(b) Perhaps God corrected the deficiency and made His acceptance known

(c) Perhaps there were two men named Hakkoz, and only one lacked proper credentials

4. *Verse 35* again stresses the number 12 and its multiples, representing the 12 tribes.

5. *Verse 36* records the completion of the mission

a. All records are turned over to the officials

b. Ezra had fulfilled his responsibility to the king (7:14), to his people and to God.

**H. Word Studies: holy, יִשְׁדָד, v. 28, pure, consecrated, separated.**

1. Because a thing was entirely or purely separated to one purpose, it was sacred for that use.

2. With little change the word is used of men devoted to pagan temples and practicing the lowest vices and perversions.

3. It makes a great deal of difference to what purpose, or God, a person devotes his life.

**I. Summary:** details the trip

1. There was a division of responsibility

2. Specifically mentioned are 2 priests, a descendant of royalty, and 12 heads of clans in charge
3. When Ezra needs recruits from among the Levites, he sends nine men and
instructs them how, to get them.

4. When the trip begins, he calls for fasting and prayer and lays their whole
safety in the hands of God.

5. The treasures for the Temple he entrusts to 12 of the priests.

6. When the trip ended and everything had been turned over to the Temple
officials, they celebrate with sacrifices and a full report is turned over to
their superiors, along with the original orders:

J. **Review Questions:**

1. How much time was spent getting the expedition underway?
2. How many leaders did Ezra select to go up with him?
3. What kind of persons did he trust with the gold and silver?
4. How many persons made the trip, and how did this compare with the
company in Ezra 2?

IX. **EZRA HEARS ABOUT SOME CURRENT SINS, PARTICULARLY MARRIAGE TO FOREIGNERS, AND HE PRAYS, 9:1-15**

A. **Excursus:** the structure of chapters 9-10 illustrate that in God's judgment there is
also grace.

B Ezra's public mourning, 9:3-4
C Ezra's prayer, 9:6-15
   X Shecaniah's confession and request for action, 10:1-4
   C' Ezra's exhortation and the people's oath, 10:5
B' Ezra's private mourning, 10:6
A' Resolution of the problem of intermarriage and the list of those who had married
foreign women, 10:7-44

B. **Preliminary Questions**

\[\text{Throntveit, 49.}\]
1. Where in the Bible have Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Amorites been mentioned before?

2. What marks of a good leader did Ezra show when he was confronted with the people's sin?

3. What does Ezra's prayer reveal about Israel's economic condition at this time?

4. Do you think Ezra was racially biased?

C. Outline:

1. Ezra hears about some current sins, particularly marriage to foreigners, and he prays, 9:1-15
   a. Ezra is informed of the problem, 9:1-5
   b. Ezra prays about it, 9:6-15

D. Verses 1-5 reflect Ezra's reaction upon receiving this information

1. Verse 1 indicates a space in time since the previous
   a. The officials, i.e., the civil authorities, and not the religious leaders who came to Ezra.
   b. 3 groups mentioned earlier in the book — the people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites — were all involved,
   c. While marriages between people of different "Christian" faiths creates all sorts of problems, this was much worse

   (1) People who had not been driven out of Canaan, as ordered by God when Israel had settled there originally, and who had remained even through the period of Israel's exile — Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Amorites, Josh. 9:1)

   (2) Neighboring nations — Moabites, Egyptians, and Ammonites.
(3) These had introduced abominations into Israel's culture.

(4) These foreign people worshiped other gods in ways that were incompatible with Israel's worship

(a) Sacred prostitution
(b) Child/human sacrifice

(5) Israel's participation in these practices were the reason they were exiled in the first place!

(6) There was a way to marry a person of another ethnic background, as the stories of Ruth, Rahab, and Bathsheba indicate.

d. Some of these people of the land may have been outside wealthy landowners

e. The temptation would since intermarriage would offer the people of Israel a chance to move up economically

f. It would offer the foreign peoples a way to enter the approved social structure of the country and solidify their holdings.

g. In the process, spiritual and human values would be crushed, It was all the more disgrace that the nation's leaders, religious as well as civil, were the leaders in this evil.

2. Verses 3-5 portray Ezra's reaction

a. Verse 2: Alone, but in public view in the Temple compound, expressing his dismay.

(1) The tearing of garments pulling out the hair used Bible (Num 14:6; Acts 14:14) as marks of profound humility

(2) Particularly, the beard was a symbol of one's age and therefore wisdom and honor (Isa. 15:2).

(3) His sitting down allowed him to continue this display of grief.
b. **Verse 4** shows those who feared God were similarly influenced

c. **Verse 5** Ezra prays

E. **Ezra's Prayer, 9:6-15**

1. **Verses 6-9** rehearse the story of the Captivity
   a. **Verse 6** records his embarrassment over the people's sins.
      (1) Ezra had committed none of these
      (2) But he identifies with the people who had — **our iniquities**
      (3) This marks Ezra as a mediator and great leader

2. **Verse 7** is particularly a confession of the sin of the people throughout their history
   a. This public prayer, was used to shape the thoughts of all who heard.
   b. He acknowledges their sins recorded by history

3. **Verse 8**, mentions God's grace
   a. Which left a **remnant** to return from exile.
   b. He had made them like a **stake in his holy place** — a firm hold, or abiding place, like a peg or nail driven in securely, on which other things could depend

4. **Verse 9**: Their bondage was not completely over
   a. They were still under Persian rule
   b. **Give us a wall** is not the physical wall of stone which surrounded the city
5. **Verses 10-15** deal with the situation which was before Ezra at that very moment.

   a. **Verse 10** acknowledges that what the people had done was a violation of the commandments which God had made known previously to them — *we have forsaken your commandments*

   b. **Verses 11-12** are a composite, made up of quotations from many Scriptures.

      (1) **The land that you are entering to possess** — Deut 4:5ff.

      (2) **Unclean with the pollutions of the peoples of the lands**
          — Lev 18:25ff.; 20:22ff.; Lam 1:17

      (3) **Their abominations** — Deut 18:9; 2 Kgs 16:3; 19:2; 2
          Chron 28:3; 33:2

      (4) **Have filled it from end to end** — 2 Kgs 21:16

      (5) **Do not give your daughters** — Deut 7:3

      (6) **Never seek their peace or prosperity** — Deut 23:6

      (7) **That you may be strong** — Deut 11:8

      (8) **Eat the good of the land** — Isa 1:19; Gen. 45:18

      (9) **Leave it for an inheritance to your children forever** —
          Ezek. 37:25b

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(10) This says something of Ezra's knowledge of the Scriptures, and of his expectation that they would be available or familiar to his hearers.

c. Verse 13 calls to mind two gracious acts of God

(1) Punished us less than our iniquities deserved — God could have punished more severely

(2) Have given us such a remnant as this — History does not record the names of many nations as completely vanquished as Israel was, who have been spared and given another opportunity to rise to worldwide significance.

d. Verse 14 shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations? — draws the conclusion to repeat the same error would destroy even the remnant

e. Verse 15 repeats the conviction that God is righteous in the things — Israel stands in court before God having been taken in the very act of sin and known to be guilty.

F. Word Studies

1. Stake, Nail, Tentpeg, vs. 8, נָתַת, something which is driven in firmly, or fixed fast, to render something stable; cf. Zech 10:4 for metaphorical use

2. Bondage, vss. 8-9, עֵבֶד, condition of laboring, working or serving. A servant or a slave would be described by this term.

3. Wall, vs. 9, חַּסָּב, that which surrounds or encloses, renders inaccessible.27

4. Offering, vss. 4-5, נְדָבָה, Cf. Exod 29:38-46. The word emphasizes its nature as a gift or present.

G. Summary

27Bailey, Images, ch. 2
1. Ezra was informed by the rulers that citizens, rulers and religious leaders had violated God's law and married foreigners.

2. This would involved the introduction of pagan religion into their culture, and would endanger their social structure.

3. Ezra reacted by tearing his clothes, pulling his hair, sitting in silence, and finally praying.

4. People gathered about him as he confessed his countrymen's sins, as he recalled how God had dealt with similar infractions in the past, and as he acknowledged that they had no excuse for their action and no reason for believing they could escape punishment.

H. Review Questions

1. What was the particular sin the people were committing, and who were involved?

2. How did Ezra react to news of their sin?

3. What can we learn from Ezra's prayer to make our own prayers more meaningful?

X. THE COMMUNITY IS CLEANSED AND A LIST OF OFFENDERS IS GIVEN, 10:1-44

A. Preliminary Questions:

1. What particular idea do you think brought the people to team?

2. Do you think Ezra was justified in advocating divorce?

3. Why do you suppose the priests are mentioned first among those who had committed this sin, and again of those who corrected their conduct?

4. Do you think the list of names is placed here as a means of punishing those who had sinned, or of honoring those who had repented?

B. Outline:
1. The community is cleansed, and a list of offenders is given, 10:1-44
   a. A decision is reached by those who heard Ezra pray, 10:1-4
   b. The decision is shared by the leaders, and an assembly is ordered, 10:5-8
   c. The decision is accepted by all, in the assembly, 10:9-15
   d. The decision is carried out, 10:16-19
   e. A list is made of those who complied, 10:20-44).

C. A Decision is Reached by Those Who Heard Ezra Pray, 10:1-4

1. Verse 1 switches from the 1st to the 3rd person
   a. Ezra's weeping drew a crowd.
   b. Some of them also wept bitterly as they recognized the consequences such actions produced.

2. Verse 2 Shecaniah took the lead in acknowledging their sin
   a. He was not named among the offenders, nor was he a priest
   b. He was of the descendants of Elam

3. Verse 3 suggests the making of a covenant, indicating the seriousness of the situation
   a. The covenant requiring divorce was seen as a solution to the problem.
   b. There was no easy solution, as the proliferation of divorce today indicates.
   c. Those who tremble at the commandment of our God — There is still a place for fear as a part of reverence toward God as we think of the consequences of violating His word.
4. **Verse 4** states that Shecaniah, and those for which he speaks, will support Ezra.

D. **The Decision is Shared by the Leaders and an Assembly is Ordered, 10:5-8**

1. **Verse 6** he spent the night fasting

2. **Verse 7** plans begin to unfold

3. **Verse 8** anyone who did not come to the meeting, all their property should be forfeited, and they themselves banned from the congregation of the exiles.

E. **The Decision is Accepted by all in the Assembly, 10:9-15**

1. **Verse 9** indicates full compliance with this order
   
a. December was the rainy season

b. No building would be large enough for the entire male population

c. They met in the Temple yard, shivering because of the seriousness of the occasion and the discomfort of the rain.

2. **Verse 10** Ezra charged them with their sin.

3. **Verse 11** orders separation from the peoples of the land (foreign men Israelite women had married?) and foreign wives

4. **Verse 12** acknowledgment — It is so; we must do as you have said

5. **Verse 13** points out the logistical issues encountered in carrying this out
   
a. A time of heavy rain; we cannot stand in the open.

b. Nor is this task for one day or for two, for many of us have transgressed in this matter

6. **Verse 14** they request enough time be given so that orderly procedures may be followed:
a. **Appointments** were to be made for all offending couples to come before the elders and judges of their cities

b. They evidently reasoned that if marriage was a public ceremony, then the separation also was to be made publicly.

7. **Verse 15** publishes the names of 2 who opposed this procedure, though their reason is not stated.

F. **The Decision is Carried Out, 10:16-19**

1. **Verse 16** They examined the matter

2. **Verse 17** relates the completion of the investigation 3 months later, on the 1st day of the year, exactly a year after Ezra had assembled his group of exiles to go up to Jerusalem (7:9).

3. **Verse 18** demonstrates the sin extends to the priesthood

   a. The book begins by recognizing the fine work of the high priest Jeshua, son of Jozadak (2:2; 3:2).

   b. Here it ends with the acknowledgment that some of his descendants and relatives have participated in this sin

4. **Verse 19**, states the offending priests **pledged themselves to send away their wives**

   a. This would save their land from the continued burden of their error

   b. Yet damage had already been done in that the pagan women were themselves victims of an injury that never could be corrected completely

   c. **Their guilt offering was a ram of the flock for their guilt** indicates this may have been unintentional sins (Lev 5:17f)

      (1) There is no sacrifice in the O.T. for deliberate sins (Num 15:30f).
(2) This suggests that those who were involved may not have been aware of the law

(3) Perhaps this particular law had not been sufficiently publicized.

(4) They may not have been impressed with the seriousness of their act.

G. A list is made of those who complied, 10:20-44

1. This is a partial list — the most influential of the people?

2. Verses 20-22 lists those involved from the priesthood

3. Verses 23-24 lists those involved from the Levites and their associates

4. Verses 25-43 lists those from Israel

5. Verse 44 does not mention what was done for the continued support of the women and children

H. Word Studies

1. Covenant, vs. 3, תָּכַבָּר, "to make [cut] a covenant; persons butchered and cut up a domestic vegetarian (peaceful) animal (see Gen. 15) and arrived at their agreements around a table of good fellowship.

   a. Peace treaties, religious obligations, personal contracts were all sealed in this way.

   b. God's covenant with man always had this connotation of fellowship, or sharing, including His obligation to bless if the covenant was kept.

I. Summary

1. As Ezra prayed a crowd gathered and entered into his feelings of guilt and sorrow and reverence.
2. One of them, Shecaniah, spoke for all to encourage Ezra to lead in covenanting with God to correct the sin of marriage to heathen mates, believing that there was still hope.

3. Leaders of the priests, Levites, and citizens took an oath to support Ezra in this reform.

4. An assembly of all the males throughout the area of Judah and Benjamin was called, under penalty of forfeiting all their property.

5. In a matter of days these assembled in spite of a heavy rain, and became convinced of the necessity of confessing their wrong and amending it.

6. Ezra appointed leaders for each community to investigate each offending household.

7. On the first day of the new year, about three and a half months after Ezra had prayed, the investigations were completed and the community of Israel had separated itself from entanglements with foreign spouses.

8. The decision was completed with pledges and offerings to God.

9. The list of those whose names were affixed to the agreement began with priests, contained Levites, and concluded with many of the prominent people throughout Israel.

XI. REFLECTIONS ON EZRA

A. The book of Ezra began with captives returning to Israel especially to rebuild their Altar and Temple.

B. A second band returned and were especially involved in the purification of the religious life.

C. The book has presented us with a contrast between

1. Growing awareness of and concern for the Gentiles
2. Exclusiveness, forbidding marriages to Gentiles.
3. On the one hand, help was obtained from a foreign king, his cabinet, and taxes on neighboring lands to help Israel build the Temple; even some of the labor came from other lands.

4. Some foreigners may even have been included in the migration from Babylonia to Judah.

5. Their continuation as a people depended on the day-to-day favor of foreigners.

6. On the other hand, help of the Samaritans had been flatly rejected, and marriages with foreigners had been annulled and forbidden for the future.

7. Israel had to live between these two tensions.

8. But so must the church today. It must live in the world

XII. EZRA CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER

A. 1 — Cyrus' proclamation permitting the return from captivity
B. 2 — List of returnees
C. 3 — Altar set up
D. 4 — Rebuilding of the Temple ceases
E. 5 — Rebuilding resumed
F. 6 — Darius' decree
G. 7 — Rebuilding of the Temple ceases
H. 8 — Names of returnees and description of the trip
I. 9 — Ezra hears of mixed marriages
J. 10 — Mixed marriages

XIII. DATES TO REMEMBER

A. 538 Cyrus conquered Babylon
B. 536 Cyrus freed captive Israelites to return home and rebuild
C. 536 Work on the Temple stopped
D. 520 Temple work resumed
E. 516 Temple work completed
F. 475 Events of the Book of Esther
G. 458 Ezra brought another band of returnees
H. 457 Ezra's reforms were completed
I. 445 Nehemiah's first mission to Jerusalem
J. 433 Nehemiah's second mission to Jerusalem Temple