

3 – THE SECOND RETURN & THE PEOPLE’S SIN (EZRA 7:1-10:44)

I. The Second Return (Ezra 7:1-8:36)

A. Ezra (Ezra 7:1-10)

- “Now after these things” refers to the Ezra 6 that took place 57 years before Ezra 7.
- Ezra 7 takes place during the reign of Artaxerxes I.

Historical Note: Artaxerxes I

Artaxerxes was called Artaxerxes I Longimanus. Longimanus means long-handed because of a deformity of his right hand. He assumed the throne when his father Xerxes I, son of Darius the Great, was murdered by the commander of the Royal Bodyguard. He ruled Persia between 465 to 424 BC. he granted the requests of Ezra in 457 BC and the requests of Nehemiah in 444 BC to go to Jerusalem. He gave them power, supplies and authority.

See: Ezra 7:1,7,11,12,21; 8:1; Nehemiah 2:1; 5:14; 13:6.

- Ezra’s lineage is traced back to Aaron the High Priest, brother of Moses.

Historical Note: Ezra

Ezra was a scribe and a priest who lived from 480 to 440 BC. He is called “Ezra the Scribe” as well as “Ezra the Priest.” He was a descendant of the last High Priest to serve in the First Temple and he was a close relative of Joshua the first High Priest of the Second Temple. He returned from exile in Babylon during the reign of Artaxerxes I in 458 BC. He reintroduced the Mosaic Law in Jerusalem.

See: Ezra 7:1,6,8,10,11,12,21,25; 10:1,2,5,6,10,16; Nehemiah 8:1,2,4,5,6,9,13; 12:1,13,26,33,36.

- Ezra came up from Babylon and he was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses.
- Ezra was granted all that he requested by Artaxerxes according to the hand of the Lord.
- Ezra, with other Jews, Levites, priests and singers, came to Jerusalem in 7th year of Artaxerxes.
- The journey, from Babylon to Jerusalem, took Ezra four months to complete with God’s favor.
- Ezra prepared his heart to seek the Law, do it and teach the Law in Israel.

B. The Letter from Artaxerxes (7:11-28)

- The writer records the personal letter that Artaxerxes I gave Ezra the Priest.
- The king decreed that the people of Israel, priests and Levites could volunteer to go back.
- He gave instructions about the moneys given by the king and his officials were to be used.

The Return To The Land: A Survey of Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther

- Guidance was given to area treasurers concerning providing funds to Ezra.
- The king also gave Ezra authority to set up judges and to execute people who disobey the Law.
- The writer blesses the Lord for moving the heart of the king to support the Temple and Ezra.

C. The First Group of Returnees (Ezra 8:1-14)

- Ezra lists the heads of the families that accompanied him back to Jerusalem.

D. The Journey to Jerusalem and Judah (Ezra 8:15-36)

- As Ezra was ready to make the journey, he discovered that there were no Levites with them.
- Messengers went to recruit Levites to go with them and 38 Levites from 2 families responded.
- Once the Levites joined, the moneys were divided among the heads of households.
- They were to carry their portion to Jerusalem and give it to the leaders at the Temple.
- Once the group arrived safely with God's protection, they delivered the moneys to the Temple.

II. The People's Sin & Reform (Ezra 9:1-10:44)

A. The Sin of Intermarriage (Ezra 9:1-15)

- The leaders reported to Ezra that the people and the priests had intermarried with the nations.
- They also reported that some of them had engaged in the detestable practices of the Canaanites.
- It was also reported that some of the leaders were the foremost in intermarriage and idolatry.
- Ezra responded by tearing his clothes and pulling his hair out in grief.
- Ezra prayed and confessed with embarrassment the continuing problem of sin with the people.
- Ezra acknowledged the grace of God in letting them return to the Land.
- Ezra confessed the sin of intermarriage and that they have directly disobey the Law.
- Ezra states that the Lord would be justified in destroying the remnant for their sin.
- Ezra did not make a request of God, but simply placed them into the Lord's hands.

B. The People's Confession (Ezra 10:1-44)

- The people gathered to Ezra and were weeping openly about their sin before the Lord.

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- One man suggested that they make an oath before God and put away the foreign wives.
- Ezra made the priests and Levites swear an oath to do as the man suggested.
- Ezra called all of the people to gather in Jerusalem and those who did not would be cast out.
- The people agreed to examine these marriages and pronounce judgment.
- The guilty would divorce their wives and send them and their children away.
- The book closes with a listing of those who were found guilty of intermarriage.