

Ezra 7-10 | 4/22/18

- The letter from Artaxerxes | Ezra 7:11-26
 - **Read Ezra 7:11-26**
 - Artaxerxes issued a royal letter (decree) like the ones given by his predecessors.
 - This letter gave authority from the king to Ezra that he could travel to Jerusalem and take with him everything that he needed to restore the proper worship and sacrificing that would take place in the temple.
 - God guided the actions of the king.
 - Ezra 7:27
 - “Praise Yahweh the God of our fathers, who has put it into the king’s mind to glorify the house of the LORD in Jerusalem,”
 - It is clear that God had his hand involved and was working in the mind of the king.
 - Important statements in the decree
 - Ezra was sent to evaluate Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of God.
 - **Ezra’s God ordained purpose was to look into the spiritual condition of the people.**
 - He was there to evaluate their hearts and minds based on the laws of God.
 - Although the Israelites had turned back to God when they first offered the sacrifices and rebuilt the temple.
 - However, God knew that they still needed help and guidance especially when it came to His Scripture.
 - The silver and gold offerings provided by the king and the people.
 - The king wanted to be sure that Ezra had plenty of money to purchase all of the animals that they might need to make sacrifices to God.
 - He also issued a decree to the treasures that resided throughout the kingdom so that Ezra would have access to those storehouses for anything he might need for the temple.
 - Artaxerxes feared God. – Ezra 7:23
 - Now likely Artaxerxes like his predecessor believed in multiple gods, it was clear that he truly feared the one true God Yahweh.
 - He feared for his kingdom if he didn’t comply and help Ezra with this process.
 - The appointment of magistrates and judges to teach the law to those who did not know them – Ezra 7:25-26
 - This allowed the Israelites to essentially self-govern themselves.
 - God desired that there would be godly people who knew the laws of God. So, Ezra was able to appoint people in these positions.
 - He also desired that for any of those who did not know the laws of God that they would be taught.
- Ezra and company return to Jerusalem | Ezra 8
 - In chapter 8 we have the return of Ezra and his company to Jerusalem.
 - The bible text lists just less than 1500 but there were also women and children so the total number who returned was likely much greater.
 - The fast for God’s protection
 - **Read Ezra 8:21-23**
 - They were now ready to make the long journey to Jerusalem and Ezra contemplated asking for a guard for protection but chose not to do so.

- Ezra didn't feel it proper to request an armed guard from the king since God had made it clear that God would protect them.
 - This could have shown doubt in God so Ezra doing the wise thing did not ask and leaned fully on God for His protection.
 - Protection was certainly needed because of all of the gold and silver that they were taking with them.
 - **Instead of asking for an armed guard, they humbled themselves before God and asked Him for His protection.**
 - They did this with a fast.
 - This is common throughout the Bible in times where people needed to make a big decision and needed to rely on God.
 - We can think of the fasting that took place in Esther before she went before the king.
 - **What do you think of Ezra's decision to not ask for a guard that the king would have freely given? What was he showing?**
 - **If you were in a parallel circumstance today, what would you do?**
 - **Why did they stop to fast and pray? Why was this important?**
 - **Even though we "know" that God will watch over and protect us, why then should we still humbly present ourselves before God?**
- God answered their prayers and delivered them safely | Ezra 8:31
 - **Read Ezra 8:31**
 - God answered the prayers of Ezra and the Israelites. He delivered them safely to Jerusalem.
- Offerings were made, and the king's decree was given throughout the region. | Ezra 8:35-36
 - **Read Ezra 8:35-36**
 - After they had returned they used the resources that they had been provided and made the proper burnt offerings to God.
 - Then they delivered the king's decrees throughout the region, which gave strength to the Israelites and gave them a great status throughout the land.
 - With the decree of the king they would likely face little opposition at this point.
- The confession of the Israelites | Ezra 9-10
 - Ezra is devastated when he hears that the Israelites have disobeyed God by intermarriage with Pagans.
 - **Read Ezra 9:1-3**
 - Ezra now after being back in Jerusalem receives a report from the various leaders and they told him of how the Israelites have not been obedient to God. They have married into the people surrounding them.
 - These people were pagans who practice everything that is detestable to God.
 - **God did not want His people to marry into them, they were supposed to be separated but instead they disobeyed God and did it anyways.**
 - God wanted His people to stay pure because in past time when they have done something similar they ended up worshiping other idols.
 - Deuteronomy 7:1-4
 - **And this disobedience wasn't limited to just the general crowd, but it was present amongst even the priests and the Levites. Those who certainly should know better.**
 - Even though they had recently celebrated how good God had been to them, they still turned to sin and disobedience.

- **Ezra is deeply disappointed with the Israelites and goes into a state of mourning because of what they have done.**
- Ezra's confession to God for the Israelites. | Read Ezra 9:4-15
 - Ezra was deeply sorry for what they had done. He enters into a deep confessional prayer to God asking for forgiveness for what they have done.
 - **Read Ezra 9:4-15**
 - Ezra realized their sins and made a confession for the people.
 - He knew the guilt and sin that have been heaped upon the people of Israel because of their sins against God.
 - He understood their exile as discipline from God for all that they had done.
 - Then Ezra acknowledges God's grace, that He has shown them mercy in allowing them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.
 - Ezra knew that their punishment should have been worse, but God showed them mercy.
 - This was a very true repentance that came from the heart.
 - This repentance from Ezra for the people of Israel was deep and true.
 - He understood that they were not worthy to stand before a perfect God, that their sins were significant.
 - He humbled himself before God knowing that He was just.
 - Unfortunately, we repeat these same mistakes in our own lives.
 - **The actions of the Israelites easily parallel what happens in the lives of Christians today.**
 - **God shows us His love and grace by answering our prayers. Then we turn around and sin against Him.**
 - **We are so thankful that God is good to us, then we repay Him with disobedience.**
 - **Why do we do this? Why is it sometimes after God has been good to us that we then choose to sin against Him?**
- The Israelites realized their disobedience and make things right before God. | Ezra 10:1-4
 - Read Ezra 10:1-4
 - The people of Israel realize their sins against God for marrying foreign women and they made a covenant with Him to put away the wives and children and obey God.