



Book
— **By** —
Book
—



WELCOME

OUR GOAL

To encourage you to read at least one book of the Bible each month, so that you may better understand who God is and where you fit into His story.

BIBLE STUDY METHOD

- **OBSERVATION:**
What does the text say?
- **INTERPRETATION:**
What does it mean?
- **APPLICATION:**
What did I learn that should affect my life?

YOU ARE HERE – OLD TESTAMENT

Five major sections:

- Law (Genesis – Deuteronomy)
- ▶ History (Joshua – Esther)
- Poetry (Job – Song of Solomon)
- Major Prophets (Isaiah – Daniel)
- Minor Prophets (Hosea – Malachi)

ZOOMING OUT

Pentateuch	From Adam to arrival at Canaan	2,600 years
Joshua-Ruth	Conquest of Canaan/Judges	350 years
1&2 Samuel	[United Kingdom Divided Kingdom Captivity	120 years
1&2 Kings		350 years
1&2 Chronicles		70 years
Ezra-Esther	Return to Land of Israel	100 years



REVIEW



EZRA

GOING BACK HOME

THE TIMELINE

Judah went into captivity in Babylon in three phases:

605 B.C. - Among those taken were Daniel and friends

597 B.C. - Including Ezekiel and 10,000 captives

586 B.C. - All remaining and the temple was destroyed

The return can also be divided into three phases:

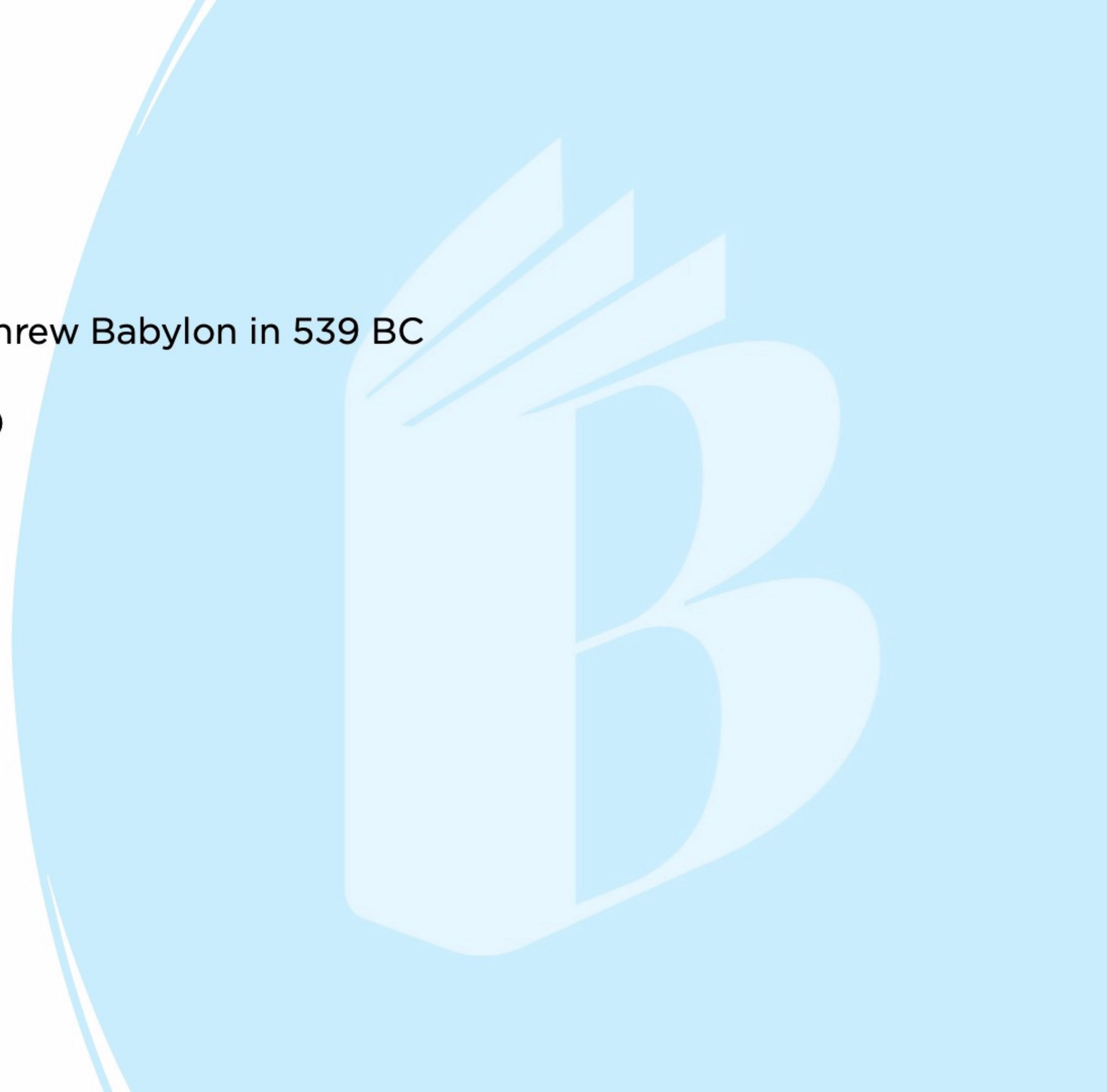
536 B.C. - Zerubbabel returned and began rebuilding the temple

458 B.C. - Ezra returned with offerings and a decree from the king

445 B.C. - Nehemiah returned and rebuilt the wall

KING CYRUS

Cyrus was a king of Persia who overthrew Babylon in 539 BC
(while the Jews were still in captivity)



The Greatest King of Persia | Cyrus the Great | Achaemenid Empire Docum...

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Info



**"WHENEVER YOU CAN, ACT AS A
LIBERATOR. FREEDOM, DIGNITY, WEALTH -
THESE THREE TOGETHER CONSTITUTE THE
GREATEST HAPPINESS OF HUMANITY. IF YOU
BEQUEATH ALL THREE TO YOUR PEOPLE,
THEIR LOVE FOR YOU WILL NEVER DIE."**



The Cyrus Cylinder

KING CYRUS (559-530)

Isaiah had prophesied of Cyrus by name hundreds of years before his time.

This is what the LORD says to Cyrus, his anointed one, whose right hand he will empower. Before him, mighty kings will be paralyzed with fear. Their fortress gates will be opened, never to shut again.

² This is what the LORD says: “I will go before you, Cyrus, and level the mountains. I will smash down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron.

³ And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness— secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name.

KING CYRUS

⁴ “And why have I called you for this work? Why did I call you by name when you did not know me? It is for the sake of Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one.

⁵ I am the LORD; there is no other God. I have equipped you for battle, though you don't even know me,

⁶ so all the world from east to west will know there is no other God.

Isaiah 45:1-6

KING CYRUS

¹³ I will raise up Cyrus to fulfill my righteous purpose, and I will guide his actions. He will restore my city and free my captive people— without seeking a reward!

I, the LORD of Heaven's Armies, have spoken!"

Isaiah 45:13

DECREE – CYRUS

² “This is what King Cyrus of Persia says:

“The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build him a Temple at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³ Any of you who are his people may go to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this Temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, who lives in Jerusalem. And may your God be with you! ⁴ Wherever this Jewish remnant is found, let their neighbors contribute toward their expenses by giving them silver and gold, supplies for the journey, and livestock, as well as a voluntary offering for the Temple of God in Jerusalem.”

Ezra 1:2-4

Why did so many of the Jews choose not to return?

- There were about 1 million Jews in exile, but less than 50,000 chose to return.
- Let's review Jeremiah's instructions when they were first taken to Babylon.

Jeremiah's Letter to the Jews in Exile

⁴ This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem: ⁵ "Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. ⁶ Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! ⁷ And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare."

Jeremiah 29:4-7

GROUP TALK

How might we have something in common with the Jews in Babylon as we live in today's world?

What scripture comes to mind when we think about being too comfortable in a culture that rejects God?

ZERUBBABEL

- Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoichin of Judah and thus a descendant of David (1 Chronicles 3:17).
- Zerubbabel is listed in the Bible as an ancestor of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:12-13; Luke 3:27).
- Born in Babylon during the exile, Zerubbabel traveled to Judah after King Cyrus II allowed the Judean captives to return to their homeland to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5; 8-10).
- The prophet Haggai identifies Zerubbabel as the governor of Judah after the exile (Haggai 1:1; 2:2,21).

JESHUA (AKA JOSHUA)

- The son of Jehozadak, the high priest” (Haggai 1:1).
- Joshua helped rebuild the temple (Ezra 5:1-2).
- The first high priest in the rebuilt Jerusalem

First Things First

In early autumn, when the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled in Jerusalem with a unified purpose. ² Then Jeshua son of Jehozadak joined his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his family in rebuilding the altar of the God of Israel. They wanted to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, as instructed in the Law of Moses, the man of God.

Ezra 3:1-2

Also...

- They celebrated the Feast of Booths (3:4-5)
- They set up masons and carpenters in preparation for construction. (3:7)



ABOUT 2 YEARS LATER...

Then...

- In the second month of the second year, they began the work. (3:8)
- And the foundation was laid, which caused a lot of noise (3:10-13)
 - ³ ‘Does anyone remember this house—this Temple—in its former splendor? How, in comparison, does it look to you now? It must seem like nothing at all! Haggai 2:3
- This stirred up the enemy.

We're Here to Help!

The enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were rebuilding a Temple to the LORD, the God of Israel. ² So they approached Zerubbabel and the other leaders and said, “Let us build with you, for we worship your God just as you do. We have sacrificed to him ever since King Esarhaddon of Assyria brought us here.”

Ezra 4:1-2

Sending Counselors to You

⁴ Then the local residents tried to discourage and frighten the people of Judah to keep them from their work. ⁵ They bribed agents to work against them and to frustrate their plans. This went on during the entire reign of King Cyrus of Persia and lasted until King Darius of Persia took the throne.

Ezra 4:4-5

KING ARTAXERXES

- The enemies (Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest) wrote to Artaxerxes, accusing the Jews of being a rebellious people, and posing a threat to the king if they are allowed to rebuild. (Ezra 4:7-16)

DECREE - ARTAXERXES

¹⁷ Then King Artaxerxes sent this reply: To Rehum the governor, Shimshai the court secretary, and their colleagues living in Samaria and throughout the province west of the Euphrates River. Greetings. ¹⁸ “The letter you sent has been translated and read to me. ¹⁹ I ordered a search of the records and have found that Jerusalem has indeed been a hotbed of insurrection against many kings. In fact, rebellion and revolt are normal there! ²⁰ Powerful kings have ruled over Jerusalem and the entire province west of the Euphrates River, receiving tribute, customs, and tolls.

²¹ Therefore, issue orders to have these men stop their work. That city must not be rebuilt except at my express command. ²² Be diligent, and don’t neglect this matter, for we must not permit the situation to harm the king’s interests.”

Ezra 4:17-22

It Worked --

²⁴ So the work on the Temple of God in Jerusalem had stopped, and it remained at a standstill until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia.

Ezra 4:24



ABOUT 14 YEARS LATER...

God Sends His Prophets

At that time the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem. They prophesied in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. ² Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jehozadak responded by starting again to rebuild the Temple of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them and helped them.

Ezra 5:1-2

HAGGAI

- A prophet sent by God to Zerubbabel and Joshua to admonish and encourage them in rebuilding the temple (Ezra 5:1; 6:14, Haggai 1-2).

ZECHARIAH

- A prophet sent by God (along with Haggai) to Zerubbabel and Joshua to admonish and encourage them in rebuilding the temple.
- Zechariah predicted more about the Messiah than any other prophet except Isaiah.

GOVERNOR TATTENAI, THE TATTLE-TALE

“To King Darius. Greetings.

⁸ “The king should know that we went to the construction site of the Temple of the great God in the province of Judah. It is being rebuilt with specially prepared stones, and timber is being laid in its walls. The work is going forward with great energy and success.

⁹ “We asked the leaders, ‘Who gave you permission to rebuild this Temple and restore this structure?’ ¹⁰ And we demanded their names so that we could tell you who the leaders were.

Ezra 5:7-9

THEY DID NOT STOP

⁵ But because their God was watching over them, the leaders of the Jews were not prevented from building until a report was sent to Darius and he returned his decision.

Ezra 5:5

KING DARIUS

- Darius I ruled Persia from about 521 to 486 BC.
- Darius is mentioned in Haggai 1:1 and Zechariah 1:1.
- When Darius became king, construction of the temple resumed in the second year of his reign.

DECREE - DARIUS

So King Darius sent this message:

“Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar-bozenai, and your colleagues and other officials west of the Euphrates River—stay away from there! ⁷ Do not disturb the construction of the Temple of God. Let it be rebuilt on its original site, and do not hinder the governor of Judah and the elders of the Jews in their work.

⁸ “Moreover, I hereby decree that you are to help these elders of the Jews as they rebuild this Temple of God. You must pay the full construction costs, without delay, from my taxes collected in the province west of the Euphrates River so that the work will not be interrupted.

⁹ “Give the priests in Jerusalem whatever is needed in the way of young bulls, rams, and male lambs for the burnt offerings presented to the God of heaven. And without fail, provide them with as much wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil as they need each day. ¹⁰ Then they will be able to offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the welfare of the king and his sons. ¹¹ “Those who violate this decree in any way will have a beam pulled from their house. Then they will be lifted up and impaled on it, and their house will be reduced to a pile of rubble.^[c] ¹² May the God who has chosen the city of Jerusalem as the place to honor his name destroy any king or nation that violates this command and destroys this Temple. “I, Darius, have issued this decree. Let it be obeyed with all diligence.”

Ezra 6:6-12

THE TEMPLE IS COMPLETED – 516BC

¹⁴ So the Jewish elders continued their work, and they were greatly encouraged by the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo. The Temple was finally finished, as had been commanded by the God of Israel and decreed by Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, the kings of Persia. ¹⁵ The Temple was completed on March 12, during the sixth year of King Darius's reign.

¹⁶ The Temple of God was then dedicated with great joy by the people of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the people who had returned from exile.

Ezra 6:14-16

A large, light blue, stylized number '6' is positioned in the background, centered vertically and horizontally. It has a modern, rounded design with a thick stroke.

ABOUT 58 YEARS LATER...

EZRA

- Ezra was a scribe and priest sent with religious and political powers by the Persian King Artaxerxes to lead a group of Jewish exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem.

EZRA

⁶ This Ezra was a scribe who was well versed in the Law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given to the people of Israel. He came up to Jerusalem from Babylon, and the king gave him everything he asked for, because the gracious hand of the LORD his God was on him. ⁷ Some of the people of Israel, as well as some of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and Temple servants, traveled up to Jerusalem with him in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes' reign.

Ezra 7:6-7

EZRA

- Ezra's effective ministry included teaching the Word of God, initiating reforms, restoring worship, and leading spiritual revival in Jerusalem.

DECREE - ARTAXERXES

¹² “From Artaxerxes, the king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the teacher of the law of the God of heaven. Greetings.

¹³ “I decree that any of the people of Israel in my kingdom, including the priests and Levites, may volunteer to return to Jerusalem with you. ¹⁴ I and my council of seven hereby instruct you to conduct an inquiry into the situation in Judah and Jerusalem, based on your God’s law, which is in your hand. ¹⁵ We also commission you to take with you silver and gold, which we are freely presenting as an offering to the God of Israel who lives in Jerusalem.

DECREE - ARTAXERXES

¹⁶ “Furthermore, you are to take any silver and gold that you may obtain from the province of Babylon, as well as the voluntary offerings of the people and the priests that are presented for the Temple of their God in Jerusalem. ¹⁷ These donations are to be used specifically for the purchase of bulls, rams, male lambs, and the appropriate grain offerings and liquid offerings, all of which will be offered on the altar of the Temple of your God in Jerusalem. ¹⁸ Any silver and gold that is left over may be used in whatever way you and your colleagues feel is the will of your God. ¹⁹ “But as for the cups we are entrusting to you for the service of the Temple of your God, deliver them all to the God of Jerusalem.

DECREE - ARTAXERXES

²⁰ If you need anything else for your God's Temple or for any similar needs, you may take it from the royal treasury.

²¹ "I, Artaxerxes the king, hereby send this decree to all the treasurers in the province west of the Euphrates River: 'You are to give Ezra, the priest and teacher of the law of the God of heaven, whatever he requests of you. ²² You are to give him up to 7,500 pounds of silver, 500 bushels^[k] of wheat, 550 gallons of wine, 550 gallons of olive oil, and an unlimited supply of salt. ²³ Be careful to provide whatever the God of heaven demands for his Temple, for why should we risk bringing God's anger against the realm of the king and his sons?

DECREE - ARTAXERXES

²⁴ I also decree that no priest, Levite, singer, gatekeeper, Temple servant, or other worker in this Temple of God will be required to pay tribute, customs, or tolls of any kind.'

²⁵ "And you, Ezra, are to use the wisdom your God has given you to appoint magistrates and judges who know your God's laws to govern all the people in the province west of the Euphrates River. Teach the law to anyone who does not know it. ²⁶ Anyone who refuses to obey the law of your God and the law of the king will be punished immediately, either by death, banishment, confiscation of goods, or imprisonment."

Ezra 7:12-26

THOSE WHO WENT WITH EZRA

- Ezra lists the heads of families in Chapter 8:

1,496 males

- Then, he notices there are no Levites!

258 Levites

Approximately 1,754 families

BEFORE WE GO...

²¹ And there by the Ahava Canal, I gave orders for all of us to fast and humble ourselves before our God. We prayed that he would give us a safe journey and protect us, our children, and our goods as we traveled. ²² For I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen^[f] to accompany us and protect us from enemies along the way. After all, we had told the king, “Our God’s hand of protection is on all who worship him, but his fierce anger rages against those who abandon him.” ²³ So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and he heard our prayer. Ezra 8:21-23

IT WAS SHOCKING!

When these things had been done, the Jewish leaders came to me and said, “Many of the people of Israel, and even some of the priests and Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the other peoples living in the land. They have taken up the detestable practices of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites. ² For the men of Israel have married women from these people and have taken them as wives for their sons. So the holy race has become polluted by these mixed marriages. Worse yet, the leaders and officials have led the way in this outrage.”

Ezra 9:1-2

EZRA'S PRAYER

⁵ At the time of the sacrifice, I stood up from where I had sat in mourning with my clothes torn. I fell to my knees and lifted my hands to the LORD my God. ⁶ I prayed, “O my God, I am utterly ashamed; I blush to lift up my face to you. For our sins are piled higher than our heads, and our guilt has reached to the heavens. ⁷ From the days of our ancestors until now, we have been steeped in sin. That is why we and our kings and our priests have been at the mercy of the pagan kings of the land. We have been killed, captured, robbed, and disgraced, just as we are today.

EZRA'S PRAYER

⁸ “But now we have been given a brief moment of grace, for the LORD our God has allowed a few of us to survive as a remnant. He has given us security in this holy place. Our God has brightened our eyes and granted us some relief from our slavery. ⁹ For we were slaves, but in his unfailing love our God did not abandon us in our slavery. Instead, he caused the kings of Persia to treat us favorably. He revived us so we could rebuild the Temple of our God and repair its ruins. He has given us a protective wall in Judah and Jerusalem.

EZRA'S PRAYER

¹⁰ “And now, O our God, what can we say after all of this? For once again we have abandoned your commands! ¹¹ Your servants the prophets warned us when they said, ‘The land you are entering to possess is totally defiled by the detestable practices of the people living there. From one end to the other, the land is filled with corruption. ¹² Don’t let your daughters marry their sons! Don’t take their daughters as wives for your sons. Don’t ever promote the peace and prosperity of those nations. If you follow these instructions, you will be strong and will enjoy the good things the land produces, and you will leave this prosperity to your children forever.’

EZRA'S PRAYER

¹³ “Now we are being punished because of our wickedness and our great guilt. But we have actually been punished far less than we deserve, for you, our God, have allowed some of us to survive as a remnant. ¹⁴ But even so, we are again breaking your commands and intermarrying with people who do these detestable things. Won’t your anger be enough to destroy us, so that even this little remnant no longer survives? ¹⁵ O LORD, God of Israel, you are just. We come before you in our guilt as nothing but an escaped remnant, though in such a condition none of us can stand in your presence.”

Ezra 9:5-15

THE PEOPLE RESPOND

While Ezra prayed and made this confession, weeping and lying face down on the ground in front of the Temple of God, a very large crowd of people from Israel—men, women, and children—gathered and wept bitterly with him. ² Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, a descendant of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God, for we have married these pagan women of the land. But in spite of this there is hope for Israel. ³ Let us now make a covenant with our God to divorce our pagan wives and to send them away with their children. We will follow the advice given by you and by the others who respect the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law of God. ⁴ Get up, for it is your duty to tell us how to proceed in setting things straight. We are behind you, so be strong and take action.”

Ezra 10:1-4

The background is a light blue gradient. On the right side, there is a large, stylized, light blue letter 'B'. Overlaid on the upper part of the 'B' is a white icon of an open book with several pages fanning out. The text 'NEXT BOOK' is centered horizontally across the middle of the image.

NEXT BOOK



NEHEMIAH

BUILDERS & OCCUPIERS



LEAVING THE KING'S COURT
THE CONSTRUCTION PLAN
FAMILY PARTICIPATION
ORGANIZED OPPOSITION
ASTONISHING ACCOMPLISHMENT
DISAPPOINTMENT -- AGAIN

GOAL FOR THIS MONTH

Read Nehemiah at least once.
(There are only 13 chapters.)

Be sure to make notes of any insights you gain
as you read and study along with
any questions you encounter.

WANT MORE NOTES?

newspring.org/bbb



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