

# Ezra 7-8 –19 January 2023

## “Instigating Institutional Growth”

### Introduction

\*In the Kings/Chronicles, Israel went into Babylonian Captivity in 3 waves, now they return the same way

1. 1<sup>st</sup> Wave - Ezra 1-6 (536-516 BC) - Gov Z & J.P.
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Wave - Ezra 7-10 (457-432 BC) - Ezra
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Wave - Nehemiah (445-425 BC) - Nehemiah
4. Book of Esther happens between 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> waves

\*Chap 1-2 we saw *God always initiates a work & the faithful are called to join* Him in the work

\*God stirred their return to their land & faithful go

\*Chap 3-4 we saw the faithful *building the core of their spiritual life* back starting w/ the altar

\*Chap 5-6 we saw them *move beyond stagnation by asking God for motivation & power* to fulfill His plan

\*They've built the “engine” of their spiritual life & now they need the “fuel” of God's Word to keep it running

**\*Today let's look at 5 steps for instigating institutional growth within the Church**

## **1<sup>st</sup> step is to prepare yourself spiritually (Chap 7:1-10)**

Read Chap 7:1-5

1. The reign of Artaxerxes is after Cyrus, Darius and Ahasuerus (Xerxes)
2. This is 458 BC, 57 years after chapter 6
3. Ezra was in lineage of the High Priests of Israel

Read Vs 6

1. Ezra has been a dedicated scribe, studying the Law – ‘ready scribe’ is quick-witted or skilled
2. Now his heart is motivated by God to go to home

Read Vs 7-9

1. There were many Jews Ezra stirred up to come home with him on this 4-month journey
2. You’re not a leader unless people are following you, you won’t have people follow you unless you’re a person of great character

## Read Vs 10

1. Ezra understood ‘Master, mission, mates’, in that order
  - a. Master: Sought w/ his heart the Law of God
  - b. Mission: To do it
  - c. Mates: To teach it
2. “*Prepare*” – to become established or fixed
  - a. Rehoboam did evil b/c he didn’t prepare his heart (II Chr 12:14)
  - b. Jehoshaphat prepared his heart but still trying helping evil king Ahab (II Chr 19:3)
  - c. Ezra has prepared himself for many years & now it’s his turn to launch out in a bigger way
3. Ezra has been preparing himself as a scribe in God’s Word and now God will use all that’s in him to teach others His Word
  - a. Israel’s former idolatry wasn’t cured by the punishment of the Babylonian Captivity
  - b. It was cured by Ezra’s passion to teach the Word of God & establishing synagogue system

## **2<sup>nd</sup> step is to pray God to move authorities (Chap 7:11-28)**

Read Chap 7:11-14

1. Ezra's job is to build up the people in the Law of God! Sent from the king by the hand of God!
2. Read Prov 21:1

Read Vs 15-17

1. The king is glad to allow Ezra and all Jews to go home and serve their God...that's peace
2. Notice the whole time the king is calling the Lord 'your God'
  - a. This money is buying a stable land & peace
  - b. Like bribing your little kids to get them in bed
  - c. You're really doing it for your peace!

Read Vs 18-23

1. As if there are lots of little gods out there that we just better appease
  - a. Isa 43:10-11 – No god before or after Me
2. All this endows Ezra w/ power to be governor

Read Vs 24

1. They just became a 501(c)3 tax exempt org!!

Read Vs 25-26

1. So political power is given to educate & govern with godly spiritual principles!

Read Vs 27-28

1. Praising God for moving the heart of the king
  - a. Pray our President's heart is moved of God
2. So teaching & governing by godly principles is seen as *beautifying the house of the Lord*
  - a. Beautify – to glorify, boast, vaunt or embellish
  - b. Root meaning: A plant that has grown over

**3<sup>rd</sup> step is to procure all the pieces & parts needed (Chap 8:1-20)**

Read Chap 8:1-14 (Only read vs 1-2)

1. Here are the family names that went with Ezra back to Jerusalem totaling 1,496 males of age

## Read Vs 15

1. As they assembled Ezra saw that although some Priests showed up for the trip there were no Levities which are those that serve at the temple
2. How would it have gone for Noah had he not gathered the gopher wood?

## Read Vs 16-17

1. Ezra sends chief men of understand from the river to a Babylonian city that has Levites to ask them to join God's mission

## Read Vs 18-20

1. 38 Levites & 220 Temple servants respond to the call – this is great faith, little planning & went
2. Where God guides, God provides

## **4<sup>th</sup> step is to perfect your walk of faith (Chap 8:21-23)**

Read Chap 8:21-23

1. Ezra had no choice but to seek God's help b/c he spoke words of faith - 'our God will protect us'
2. Wouldn't have been wrong to have asked for escort but give you the chance to impact others

## **5<sup>th</sup> step is to partner with the body of Christ (Chap 8:24-36)**

Read Chap 8:24-30

1. Ezra entrusts these faithful men
  - a. The Lord's work is corporate work
  - b. There's a trust and a fellowship here
2. When we're doing the Lord's work, we're holy
  - a. Set apart to live right & bring Him honor

Read Vs 31-32

1. Ezra 7:9 says they left Babylon 12 days before departing the river

- a. This time was adding Levites to their ranks and dividing the money for the work to come
- b. Take time to ensure all know their role
2. So God was faithful to protect this journey
  - a. This was God's will for them to go, of course he would protect them
  - b. There's confidence when we're in His will

Read Vs 33-34

1. Money is given to the servants at the Temple

Read Vs 35

1. Sin Offering acknowledges that they have unintentional sin...even Original Sin
2. Burnt Offering is whole dedication to God
  - a. 12: 1 for each tribe & 96: a multiple of 12s
  - b. 77: less apparent in meaning, no other usage

Read Vs 36

1. Report in with the local authorities and we're ready to serve the Lord
2. Partnering w/ those serving Christ in sincerity



## Conclusion

So, we may have the foundation of our Christian lives in place, but how do we solidify its fabric to insure growth down thru the years?

**1. Prepare ourselves spiritually**

- a. Spring up will be ineffective unless we 1<sup>st</sup> root ourselves deep in God's Word

**2. Pray God moves authorities around us**

- a. We need God's favor to affect what we can't affect

**3. Procure all the pieces & parts needed**

- a. Tangible work needs done – plan for it

**4. Perfect our walk of faith**

- a. W/o faith it's impossible to please God  
b. Trust the direction He's leading

**5. Partner with the body of Christ**

- a. Recognize we don't have all the tools to perform God's will – but the whole body of Christ does!