

## Read Ezra 7:11-28

### Introduction

Artaxerxes, was the fifth king of Achaemenid Dynasty; a succession of Persian kings who followed Cyrus the Great and the initial phase of the Jews' return from Babylon. With instability in the Egyptian delta, Artaxerxes desired a policy of stability and respect for law to be encouraged in Jerusalem.

Ezra was the king's emissary and ambassador (**Ezra 7:11–28**). He would restore a knowledge and respect for 'Torah' in the post-exilic community that had probably not been understood for several centuries.

### Summary

**Ezra 7:11-28 contains a copy of a letter from Artaxerxes that not only granted Ezra permission to engage in the work of reform in Jerusalem, but also revealed the king's own desire for the Jews, together with Ezra's thankfulness for the favor he and the Jews had received from their Persian masters.**

#### 1. Royal Permission vv. 11-13

Artaxerxes' letter provided Ezra with official authority, as well as explaining why others had accompanied him on the journey home.

Seemingly, copies of the Scriptures were kept intact during the exile, but there is little evidence that these were brought back to Jerusalem during the initial phase of the rebuilding of the temple. Given the moral state of things in the city, little or no teaching of the Torah was taking place. In Babylon, however, Ezra, and other priests were engaged in both studying and teaching the law of Moses.

The law seems to have been somewhat familiar to the king, since Ezra was both known to him and sent by him as an official ambassador to Jerusalem.

In the overruling providence of God, the Scriptures were preserved (**2 LBC 1.8**).

The providence of God employed a Persian king to enforce the law of God in Jerusalem and guarantee the continuity of a godly line that eventually ensured that the Savior is born in Bethlehem. We ought to pray that all rulers may so rule as to ensure the promotion of godliness in the church (**1 Tim. 2:1–2**) and when that occurs, it is a matter of thanksgiving to the Lord that we enjoy such favorable providences.

## 2. Investigative Powers vs. 14

Persian kings relied on a privy council of seven men (**Ezra 7:14**).

Given Ezra was officially sent by the king and his seven counselors “to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God”, it may not have been immediately obvious to the Jews in Jerusalem what the precise nature of Ezra’s coming involved.

Somehow, it became obvious to Artaxerxes that compliance in Jerusalem was lacking. Complaints must have reached some kind of climax for this delegation to be sent.

With a costly rebellion in Egypt on his hands, the last thing Artaxerxes needed was the wrath of the God of Israel, too.

## 3. Fiscal Matters vv. 15-23

The bulk of the Artaxerxes’ letter deals with matters of worship in the temple.

First, funds were taken to Jerusalem from the Persian empire itself, in the form of silver and gold (**Ezra 7:15-20**).

Secondly, we note that silver and gold were also taken to Jerusalem from exiled Jews in Babylon (**Ezra 7:16**).

Thirdly, Artaxerxes instructed the Persian treasurers in the Judean province to provide Ezra with a large quantity of silver, wheat, wine, oil, and salt (**Ezra 7:21-22**).

He evidently feared that the Lord’s “wrath [would] be against the realm of the king and his sons” (**Ezra 7:23**).

Does accepting such civil funds would result in lessening the responsibility for self-sacrifice on the part of God’s people.

It is interesting that earlier Samaritan help was flatly refused because it came with religious implications), but that Persian money was not (presumably because it involved no violation of conscience on the part of the Jews (**cf. 1 Cor. 10:25**).

“Where is Christ in this passage?” Christ, too, is a letter-writing King.

The Bible is his letter to believers including this letter from a Persian monarch.

He is telling us that He is in complete control?

He is ensuring the end from the beginning.

He is determining the future of His people.

He is aligning the events of history to ensure that His purpose for the redemption of His people will be accomplished according to His plan.