

Ezra 6:13-22 and Ezra 7:1-28

Ezra 6:13-18 – Completion and Dedication of the Temple in 516 BC

6:13 – **“Then, according to the word sent by Darius the king, Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates did with all diligence what Darius the king had ordered.**

6:14 – **“And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia;**

1. “The elders of the Jews” are mentioned, but no mention of Zerubbabel is made.
2. Credit was given to:
 - a. The Decree of the God of Israel
 - b. The Decree of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes (all three contributed support politically and financially)
 - i. Cyrus sent the Jews back in 539 BC
 - ii. Darius confirmed the reconstruction in 520 BC
 - iii. Interestingly, Artaxerxes does not get involved until 458 BC, but the writer/editor anticipates his contribution which will begin being detailed in the next chapter.
3. It is typical Jewish theology that the Lord controls history with the king or the kings of the nations.
 - a. Sargon and Nebuchadnezzar brought the Lord’s destruction
 - b. Cyrus and Darius brought the Lord’s restoration

6:15 – **“and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.**

1. Finished on March 12, 515 BC. That date was a sabbath that year.
 - a. It was finished 21 years after the foundations had been laid in 536.
2. This temple would stand for 585 years until the Romans destroyed it in 70 AD. Solomon’s temple stood 400 years.

6:16 – **“And the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.**

1. The participants in the celebration were not Samaritans or those who had remained in the land. The participants are clearly listed as:
 - a. People of Israel,, of “sons of Israel” a term for the covenant people. This means it was more than the two tribes of Judah (Benjamin and Judah), but members of all the tribes.
 - b. Priests
 - c. Levites
 - d. Rest of the returned exiles, this would be another way of referring to the non-Levitical Jews who had returned from Babylon

6:17 – **“They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.**

1. The number of animals sacrificed was impressive, but not near the number used by:
 - a. Solomon –
 - b. Hezekiah –
 - c. Josiah –

2. Male goats seem to be used at the dedication of things made by man when they are dedicated for service to God.
 - a. The profane, secular becomes the holy, divine
 - b. The fact that 12 goats were offered may indicate one for each of the 12 tribes.

6:18 – **“And they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.**

1. In 515 before the return of Ezra and the scribal reform the Book of Moses is referred to as an existing fact. This would indicate that the Book of Moses went with the exiles into Babylon and was not a product of the exile as some would want to teach.

Ezra 6:19-22 – Celebration of the Passover in the Restored and Rebuilt Temple

6:19 – **“On the fourteenth day of the first month, the returned exiles kept the Passover.**

1. This is the first Passover celebrated since the days of Solomon’s temple and the first celebrated in the new temple.

6:20 – **“For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were clean. So they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves.**

1. Priests and Levites purified themselves in order to serve
2. They sacrificed for the returned exiles

6:21 – **“It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by every one who had joined them and separated himself from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel.**

1. The meal was eaten by:
 - a. The people of Israel who had returned
 - b. By every one who had joined them and separated himself from...the peoples of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel.
 - i. Who were these people?
 1. Samaritans? Definitely not. They would have been unclean because they were not pure Jews and they had corrupt worship and false religion.
 2. Jews not taken into captivity? Already rejected. They had joined with the imported pagans and their false religions and gods.
 3. Proselytes? This is the most likely answer. These are they who converted to Judaism

6:22 – **“And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the Lord had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.**

1. The reference to the “king of Assyria” seems strange. It would be best to be “king of Persia” or, at least, king of Babylon.
 - a. It was common that the king who overthrew the Assyrians would then also be called the new “king of Assyria” even if they are the Babylonian king.
 - b. Likewise, when Cyrus, King of the Persians, overthrew the Babylonians he became the King of Babylon and inherited the title “King of Assyria”
2. There is a list the people who were Kings of Babylon from the ancient world. It begins with Assyrian Kings, moves through Chaldeans such as Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, continues through the Persian kings and goes all the way up to the Seleucid kings for the Greeks.

3. God had caused Israel and Judah to fear the Assyrian kings (Sargon, Sennecherib), but now this same position had kings who favored the Jews and helped restore and support their way of life.

Ezra; Ezra's Return; Ezra's Commission and Letter from Artaxerxes 458 BC

Ezra 7:1-28

1. This is the year 458 BC
2. There have been 57 years between the end of chapter 6 and this chapter 7
3. These 57 years would include:
 - a. Samaritan hostilities mentioned in Ezra 4:6-23
 - b. General hostility in trade, travel, farming, community establishment. These returning exiles were seen as foreigners to the people of the land.
 - c. Immoral interaction with the people of the land polluted by the Samaritans, remains of false worship of Northern Israel, and the influx of the many pagan gods brought in from exiled peoples from other lands
 - d. Common sense compromise by the returning exiles to live at peace with the peoples, cultures, traditions, religions of the area for peace, safety, trade, intermarriage, and other issues in daily life.
4. Most likely things had declined morally and spiritually during the 60 years from the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah (520-518 BC) and the glorious completion of the temple and Passover of 515 BC)

Ezra 7:1-5 -Ezra's Linage and Occupation Return to Jerusalem

7:1-5 – “**Now after this, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia,**

Ezra the son of Seraiah,

son of Azariah,

son of Hilkiyah,

son of Shallum,

son of Zadok,

son of Ahitub,

son of Amariah,

son of Azariah,

son of Meraioth,

son of Zerariah,

son of Uzzi,

son of Bukki,

son of Abishua,

son of Phinehas,

son of Eleazar,

son of Aaron the chief priest—

7:6 – “**this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him.**

1. This is awkward language because the subject of the sentence is Ezra in verse 7:1, but the predicate (verb “came” or “went up”) does not occur until 7:6. In between the subject and the verb is a rough genealogy of Ezra. Six verses separate the subject and the verb.
 - a. The author did this intentionally and skillfully
 - b. The subject “Ezra” is repeated at the beginning of 7:6 – “this Ezra”. So, this was not a mistake.
2. The author is trying to make a point that Ezra, besides being appointed by the Persians establish and enforce law and order, was also in the line of the High Priests going all the way back to the beginning.
3. Not every generation is mentioned, but only some highlighted names to give Ezra some credentials.
4. The phrase “son of” does not necessarily have to mean a father and son relationship.
 - a. This is used often of a man’s grandfather
 - b. It is used in a general genealogical connection.
 - c. It is used, for example, of the Messiah being the son of David. But, of course, David will not be the actual father of the Messiah, but the Messiah will be in the human lineage of the man David.
5. Ezra comes from Babylon. Nehemiah comes from Susa.
 - a. Ezra would have lived in Babylon and taught the Jews there in Babylon
 - i. The Jews in Babylon were educated
 - ii. The Jews in Babylon were prosperous in business
 - iii. The Jews in Babylon had successfully become part of the Babylonian culture
6. Ezra is a shortened name for Azariah which means “the Lord has helped.
7. Ezra was a “secretary” or a “scribe” from *spr’*
 - a. *Spr’* is a “scribe”, “secretary”, “clerk”
 - i. Here it is a Persian office appointed by Artaxerxes with a specific task in Judah.
 - ii. Ezra has an official task in Judah to accomplish for Artaxerxes (and, the Lord.)
 - b. Likely a double role or a double meaning
 - c. First, he would be a Persian office holder under Artaxerxes. Ezra was appointed to act as the secretary of Judah on behalf of Artaxerxes.
 - d. Second, he was a priest who had specialize in the study of the Law of Moses.
 - e. Ezra was the scribe who established Jewish exegesis. He was the greatest interpreter and taught others to do likewise.
 - f. Ezra will be serving to teach, oversee and enforce
 - i. The Law of Artaxerxes
 - ii. The Law of Moses (or, The Law of the Lord)
8. “Skilled” or “well versed” is from *mahir*
 - a. *Mahir* is a combination of wise and skilled



- b. Refers to a scribe of the highest efficiency
- c. A professional of the highest order
- d. Ezra is particularly skilled in the Law of Moses

Ezra 7:7-10 – Ezra’s Return to Jerusalem, the returning exiles and Ezra’s Purpose

7:7 - **“And there went up also to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king, some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants.**

7:8 – **“And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.**

7:9 – **“For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him.**

7:10 – **“For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.**

1. 500 mile journey in a straight line, but they did not go through the desert but in to northern Syria and down the coast
2. It was a dangerous journey and during a time that an Egyptian rebellion had broken out.
3. The seventh year of Artaxerxes was 458 BC
4. They arrived the same year they left
5. April 8 until August 4.
 - a. They traveled from the first of the first month, Nisan (April 8) until the first of the fifth month, Ab (August 4)
 - b. They began in the spring and arrived in midsummer.
6. Ezra had taught the Jews in Babylon (some of them were likely traveling with him back to Jerusalem. Ezra came to Jerusalem to teach the Jews who had already returned.
7. All of the rest of the book should be read with the understanding that Ezra came to teach, enforce and live the Law of Moses with the Jews in Judah.
 - a. He was sent by Artaxerxes to do this.
 - b. God’s hand was on him to accomplish this.

Ezra 7:11-26 – Artaxerxes’ Letter and Ezra Commission and Documents of Provision

7:11 – **“This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel:**

THE LETTER FROM ARTAXERXES:

7:12 – **“ ‘Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven. Peace. And now**

7:13 – **I make a decree that anyone of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom, who freely offers to go to Jerusalem, may go with you.**

7:14 – **For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God, which is in your hand,**

7:15 – **and also to carry the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,**

7:16 – **with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, vowed willingly for the house of their God that is in Jerusalem.**

7:17 – With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and you shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God that is in Jerusalem.

7:18 – Whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do, according to the will of your God.

7:19 - The vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God, you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem.

7:20 - And whatever else is required for the house of your God, which it falls to you to provide, you may provide it out of the king's treasury.



7:21 - And I, Artaxerxes the king, make a decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence, 7:22 - up to 100 talents of silver, 100 cors of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much.

7:23 - Whatever is decreed by the God of heaven, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons.

7:24 - We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on anyone of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.

7:25 - And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God. And those who do not know them, you shall teach.

7:26 - Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment.’ ”

Ezra 7:27-28 - Ezra Writing in First Person includes His Own Words likely from his Personal Memoirs

7:27 – “Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem,

7:28 – “and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers. I took courage, for the hand of the Lord my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.”