



CHAPTER 8

When

- 536 BC - Rebuilding of the foundation of the Temple.
- 536-530 BC - The adversaries of the Jews oppose the Temple rebuilding.
- 530-520 BC - Work on the Temple stops by decree of King Artaxerxes.
- 520 BC - Work on the Temple resumes.
- 516 BC - Work on the Temple completed.
- 457 BC - Ezra arrives in Jerusalem.

Key Characters

- **Captives of Judah** - The descendants of Israel who returned to Jerusalem and Judah following 70 years of exile in Babylon. The returning exiles became known as the Jews (4:12).
- **Artaxerxes Longimanus** - King of Persia from 464-424 BC.
- **Ezra** - A priest and scribe who was skilled in the Law of God.

Where

- **Jerusalem** - The capital of the Kingdom of Judah and the location of God's Temple. The city was under reconstruction after being destroyed by the Babylonians 50 years earlier.
- **Babylonia** - Ezra left Babylonia and travelled to Jerusalem.
- **River Ahava** - Ezra gathered a group of returning exiles at the River Ahava before setting off for Judah. The exact location of the river is debated.



Outline

- GENEALOGY OF THE EXILES WHO RETURNED WITH EZRA (8:1-14):

- + This portion of Ezra's writing is devoted to documenting the number of men who travelled with him from Babylonia to Jerusalem.
- + According to the list, there were around 1,500 men who made the trip.

- EZRA RECRUITS LEVITES TO RETURN TO JUDAH (8:15-20):

- + When all the people were gathered at the River Ahava, Ezra noticed that there were no men from the Tribe of Levi amongst them.
- + Ezra wanted Levites to accompany them so they could serve as ministers in the Temple (8:17).
- + Ezra sent a group of men to recruit some Levites, and they were successful at finding close to 40 Levites and 220 Temple servants.

- A FAST FOR A SAFE JOURNEY (8:21-23):

- + Ezra didn't want to ask Artaxerxes for an armed guard to escort them to Judah, even though they would be carrying a lot of money, because he had already bragged about God, telling the king God's power would keep them safe.
- + Instead, Ezra declared a fast, and him and his company fasted and prayed for God to watch over them.

- DISTRIBUTION OF THE MONEY FOR TRANSPORT (8:24-36):

- + Ezra was charged with carrying a sizable and valuable gift from Babylonia to the Temple in Jerusalem: 650 talents of silver, silver vessels of 200 talents, 100 talents of gold, 20 bowls of gold, and two vessels of fine bronze.
- + *A talent weighed anywhere between 55-75lbs (25-34kg).
- + He distributed the precious things between 12 of the leading priests and entrusted them to keep it safe.
- + Ezra's 5-month journey is summarized with great brevity in verses 31 and 32.
- + A few days after their arrival in Jerusalem, the precious gifts were brought to the priests at the Temple, they were counted, weighted, and recorded.
- + The newly returned exiles worshiped the Lord with offerings: 12 bulls, 96 rams, 77 lambs, and 12 male goats as a sin offering.

Application

- Ezra didn't want to return to Jerusalem without some men from the Tribe of Levi to help at the Temple. He had a need, and he recruited men to fill that need.
- His actions remind me of Barnabas travelling up to Tarsus to recruit Paul as a coworker (Acts 11:25-26).
- These examples stand in contrast to the common practice of praying for help and then expecting God to drop it in our laps.
- Sometimes we need to pray and then be proactive in working towards a positive answer.
- We all want our prayers answered like Abraham's servant when he went to find a wife for Isaac (Gen 24).
- But sometimes we need to follow Jesus' example with His Apostles. He prayed and then went out and recruited the men He wanted (Luke 6:12-16).

