

Return and Rebuilding

Ezra Goes Home

Foundation

Bible passage : Ezra 7-10

When: In previous units we have seen how the Temple had finally been rebuilt in Jerusalem and also about how Esther became Queen and rescuer in Susa. Those events took place about the same time. The “after this” of Ezra 7.1 is about 40 years after the completion of the Temple.

Background: The King of the empire was now Artaxerxes. Ezra was a Hebrew scribe who knew the Law (the early books of the Bible) well and was able to teach it to others. The King allowed Ezra to visit Jerusalem to see what was going on and sent instructions regarding the authority given to Ezra. Many others went with the scribe.

“Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king”

Powerpoint: ExileAndReturn-12. There are animations showing a further group going from Babylonia (rather than just Babylon) and arriving at Jerusalem where there are people, houses and the Temple already.

Trouble: The people of Israel had been defeated, their city and Temple destroyed because they had rebelled against God again and again. When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem he saw signs that the people were falling back into their old ways, in which case everything that had been achieved since they went back would come to nothing.

The particular issue Ezra focused on was that the people of Israel had married people from

Artaxerxes I appears to be the king mentioned in Ezra. He is shown in a relief at Naqsh-e Rostam, in Iran.



other nations. We might wonder why this was such a big problem. But their

history showed how so often in the past this had led people to turn away from the Lord and worship other gods and to forget and ignore both the promises God had given his people and His commands to them. That had been part of the reason for all the calamity that had come on them.

When Ezra learned how bad things were he tore his robes in repentance and then prayed for God’s forgiveness and help.

Teaching: Ezra used the Bible to teach people and to show that what they were doing was wrong. Not everyone liked what he was saying but most of them saw that he was right and so they changed their ways.

Our Bible has grown since Ezra’s day and in particular includes all the New Testament. But Christians believe that it has been given to us by God and so we read it and seek to learn from it and be guided by it. In the New Testament we are taught that the main role of ministers in churches (called presbyters/overseers) is to preach and teach the Bible.



Ezra taught God’s word but was fearful that despite God’s blessings the people were going to fall into the old errors.