

Ezra 8:21-23 – Ezra Fasts and Prays for Protection – God is Faithful!

3/9/19 Sat Morn Prayer – P. Twente, 714 425-9221; ptwente@gmail.com

ALL THE WAY MY SAVIOR LEADS ME – F. Crosby/Joslin

1 All the way my Savior leads me, what have I to ask beside? Can I doubt His tender mercy, Who through life has been my Guide? Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort, Here by faith in Him to dwell! For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well; For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.

2 All the way my Savior leads me, Cheers each winding path I tread, Gives me grace for every trial, Feeds me with the living Bread. Though my weary steps may falter and my soul athirst may be, Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! A spring of joy I see; Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! A spring of joy I see.

3 All the way my Savior leads me, Oh, the fullness of His love! Perfect rest to me is promised in my Father's house above. When my spirit, clothed immortal, wings its flight to realms of day This my song through endless ages: Jesus led me all the way; This my song through endless ages: Jesus led me all the way.

Ezra Leads Second Return to Israel from Babylonian Captivity (Chapters 7-8)

The Artaxerxes of Ezr 7:1 is "Artaxerxes Longimanus," who ruled Persia from 465 to 425. In his seventh year, he permitted Ezra the priest-scribe to return to Jerusalem to assist the people in their spiritual needs. In Ezr 7:1-5 we have Ezra's genealogy, the proof that he was a priest from the family of Aaron. He was also a ready student of the Law, a scribe; see Jer 8:8. Apparently Ezra had requested permission from the king, realizing that the remnant in the restored nation desperately needed spiritual guidance. It took Ezra almost four months to make the journey of about 900 miles from Babylon to Jerusalem. The **good hand of God was upon him and he prospered!** The king decreed that any Jew could go up with Ezra and return to the land. These Jews would take with them a large freewill offering from Babylon to assist in the work of the Lord. Darius also gave Ezra an "expense account" up to about \$100,000, to be taken from the king's treasury. Ezra's task was to establish order and religious worship in the land. Ezra's doxology in Ezr 7:27-28 shows how grateful he was to the Lord for answering prayer. Ezr 8:1-36 lists the names of the families and the men who accompanied Ezra on his hazardous trip to Jerusalem. It was important that the Levites go along because it was their duty to study the Word and teach it to the people. Unfortunately, Ezra had to "draft" some of the Levites, because they did not volunteer to go. **Ezra proclaimed a fast, because he knew that God alone could prosper their journey. The very testimony of the nation was at stake — for Ezra had told the king that they would not require a military escort, for the Lord would take care of them. Their fasting and prayer and the Lord's response should encourage similar behavior in us today.** Ezra chose twenty-two godly men to be responsible (*watch and keep*) for the carrying of the treasures. Ezra warned them that God would require an accounting when they reached Jerusalem. **What a beautiful picture of Christian stewardship today. God has entrusted us with spiritual treasures, and at the Judgment Seat of Christ we will give an account of our stewardship.** The group departed in April 458 BC and arrived at Jerusalem in July, traveling at an average of seven miles a day. The people deposited their treasures, and it was found that each man had been faithful. They had heeded Ezra's warning, "*Watch and keep!*"

Ezra's Fasting and Prayer for Protection -- Ezra 8:21-23

Ezr 8:21 **Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.**

Ezr 8:22 **For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him."**

Ezr 8:23 **So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.**

Priests to Guard Offerings

Ezr 8:24 **And I separated twelve of the leaders of the priests—Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them—**

Ezr 8:25 **and weighed out to them the silver, the gold, and the articles, the offering for the house of our God which the king and his counselors and his princes, and all Israel who were present, had offered.**

Ezr 8:26 **I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver(about 25 tons), silver articles weighing one hundred talents, one hundred talents of gold (about 3.5 tons),**

Ezr 8:27 **twenty gold basins worth a thousand drachmas, and two vessels of fine polished bronze, precious as gold.**

Ezr 8:28 **And I said to them, "You are holy to the LORD; the articles are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to the LORD God of your fathers.**

Ezr 8:29 **Watch and keep them until you weigh them before the leaders of the priests and the Levites and heads of the fathers' houses of Israel in Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD."**

Ezr 8:30 **So the priests and the Levites received the silver and the gold and the articles by weight, to bring them to Jerusalem to the house of our God.**

Ezr 8:31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. And the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road.

Ezr 8:32 So we came to Jerusalem, and stayed there three days.

Ezr 8:33 Now on the fourth day the silver and the gold and the articles were weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; with them were the Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui,

Ezr 8:34 with the number and weight of everything. All the weight was written down at that time.

Ezr 8:35 The children of those who had been carried away captive, who had come from the captivity, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and twelve male goats as a sin offering. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD.

Ezr 8:36 And they delivered the king's orders to the king's satraps and the governors in the region beyond the River. So they gave support to the people and the house of God.

SUMMARY:

- In the preceding chapter, King Artaxerxes had given written authorization for Ezra to lead Jews that wanted to go, to go back to Jerusalem. The King had given much gold, silver, and supplies for the trip!
- Ezra gathers the people who volunteered to go back to gather at the river that flows to Ahava. As Ezra looked for the priest and Levites in the group, he found none!
- We now have an excellent record of what a leader needs to do in accomplishing God's work under most difficult circumstances.
- First, Ezra went into action by putting out a call to eleven Levites and two men of understanding to raise up priests, Levites and Nethinim to join the trip back to Jerusalem. More than 250 joined the group.
- Next Ezra proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. *Ezr 8:22 For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him."*
- Then Ezra led the group in fasting and prayer: *Ezr 8:23 So we fasted and entreated our God for this,*
- God answered their prayer! and He answered our prayer. How faithful our God is!
- The good hand of the God was upon them: *Ezr 8:31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. And the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road.*
- The long, 900-mile trip to Jerusalem was completed in about three- and one-half months!
- On the fourth day after their arrival in Jerusalem, all of the valuables were weighed in the house of our God under the auspices of the priests and Levites. Total accountability! The LORD protected all of the gold, silver and valuables! Not one item was lost! Those who had returned to Jerusalem offered burnt offering to the LORD; delivered the king's orders as instructed and gave support to the people and the house of God.
- How faithful our God is! - past, present and future! How thankful are we?

TO GOD BE THE GLORY – F. Crosby – Joslin Grove Choral

1 To God be the glory, great things He has done; So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, Who yielded His life an atonement for sin, And opened the life gate that all may go in.

Refrain: Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice! O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son, And give Him the glory, great things He has done.

2 O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood, To every believer the promise of God; The vilest offender who truly believes, That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.(Refrain)

3 Great things He has taught us, great things He has done, And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son; But purer, and higher, and greater will be Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. (Refrain)

Pray for World Leaders, including: Xi Jinping – China; Narendra Modi- India; Donald Trump – USA; Joko Widodo - Indonesia; Jair Bolsonaro - Brazil; Arif Alvi - Pakistan; Muhammadu Buhari - Nigeria; Hasina Wazed - Bangladesh; Vladimir Putin- Russia; Lopez Obrador – Mexico; Benjamin Netanyahu – Israel; Angela Merkel – Germany; Theresa May – U.K.; Kim Jong-un – North Korea; Moon Jae-in – South Korea.

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