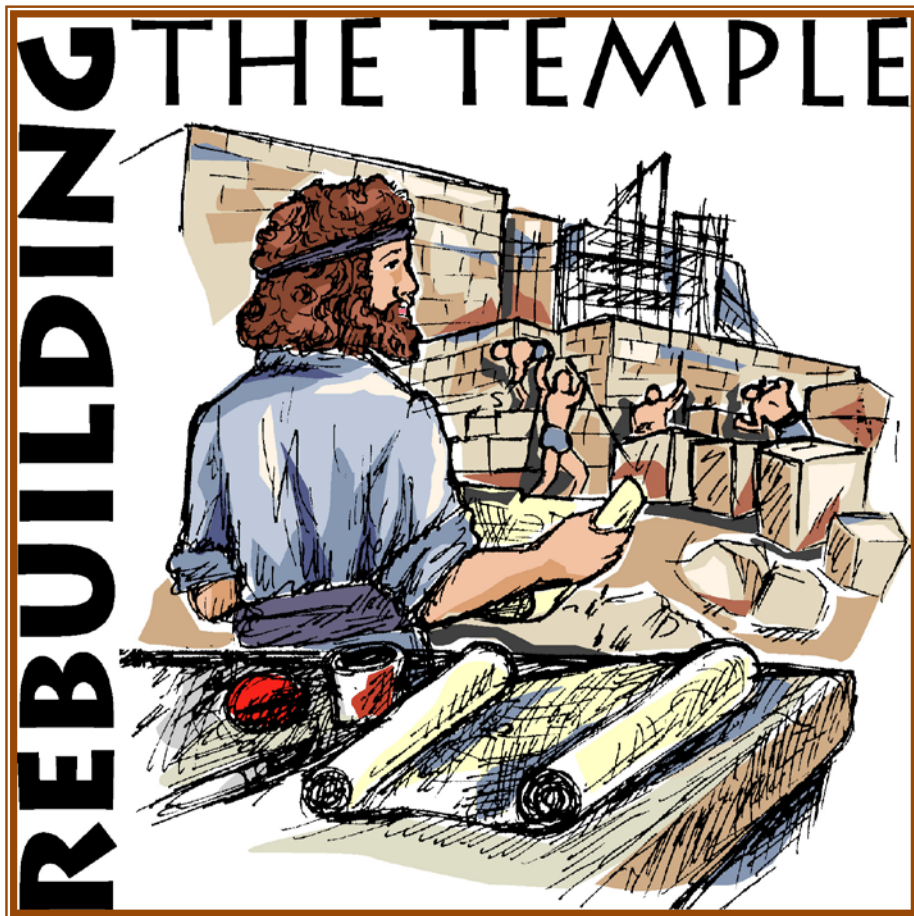


# EZRA

PREPARATION,  
RESTORATION & REFORMATION



**"For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD,  
and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel," Ezra 7:10.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction:**

Background history..... 3

Decree of Cyrus the Great..... 3

First return of the exiles..... 3

Details of Ezra’s life..... 4

Favor of King Artaxerxes of Persia..... 4

Discovery of marriages to pagan women..... 5

Positive response of the people..... 5

**Outline of Ezra:**

**The First Return of Exiles: Led by Zerubbabel..... 6**

It is time to restore the temple.

**The Second Return of Exiles: Led by Ezra..... 8**

It is time to restore the law and the people.

NOTE: **The Third Return of the Exiles is recorded in the book of Nehemiah.**

**SOURCES:..... 10**

**Appendix:**

Ezra: A Man Who Prepared His Heart..... 11

Ezra: Protecting the Treasures..... 15

**Diagram of the Three Returns..... 21**

## Book of Ezra

### Introduction:

1. Many scholars support the tradition that Ezra was the author of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah which originally were one volume.
  - a. Since A.D. 1448, Hebrew Bibles have had the twofold arrangement of Ezra and Nehemiah as in our English renderings.
  - b. Ezra was noted as a religious leader and reformer among the returning exiles.
  - c. He was definitely interested in the project of rebuilding the temple.
  - d. He records the history of the people in their work of rebuilding (chapters 1-6), and lays the foundation information for recording his own activities.
  - e. As was mentioned in the introductory remarks, Ezra also helped in the reforms of Nehemiah.
  - f. His close association with Nehemiah and his ability as a scribe would have certainly qualified him to record the book of Nehemiah.
2. The opening verses record the decree of Cyrus (536 B.C.) that allowed the first group of Jews to return to their homeland. Isaiah had foretold of the rise of Cyrus some 160 years before he was born (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).
  - a. Ezra 1:1-4 and 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 record this decree of Cyrus. This is one of the reasons why some scholars think that Ezra was also the author of the Chronicles.
  - b. Ezra led the second return to Palestine.
  - c. The book of Ezra, however, begins with the first return under Zerubbabel.
3. The first return of the exiles was under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua (Jeshua) who also attempted to rebuild the temple and to restore its worship, but they were hindered for nearly two decades.
  - a. Some scholars believe that in recording the opposition that occurred in this period, the author also includes subsequent enemy interference in the Jerusalem rebuilding project (Ezra 4:6-23).
  - b. This subsequent opposition would have been in the reign of Ahasuerus or Xerxes (485-465 B.C.), and Artaxerxes (464-424 B.C.).

- 1) Others believe that chapter four deals only with the current opposition.
  - 2) Regardless of this disagreement among scholars, the fact remains that the first returnees suffered enough persecution from their enemies that they stopped the work of rebuilding the temple from 535-520 B.C., the second year of Darius king of Persia (Ezra 4:24).
- c. At this time the prophets Haggai and Zechariah began their ministry of encouragement to the discouraged returnees.
  - d. They heeded the preaching of the prophets, continued what they had started fifteen years prior, and finished the temple in the sixth year of Darius (516 B.C.).
  - e. Nothing is recorded about subsequent developments in the Jewish state until the return of Ezra in 457/458 B.C.
  - f. His activities as leader and reformer are recorded in the last four chapters.
  - g. Some eighty-one years had passed from the beginning of Cyrus' reign until Ezra's return in 458 B.C.
4. Details about the author of the book that bears his name begin in **chapter seven**.
    - a. Ezra was a lineal descendant of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron (Ez. 7:1-5), being a son of Seraiah, who was the grandson of Hilkiah, high priest in the reign of Josiah.
    - b. He is described as "a ready scribe in the law of Moses" (7:6); "a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of the statutes of Israel" (v. 11); "Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven" (v. 12).
    - c. Ezra's priestly extraction acted as a powerful lever for directing his vigorous efforts specifically to his people.
    - d. He led the second expedition of Jews back from Babylonian exile into Palestine.
  5. Living in Babylon he gained the favor of King Artaxerxes, and obtained from him a commission to go up to Jerusalem (about 459 B.C.).
    - a. The king's commission invited all the Israelites, priest, and Levites in the whole empire, who so wished, to accompany Ezra.
      - 1) Of these a list amounting to one thousand seven hundred and fifty-four is given (chapter 8); and these doubtless, form part of the full list of the returned captives contained in Nehemiah (chapter 7), and in duplicate (Ezra 2).
      - 2) Ezra was allowed to take with him a large freewill offering of gold and silver vessels.

- 3) He was also empowered to draw upon the king's treasures beyond the river for any further supplies required.
- b. Ezra was granted permission to appoint magistrates and judges with power in Judea.
- c. They reached Jerusalem without incident at the beginning of the fifth month (7:8).
- d. Burnt offerings were made and the king's commission was delivered.
- e. Ezra discovered that many of the Jews had not abided by God's law regarding the marriage of Israelites with heathen.
  - 1) Ezra wept bitterly over this situation.
  - 2) They called for a meeting to see what to do about it.
  - 3) They decided to put away all of the strange wives.
6. No one knows for sure what happened to Ezra after the separation of the heathen from the Jews.
7. It is believe by some that he served as governor until Nehemiah took over later, and afterwards he continued his priestly functions.

NOTE: Some of the above information was taken from *Unger's Bible Dictionary* by Merrill F. Unger, Moody Press: Chicago, pages 338-340.

## OUTLINE OF EZRA

### **The First Return of the Exiles: Led by Zerubbabel; Chapters 1-6**

#### **I. It Is Time for the Restoration of the Temple. (Chapters 1-6)**

- A. The decree is made to rebuild the temple: (Chapter 1)
  - 1. The proclamation was announced. (Ezra 1:1-6)
    - a. The reason is given. (Ezra 1)
    - b. Its contents are revealed. (Ezra 2-4)
    - c. Its fulfillment is described. (Ezra 5-6)
  - 2. The temple articles are listed. (Ezra 1:7-11)
  - 3. There is the deliverance and definition. (Ezra 7-8)
  - 4. There is the description and numbering. (Ezra 9-10)
  - 5. There is the transportation of articles (Ezra 11)
- B. The exiles are returning: (Chapter 2:1-70)
  - 1. These are the men of Israel. (2:1-35)
  - 2. These are priests and their services in the temple (2:36-38)
  - 3. These are men of unconfirmed households. (2:39-63)
    - a. They are excluded from the priesthood and are pronounced unclean.
    - b. They were not to eat of the most holy things, but they were to wait until a priest with Urim and Thummim came (Christ, our High Priest, has come with the answers).
  - 4. A summary and a description are given of the assembly and treasure. (2:64-67)
  - 5. They returned to their cities. (2:68-70)
- C. The restoration of the temple begins: (Chapter 3:1-13)

1. They rebuilt the altar. (3:1-2)
    - a. They built it after the pattern described in the Law of Moses. (3:2)
    - b. Its purpose was to offer burnt offerings. (3:2)
    - c. The time was the 7th month.
  2. They reinstated God's directions for acceptable worship. (3:3-6)
  3. The rebuilding for the temple for the first time is described. (3:7-13)
- D. Adversaries halt the restoration of the temple. (Chapter 4:1-24)
1. Israel and her enemies have a meeting. (4:1-5)
  2. Israel's enemies advance some disdainful plans. (4:6-16)
    - a. They told Artaxerxes that if he continues to let Israel rebuild, he will have trouble on his hands.
    - b. The king researched the history of Israel and found them be a conquering people.
    - c. The King issued a degree to stop the building of the temple. (4:17-22)
  3. Israel is forced to stop building. (4:23-24)
- E. The Restoration of the temple is resumed. (Chapter 5:1-17)
1. They continue rebuilding the temple. (5:1-5)
    - a. The word of God came to the people through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. (5:1-2)
    - b. The governor, Tattenai, questioned their resuming the reconstruction of the temple. (5:3-5)
    - c. The governor sent a letter to King Darius asking him to research the history of Cyrus regarding his decree to allow the Jews to rebuild the temple. (5:6-17)
  2. The record of Cyrus' degree was found and the building of the temple is resumed. (6:1-22)
    - a. Darius decrees to allow the building of the temple resume. (6:1-12)

- b. Tattenai and his men did all that King Darius told them to do in helping to rebuild the temple.
- c. The temple was completed and dedicated.
- d. The people of Israel observed the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.

## **The Second Return of the Exiles: Led by Ezra; Chapters 7-10**

### **II. It is Time for the Restoration of the Law and the People: (Chapter 7:1-22)**

A. Ezra is appointed by King Artaxerxes to restore the Law of the Lord. (Ezra 7:1-28)

B. Ezra Goes to Jerusalem from Babylon. (7:1-10)

1. His heritage is described. (7:1-6)

2. His travels from Babylon are detailed. (7:7-10)

C. Artaxerxes' gives a decree to Ezra. (7:11-26)

1. Ezra is given permission to gather a number of priests and Levites to return to Jerusalem and restore the law of God.

2. "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel," Ezra 7:10.

3. Ezra gives exaltation to God. (7:27-28)

E. Ezra leads the exiles to Jerusalem. (Chapter 8:1-36)

1. A list of returnees is provided. (8:1-14)

2. There is a delay to get priests until they could find men from the tribe of Levi. (8:15-20)

3. They fasted and prayed for protection before the journey. (8:21-23)

4. The priests are charged to guard the valuables. (8:29-30)

5. They journey to Jerusalem without a problem. (8:31-36)

F. Ezra intercedes on behalf of Israel. (Chapter 9:1-15)



1. Ezra hears about Israel's sin of marrying women from other nations. (9:1-4)
2. Ezra was astonished and prays to God (9:5-15)
  - a. He confesses the sins of Israel. (9:5-7)
  - b. He acknowledges God's Love. (9:8-9)
  - c. He confesses they have broken the commandments. (9:10-12)
  - d. He confesses that Israel stands guilty before God. (9:13-14)
  - e. He gives thanks that God has saved a remnant. (9:15)

G. Ezra Purifies the People. (Chapter 10:1-44)

1. A large assembly came to Ezra and confessed that they had done wrong in marrying pagan wives and were willing do God's will even if it meant putting them away. (10:1-4)
2. Shecaniah suggested a plan of action, remove themselves from their pagan wives. (10:1-4)
3. Ezra gives a proclamation and a warning. 10:(5-8)
  - a. He made them swear an oath.
  - b. He fasted.
4. He commanded that all descendants of the captivity gather in Jerusalem. (10:9-15)
  - a. He warned that if they didn't, all of their possessions would be taken away.
  - b. All the people gather and trembled in the heavy rain.
  - c. He reminded them that their taking pagan wives made Israel guiltier.
  - d. He told them that they needed to confess their sins to the LORD God, do His will and separate themselves from the peoples of the lands and their pagan wives.
  - e. With a loud voice they said, "Yes! As you have said, so we must do.
5. The people responded in a positive way. (10:16-44)

- a. The people in general gave a response.
- b. The priests responded.
- c. The Levites responded.
- d. The singers and gatekeepers responded.
- e. The Israelites responded.
- f. Many other sons of their families responded.
- g. Some of them had wives by whom they had children.

**Conclusion:**

“Then all of the assembly answered and said with a loud voice,  
‘Yes! As you have said, so we must do.’” Ezra 10:12

**SOURCES**

*New King James Bible*, Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1985.

Tenney, Merrill; Editor. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2 of 5.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975.

Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1967.

Willmington, Harold L. *The Outline Bible*, Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers,  
1999.

## APPENDIX

### Ezra: A Man Who Prepared His Heart

**TEXT: Ezra 7:10**---“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statute and ordinances in Israel.”

#### Introduction:

1. The children of Judah had disobeyed God again. Because of this, God was fed up with them and they were carried away into captivity (2 Chr. 36:15-21).
  - a. They were there for a total of 70 years before they were allowed to return to their home.
  - b. Some of the captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia (1:1-11).
  - c. They began to rebuild the temple, but they soon met resistance by outside forces (4:6-24).
  - d. They were allowed to again resume working on the temple (5:1-6:12). The temple is completed and dedicated, and the people of Judah celebrate the first Passover after the return of the Babylonian captivity (6:13-22).
2. In Ezra 7, we are introduced to Ezra for the first time.
  - a. Ezra had a big task ahead of him.
  - b. He was a scribe that knew the law of Moses and could help the people to follow the law of God.
  - c. It was a difficult task, but Ezra was able to accept the task and perform it well because he had prepared himself.
3. Notice some of the traits that were a part of Ezra’s life that led him to being prepared.
4. We today need to be prepared, just as Ezra was prepared.

#### Discussion:

##### I. Ezra lived a Life That Was Trustworthy (7:11-26).

- A. The king let Ezra have whatever he wanted to restore proper worship to Judah.

1. He lived a great moral life, so that others around him could know that there was something different about him.
  2. He did what was right in the sight of men and God.
- B. We must live a life that is worthy of trust.
1. We need to do what we say we are going to do.
  2. We need to live good, moral lives before God.
    - a. The rich, young ruler was a man who lived an honest life: **Mark 10:17-22**
    - b. He had earned his riches and position honestly; however, he was too immersed in his possessions until they owned him.
- C. In order for us to be trusted, we must trust in God.
- 1 Tim 4:10**---For to this *end* we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.
1. We should be willing to suffer because we know His promises are true.
  2. As our trust in God grows, the trust that others have for us also grows.
- D. Ezra prepared himself in that he lived a life that was trustworthy.

## II. Ezra Was a Man of Prayer (8:21-23; 10:1).

- A. We know of at least twice that Ezra prayed.
1. We can safely know that he was a man of prayer.
  2. He prepared himself by being a man of prayer.
- B. We have several examples in the New Testament of how we ought to pray.
1. Paul's example and command teaches us that we should be people of prayer.
 

**Acts 20:36**---And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

    - a. Paul prayed for every church and individual that he wrote to.
    - b. Paul needed and asked for the prayers of others.

2. Notice other things that Paul says about prayer.

**Ephesians 6:18**---“...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...”

**Philippians 4:6**---Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

**1 Thess. 5:17**---Pray without ceasing,

- a. Paul was a man of prayer.
- b. We need to be a people of prayer.

3. Jesus also was a man of prayer: **John 17:1-26**

**Luke 22:39-46**---The sweat of Jesus became as drops blood as He prayed.

**Luke 5:16**---So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

- C. If we are going to prepare ourselves for great things, we must be people who pray.

### **III. Ezra Was a Man of Faith (8:22-23).**

- A. Ezra trusted God to protect him.

1. Ezra and those with him were making the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.
2. Instead of asking the king to protect them, Ezra asked God to protect them.
3. He put his trust in God rather than men.

- B. We today should put our faith in God to protect us.

**Matthew 6:13**---And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

**2 Thess. 3:3**---But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

- C. We must have faith in God.

1. Faith is important because without it, we cannot please God.

**Hebrews 11:6**---But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

**Conclusion:**

1. Ezra prepared himself before he was asked to do something great.
2. We must also prepare ourselves if we are going to be pleasing to God.
3. Are you prepared for Him and His work in the kingdom?

## EZRA: PROTECTING THE TREASURES

**TEXT: Ezra 8:2-8**

### Introduction:

1. The proclamation was given for the Jews to return. **Ezra 1:1-4**

a. Ezra was one of the approximately 50,000 Jews who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and restore their worship.

b. Ezra was a priest and a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses.

**Ezra 7:6**---This Ezra came up from Babylon; and he *was* a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

c. He had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord and do it.

**Ezra 7:10**---For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

2. They traveled four months, facing many hardships and dangers.

a. They were ashamed to ask for an escort from the king.

**Ezra 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.”

b. They could have had an escort but, instead, they chose to trust God to protect them on their journey.

3. Ezra gave commandment to the Levites.

**Ezra 8:26-30**---I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, silver articles *weighing* one hundred talents, one hundred talents of gold,<sup>27</sup> twenty gold basins *worth* a thousand drachmas, and two vessels of fine polished bronze, precious as gold.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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.”<sup>30</sup> 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.

- a. Thus, the priests were entrusted with temple treasures: gold, silver, and sacred vessels.
  - b. God has entrusted us with many treasures as well.
4. We also have a trust as we march, not toward physical Jerusalem, but toward the heavenly Jerusalem.

**Discussion:**

**I. OUR TREASURES IDENTIFIED: WHAT ARE THEY?**

- A. These are blessings that come to all humanity.

**Heb. 2:6-8a**--- But one testified in a certain place, saying: “What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? <sup>7</sup> You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. <sup>8</sup> You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

- 1. Our bodies are a blessing from God.

- a. We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

**Psalm 139:13-16**---For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. <sup>14</sup>I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And *that* my soul knows very well. <sup>15</sup>My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, *and* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. <sup>16</sup>Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when *as yet there were* none of them.

- b. We need to use our bodies, not for sin, but to glorify God.

**1 Cor. 6:18-20**---Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? <sup>20</sup>For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

- 2. Our intelligence is a gift from God.



- a. We were made far above the animals. We can think, reason, believe, make choices, etc.
- b. Men often profess themselves to be wise, but become fools.

**Ephesians 4:17-19**---This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup> having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; <sup>19</sup> who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

B. Our soul is our most precious possession.

- 1. This is the part that is made in the image of God.

**Genesis 1:26-27**---Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

- 2. We are the offspring of God.

**Acts 17:28**---for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

- 3. Man must learn to keep his place: God is the Creator; we are the created.
  - a. "Am I in the place of God?" Gen. 30:2; 50:19
  - b. Many today act as though they are in the place of God.

**III.**---For example, a professor at the UCLA Medical School asked his students this question: "Here is the family history: The father has syphilis. The mother had TB. They already have had four children. The first is blind. The second has died. The third is deaf. The fourth has TB. The mother is pregnant. The parents are willing to have an abortion if you decide they should. What do you think?"

- 1) Most of the students decided on abortion.
- 2) "Congratulations," said the professor. "You have just murdered Beethoven!"

- 3) No one should put himself in the place of God and decide that a certain child should or should not live.

## II. THE GUARDIANSHIP REQUIRED OF US: WHAT KIND IS NEEDED?

### A. We need daily vigilance.

**Ezra 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."

1. Satan would rob our bodies of health; our intellects of wisdom, our consciences of peace, and our souls of the eternal reward.
2. We need to guard against him.

**1 Peter 5:8-9**---Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

### B. We need to constantly entreat God for help.

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

1. We need a daily pursuit of God and His ways - not as the rich fool who left God out of his life.

**Luke 12:16-21**---Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. <sup>17</sup> And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' <sup>18</sup> So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.'" <sup>20</sup> But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

2. **III.**---While attending a funeral at the Forest Lawn Mortuary in California, at the cemetery, I asked the mortician, "What was the most expensive funeral you ever had here?" The mortician didn't have to search his memory. He said, "A man embittered at his ex-wife and children had left them almost nothing, but had provided bountifully for his own final, ostentatious farewell. He had assigned \$200,000 (about a half-million in 1985 dollars). First, a bronze casket was

bought for around \$18,000, and a beautiful rose window was created for \$25,000. But, after these and other expenditures, the mortuary still had about \$100,000. What next? Their solution was orchids--one hundred thousand dollars worth! And how many attended this \$200,000 extravaganza? Exactly three!" (From Gil Beers in *Christianity Today*, May 17, 1985, p. 12)

3. What a foolish waste!

C. We need to be courageous and steadfast in spite of difficulties.

**Ezra 10:3**---Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. **v. 9**---So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It *was* the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of *this* matter and because of heavy rain.

1. No doubt, it was exceeding difficult for them to put away their foreign wives, but it was necessary.
2. No one appeals to one's heroic dimension (to conquer the difficult) better than Jesus Christ.
  - a. Following Christ can be very difficult, but the one who endures will reap great rewards.

**Matthew 10:34-38** ---"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.<sup>35</sup> For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law';<sup>36</sup> and 'a man's enemies *will be* those of his *own* household.'<sup>37</sup> He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.<sup>38</sup> And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

- b. **III.**---One of the most effective advertisements ever written appeared in a London newspaper earlier in this century. It read: "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful."  
The ad was written by Sir Ernest Shackleton, explorer of the South Pole. Regarding response, Shackleton said, "It seemed as though all the men in Great Britain were determined to accompany us." (From *Illustrations Unlimited*, by James S. Hewett, p. 130)  
Shackleton's ad appealed to the heroic nature which lies within each individual.

D. We need to continue to teach our young people the way of God.

**Nehemiah 8:2-3**---So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who *could* hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup> Then he read from it in the open square that *was* in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* to the Book of the Law.  
**v. 8**---So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

1. Notice that the young people were included.
2. We need to continually teach and train our young people to follow in the way of godliness, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
3. **III.**---Olga Silverstine, a family therapist, and author of the book, *The Courage to Raise Good Men*, was asked by USA Today to comment on the O.J. Simpson situation. Dr. Silverstine said, "Men are expected to be brutal killers in war and on the athletic field, but also to be loving husbands and fathers. We overvalue the qualities we call masculine, and undervalue the qualities we call feminine, including empathy, caring, and feeling. She said, "Real he-men are allowed only one emotion, anger, never fear and never hurt, just anger. And the man taught from infancy to be a winner at all costs in terms of sports, career, and sexual conquests, cannot cope with losing, and he responds with the only emotion he has, rage." (From Associated Press, 6-24-94)

**Conclusion:**

1. Someday we will be weighed in the balances of God's eternal truth.
2. We will be judged by the Scripture in accord with our works.
3. Let us be like those brave Jews who marched toward Jerusalem.
4. Let us be like Ezra who determined in his heart to seek the Law of the Lord and do it.

