

**"THE HELP NEEDED" - EZRA 7**

**INTRO:**

60 years after ch. 6, we come to ch. 7. what's happened? Esther has married King Xerxes, and spared the Jews from annihilation by wicked Haman (read the book of Esther). Through her there is a godly influence in the palace and favor to the Jewish people. Xerxes' son, Artaxerxes, is now on the throne and the favor to the Jewish people continues on.

Now in Ch. 7 we are finally introduced to **Ezra** (the writer of this book). He is a **scribe & priest** whom King Artaxerxes allowed to lead a group of Jews from Babylon back to Jerusalem (458 BC). He also is the one to send Nehemiah back to rebuild the city (Nehemiah & Ezra are contemporaries).

But Ezra's purpose was not just to lead people home, but also to teach them God's ways. Ezra = "help"

God's point to us is this: **What God rebuilds & revives, He maintains!** He brings help to us (other believers, ministry aspects, the Holy Spirit, etc.) - all to help us grow up strong in the Lord.

What traits are notable in this man, Ezra, for us to attain to? What examples of leadership do we see in him that we can follow? Ultimately, we see here in ch. 7, through Ezra, a picture of the Holy Spirit at work today leading God's people into His promises.

**THE LEADER & HELPER NAMED EZRA (7:1-10)**

**1-5) we are going to see 12 traits of Ezra that are notable:**

**1) His LINEAGE (1-5)** - Ezra shows us that he is a Levite & priest, a son of **Seraiah** (the last high priest before captivity) and tracing his line all the way back to the first high priest, **Aaron**.

Why is this important? **Line = Belonging**

1) **IDENTITY** - I belong in the family of Jews...I am in that special covenant with God...2) **COUNTRY** - I belong in that homeland - place of God's promises is where I rest my head...3) **MINISTRY** - I have a particular ministry with authority from God. I have a purpose to fulfill.

NOTE: you may not know your family tree physically...it may be some twisted mess...but spiritually when you came to Christ you became a part of His family - Child of God, in a New Covenant with Him...you belong in His promises - resting & living in them...you ultimately belong in heaven (citizen of heaven heading home). You have a special ministry from the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 2:9 - holy priesthood, special people, declaring the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His light)

Cherish your spiritual line - you can trace it back to the great High Priest in Heaven, Jesus!

**6) 2) His FAITH (6a)** - "...this Ezra came up..." here was a man willing to go where God lead him. Willing to step up and lead others there. Willing to step into the unknown, trusting a known God.

**Steps of faith always have a risk factor in them.** It's not flippant move, but a wise move, a Spirit led move, a righteous move that glorifies God. I may not have all the details, but I do have what He has given me, with His peace, to go for it!

How flexible am I for new things in Christ? Do I resist or embrace the moves of the Spirit on my life? Can I see when God is moving in a new way and get on board with Him or am I missing the boat? Faith & Flexibility go hand in hand.

**3) His SKILLFUL SERVICE (6a)** - "...he was a skilled scribe..." (KJV - ready). Ezra was not only a priest, but a **scribe** (writer & expert in God's Law - they preserved the Word through writing, taught the word to the people, & lived out the word - applying it in life)...in captivity Ezra couldn't do the priestly duties (no temple there), so he continued to read God's law, study it, and prepare his heart to be ready when God called him.

Are you ready now to be used by God? Don't despise the days of preparation. Don't think the hours of studying God's Word are for nothing. In time you will see this truth: **Those who invest in God find fruitfulness abounding.** God is a "rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6)

**NOTE: You and I are given skills, gifts, ministries, and activities to reach others.**  
By faith use them! Build up His kingdom, strengthen God's Church, build up others in Jesus!  
Ezra did and God used him for such a time as this!

**4) His SENSITIVITY TO THE SPIRIT (6b)** - Ezra knew God's hand was behind all this. It wasn't just Ezra's skill, faith, or lineage...it was **"...according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him."** (3x within this book). Here was a man who saw God's hand on his life.

Can you see His hand? How He guides & provides...protects & instructs...works & moves. God's hand settles me & sends me. We live life according to the hand of the Lord upon us!

**NOTE: If we are going to be effective FOR Christ, we must be humble BEFORE Christ.**  
Know where the glory goes... We must never think that what we see happen is because of us. Be sensitive to the Spirit and God will lead you in His great work.

**7-9) 5) His UNIFYING ABILITY (7-9)** - Ezra rallied various Levites, Jews, and even the Nethinim together for this 4 month journey over 900 miles. (**Nethinim** -Gentiles who became wood cutters & water carriers for the temple service)...*(mixed multitude going back to Jerusalem)*

overall there was 1,754 men and their families, all unified in this venture. Ezra was a man of leadership and influence - able to unify people for a common cause.

Again, noting that it all took place because of the **"good hand of his God upon him."**

**10) 6) His STRATEGY (10)** - Ezra first put his heart right with God...then his actions in line with God's Word...so that he could teach & help others along.

**NOTE: You can't give out to others, what you haven't taken in yourself.** You can't talk the talk, and not walk the walk = hypocrisy. God wants His leaders to be true inside & out because they represent Him. You as a spiritual leaders (church, marriage, home) must 1st seek God for yourself...then 2nd live it out and put into practice in your own life what you want to see in others...3rd - teach others Gods' ways.

## **THE LETTER IN HAND (7:11-26)**

**11-14). 7) His AUTHORITY (11-14)** - Ezra had the authority from the king to do this task. He didn't make this up himself. It wasn't a power move... It was given to him by one over him. **"...you are being sent by the king..." (14)**

So too, **you and I have been given authority to do the work of ministry from the King of Kings!** Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth...Go and make disciples!" (Matt. 28)...God opens doors that no man can shut.

When you feel unable to do the ministry, unqualified to do the task at hand...remember: **The King knows what He's got in you & He is confident that He can do it through you.** You simply go in His authority, exercise faith, and allow Him to work.

**15-20). 8) His PROVISION (15-20)** - Ezra was given gifts of **silver & gold & wine** to help in the worship God. The king gave...the people gave free will offerings.... Everything was provided to do this ministry. (Up to 4 tons of silver and 600 gallons of wine!)

Anything more that was needed was put at the discretion of Ezra, and then charged to the king's account. He was to **carry it (15)**...to shoulder it all the way to Jerusalem. He was trusted by the king in this task

**21-23) 9) His RESPONSIBILITY (21-23)** - People were to diligently supply and help out with whatever he needed up to a certain point. **Ezra had responsibility with accountability.**

So too, you and I are given from our king a ministry. That ministry has a responsibility (what to do), and an accountability (we must give an accountability for what God has put into our hands).

Matt. 25 - Jesus will say to us... "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few, I will make you ruler over many. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

23) tells us Artaxerxes reason for being so generous. **“Why should there be wrath against the realm of the king & his sons?”** Often when a Persian king conquered a land, he would then give sacrifices to the gods of that land to appease them. He wanted it to be well for him & his kingdom...as well as win favor in the eyes of the people he now ruled over.

**24) 10) His ACCOMMODATIONS (10)** - Even back here the government issued a law that ministers were tax-exempt! The king saw the value of the ministry and wanted to make sure that they could do it without the tax burden.

**25-26) 11) His MINISTRY (25-26)** - Ezra was to appoint **leaders (judges, teachers)** to help lead the people civil matters and to teach God's law in the land. The King wanted all to know the word of God! And whoever would not obey God's Word would face stiff consequences (judged).

**27-28) 12) His PRAISE (27-28)** - Ezra was a man of worship.

**“Blessed”** (how fortunate and happy)...3 things to praise God for here:

1) GOD'S WORK THROUGH OTHERS - God put in the heart of the king this desire to beautify God's house. God moved through King Darius (ch.6) and now through King Artaxerxes (ch. 7).

2) GOD'S MERCY ON ME - God gave him mercy in the eyes of the king & his counselors & princes.

3) GOD'S MINISTRY DONE THROUGH ME - I was encouraged by the hand of God on me. Continual reminder that it is all God in our lives!

and so Ezra gathered the people together to set out on this journey to God's promise land.

## **THE GREATER PICTURE IN CH. 7**

Ezra = “help”. Though a man, we see a similar picture of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of believers to bring them into the promises of God.

**John 14:16-17 (Jesus)** “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

we have a Helper (advocate)...one alongside us to comfort, exhort, guide, teach...”another” is not a different one, but one of the same kind (3rd person of the Trinity)

**John 16:13-14 (guide you into all truth, glorify Jesus).** “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.”

the Spirit of God is actively working in your life to point you to Jesus, to bear fruits that glorify God, to help you know the truth and walk in God's ways.

## **So what similarities do we see between Ezra and the Holy Spirit?**

compare:

Ezra was sent from the King on a journey with God's people...the Spirit would be sent by our King Jesus, to help us forward into God's promises..

Ezra invited people to come along with him to Jerusalem...the Spirit invites all to come into God's promises and enjoy God's eternal life.

Ezra was a skilled scribe...the Spirit with skill moved upon holy men to write this Word of God (2 Peter 1:21)

Ezra unified the people as one...the Spirit of God makes us one today.

*Ezra had a purpose and a plan to teach people God's Word...the Spirit of God does the same thing. Jesus said, "He will teach you all things..." (John 14:26)*

*Ezra was given gifts to help the worship forward...the Spirit of God gives us gifts to enhance our worship. They are Provisions with limitations & accommodations - all for the glory of God in our lives.*

*Ezra was to appoint leaders, teachers, judges to help the people know God...the Spirit appoints us in positions to help His Church grow up in Christ.*

*Ezra was a man of worship and praise...The Spirit leads us in worship & praise to God.*

**Closing: 2 questions:**

1) *How am I leading others? Am I following in the footsteps of Ezra with my family, my workplace, my church?*

2) *How is the Spirit leading me? What ventures of faith lie before me that I'm praying about? How is He confirming His Word and answering my prayers?*

**PRAY**