

Ezra: Rebuilding God's Temple

- I. The Book of Ezra deals with the return of a great number of the Jews from Babylon to rebuild the temple of God at Jerusalem.
 - A. The present age of the gospel was prophesied of as a time of rebuilding old wastes. **ISA 61:1-4; ACT 15:15-16.**
 - B. The gospel church is the *reformation* of the existing church which had fallen into gross disrepair. **HEB 9:10; ROM 11:11-21.**
- II. Like its counterpart book which deals with the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Nehemiah), Ezra sets forth tactics of the church's adversary to hinder or stop the building (particularly the rebuilding) of God's temple. c/w **2CO 2:11.**
 - A. Satan has an eye to frustrating the rebuilding of the temple of God.
 - B. The gospel church is the temple of God. **1CO 3:16-17; 2CO 6:16.**
 1. Its ministers are given for its *edification* (building up). **EPH 4:11-12.**
 2. Its members are to edify one another, which includes rebuilding. **JUDE 1:20; 1TH 5:11 c/w JAM 5:19-20; GAL 6:1.**
 3. Churches sometimes fall into disrepair which will require a rebuilding effort on the part of ministers and members. **1CO 4:14-17; GAL 4:19; REV 2:4-5.**
 4. Satan loves to see churches fall into doctrinal or practical corruption and does whatever he can from outside and inside to frustrate their repentance/rebuilding. **2CO 11:3.**
 - C. The believer's personal body is the temple of God. **1CO 6:19.**
 1. Fornication is a special sin against that temple. **1CO 6:18 c/w ROM 1:24.**
 2. "Minor" sexual sins tend to devolve into worse uncleanness. **ROM 1:26; EPH 4:19; JUDE 1:7.**
 3. Satan loves to draw God's people down this drain and keep them there.
 4. Satan in general does not want our persons to repent of sin since a broken temple is a less formidable testimony to God's existence, power, and right to demand human service and worship. **ROM 2:24; 2TI 3:5 ct/w 1PE 2:12; 3:16.**
 - D. The body of the Lord Jesus Christ is the temple of God. **JOH 2:19-21.**
 1. Satan sought to corrupt Christ by bodily temptation while He walked. **MAT 4:3.**
 2. Satan sought to corrupt Christ's flesh by death.
 3. Satan sought to prevent the "rebuilding" of Christ's body. **MAT 27:62-66.**
 4. Satan sought to prevent the news of the "rebuilding" from affecting others. **MAT 28:11-15.**
 5. Satan's ploys against that temple all failed. **HEB 4:15; ACT 13:28-39, 48-49.**
 - E. Rebuilding God's temple is pretty important!
 - F. There is one area where Satan does want us to rebuild. **GAL 2:18.**
- III. The Book of Ezra also has important historical, hermeneutical, prophetic and eschatological significance and implications.
 - A. It satisfies previous prophecies about Israel's return and rebuilding.
 - B. It links with other O.T. books which shed more light on the circumstances.
 - C. Its temple would one day be graced by the Son of God. **HAG 2:3, 6-9 c/w LUK 2:25-32.**
- IV. Consider some principal persons in Ezra.
 - A. Ezra: a Levitical priest descended from Eleazar and a devoutly Bible-oriented scribe and

teacher who, when he came on the scene, led the people to understanding through fundamentals of Bible study. **EZR 7:1-6, 10 c/w NEH 8:4-9.**

- B. Cyrus: the Persian king who decreed the Jewish return to rebuild the temple. **EZR 1:2.**
- C. Sheshbazzar/Zerubbabel: the prince of Judah whom Cyrus appointed governor and whom God promised would be honored with the beginning and finishing of the temple. **EZR 1:8; 5:14 c/w EZR 2:2; HAG 2:21; ZEC 4:10.**
- D. Jeshua/Joshua: the high priest (**EZR 3:2 c/w HAG 1:1**), who was crowned with many crowns and advised of a Royal Priest to come. **ZEC 6:11-13 c/w REV 19:12.**
- E. Haggai and Zechariah: contemporary prophets who reignited the project and saw it through. **EZR 4:24-5:1; 6:14.**
- F. Artaxerxes and Darius: other Persian kings who enabled the project. **EZR 6:14.**
- G. Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel: trouble-making lawyers hired by the snubbed Samaritans. **EZR 4:4-7.**
- H. Rehum and Shimshai: lackey secretaries who penned the official complaint to present to King Ahasuerus/Artaxerxes. **EZR 4:8.**
- I. Tatnai and Shetharboznai: more trouble-makers who tried to stop the reignited building program. **EZR 5:3.**

- V. Consider the spirit of the people who signed on to the project.
 - A. There was willingness to materially support it. **EZR 1:6; 2:68-70; 3:5 c/w 2CO 8:1-5.**
 - B. There was unity. **EZR 3:1 c/w ACT 4:32; PHIL 1:27; 2:2.**
 - C. There was a zeal for purity. **EZR 2:62; 10:14 c/w 2CO 7:11.**
 - D. There was godly response to rebuke. **EZR 5:2; 10:15-19 c/w 2CO 7:9.**
 - E. There was a joyous zeal for proper order according to the Law and keeping of ordinances. **EZR 3:2-5, 10; 6:16-22; 10:3 c/w 1CO 11:2; 1JO 5:3.**
 - F. There was humility, confession, fasting and prayer. **EZR 8:21-23 c/w ACT 13:1-3.**
 - G. They made sure that a good foundation was in place. **EZR 3:10 c/w 1CO 3:10-11; EPH 2:20-22; MAT 7:24-27.**
 - H. They had no delusions about the relationship of the temple of God to Babylon. **c/w REV 18:4.**
 - I. Any church which has fallen into disrepair had better have the same spirit if it ever expects to rebuild the way God's temple should be built.
 - J. An individual believer who has fallen into spiritual disrepair had better have the same spirit if he ever expects to rebuild the way God's temple should be built.

Chapter 1

- 1. The Jews at this time had been long absent from their homeland and their condition during captivity was a far cry from their former glory. This was the awful consequence of their sin.
 - A. God had told them that if they turned from Him that they would be dispossessed of their land, their city and land would be desolated, and they would be destroyed, dispersed and dispirited. **LEV 26:27-39; DEU 28:37, 63-66; 2CH 36:16-17.**
 - B. The Davidic reign was suspended (**EZE 21:26-27**) and some of its sons made eunuchs for service in the palace of the king of Babylon. **2KI 20:18; DAN 1:6-8.**
 - C. Jerusalem's overthrow was so complete that it even astonished the Gentiles. **LAM 2:15; 4:12.**
 - D. Their beautiful temple was plundered and destroyed. **2CH 36:18-19.**
 - E. Their former songs of Zion became mocking entertainment for the Babylonians.

PSA 137:1-3.

2. When the Jews had been sufficiently punished, God overthrew the Babylonians by the hand of the Medes and Persians. **2CH 36:20-21 c/w DAN 5:30-31; 6:28.**
 - A. The conquest of Babylon by Darius who reigned jointly with Cyrus marked the end of the seventy-year period of captivity of which Jeremiah had prophesied. **JER 25:11-12; 29:10.**
 - B. It is significant that Daniel remained in Babylon after the Medo-Persian conquest and was made second only to Darius in power. **DAN 6:1-3.**
 - (1) By God's deliverance of Daniel from the lions, Darius was favorably impressed with Daniel's God. **DAN 6:25-27.**
 - (2) In the first year of Darius, Daniel understood the captivity was about to end. **DAN 9:1-2.**
 - a. Daniel fasted, prayed and confessed sins as a result. **DAN 9:3-20.**
 - b. God then sent Gabriel to tell Daniel of the future of his people being completed by the end of seventy weeks (of years) which would begin with "...the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem..." (**DAN 9:24-27**).
 - (3) Daniel would have been in the perfect position to also show Cyrus that God had named him about 200 years earlier, prophesied of the details of his conquests, and that he should restore the Jews to their land. **ISA 44:26-28; 45:1-5, 13.**
 - (4) The Jewish historian, Josephus, stated that Cyrus had actually read the prophecy of Isaiah concerning him and concluded that God had given him a charge to send the Jews back to their land to restore Jerusalem and the temple.
(Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 11, 1:1-2 of the 1957 English version published by The John C. Whiston Company)
 - (5) Thus, by two powerful independent occurrences, the minds of Darius and Cyrus were affected positively towards the Jews and their God.
 - (6) Kings' hearts are truly in the hand of the Lord to be turned according to His will (**PRO 21:1**) and that by various means.
 - C. The decree of Cyrus was a pivotal moment in the history of the Jews: it marked the end of the seventy years of captivity and the beginning of the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy. **DAN 9:25.**
 - (1) Various historians note that Darius was Cyrus' uncle. Although it was actually Cyrus whose valor and prowess conquered Babylon, the credit and the rule were given to Darius out of respect.
 - (2) This agrees with what the Scriptures had said about Cyrus being the one whom God would raise up to conquer Babylon and set the Jews free.
 - D. The punctuality of God giving his people release at the appointed time should not be overlooked. As the clock of their captivity expired, so did the clock of their liberation begin, similar to what happened in their deliverance from Egypt. **EXO 12:40-41.**
 - (1) We should be reminded that our legal deliverance from the penalty of sin was according to a specific time table punctually kept. **GAL 4:4-5.**
 - (2) We should be reminded that our personal deliverance to liberty from the captivity of sin is an appointed day (and we will be held captive until then): the day of repentance. **2CO 6:1-2.**
 - (3) The day of our total deliverance "...from the bondage of corruption unto the glorious liberty of the children of God" (**ROM 8:21**) is likewise a specific appointed day known only to God. **ACT 17:31; MAR 13:32-33.**
3. The prophecies of Cyrus and their fulfillment are of interest.

- A. Of the man Cyrus, scripture shows him to be a type of Christ:
 - (1) He was God's shepherd. **ISA 44:28 c/w JOH 10:11.**
 - (2) He would perform all of God's pleasure. **ISA 44:28; 48:14-15 c/w JOH 8:29.**
 - (3) God loved him. **ISA 48:14 c/w JOH 3:35.**
 - (4) He was God's anointed. **ISA 45:1 c/w LUK 4:18.**
 - (5) God held his right hand. **ISA 45:1 c/w ACT 2:25.**
 - (6) God raised him up in righteousness. **ISA 45:13; 41:2 c/w ISA 42:6; 1JO 2:1.**
 - (7) God would direct his ways. **ISA 45:13 c/w JOH 5:19; ACT 2:23.**
 - (8) He would build God's city and temple.
ISA 44:28; 45:13 c/w MAT 16:18; EPH 2:19-22.
 - (9) He proclaimed liberty to the captives. **EZR 1:3 c/w LUK 4:18.**
 - (10) He set God's people free without cost to them. **ISA 45:13; 52:3 c/w 1PE 1:18-19.**
 - (11) He liberated God's vessels from the house of idols for the building of God's house.
EZR 1:7 c/w ROM 9:23-24; 1CO 12:2.
 - B. Ancient and modern historians have noted that Babylon was a seemingly unconquerable city with massive circumferential walls, an internal self-sustaining food supply, the river Euphrates running through the middle of it and secured by walls and huge metal gates.
 - (1) Cyrus' engineers diverted the Euphrates into a flood plain apparently without challenge during a great pagan festival in Babylon. **c/w ISA 44:27; JER 51:31-32.**
 - (2) Whether through subterfuge or neglect by the city guardians, the metal gates were not an obstacle to Cyrus' forces. **ISA 45:1-2.**
 - (3) King Belshazzar's loins were loosed. **DAN 5:6 c/w ISA 45:2.**
 - C. Unlike Nebuchadnezzar who took credit for all his accomplishments (**DAN 4:30**), Cyrus credited God for his empire. **EZR 1:2.**
4. Mind that Cyrus' proclamation was so "...that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be FULFILLED" (**EZR 1:1**) / "accomplished" (**2CH 36:22**).
- A. Jeremiah spoke of more than the end of the seventy years' Jewish captivity.
 - B. He also spoke of the gathering and return of the Jews to their historic land.
JER 23:3; 32:37; 33:7.
 - C. The Futurist school of eschatology tends to assume that the gathering and return of the Jews to their land did not occur during Cyrus' day but were reserved to a much later time preceding the Second Advent of Christ.
 - (1) "The restoration here foretold is not to be confounded with the return of a feeble remnant of Judah under Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel at the end of the 70 years....The prophecy is yet to be fulfilled..."
(C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 795, comment on **JER 23**)
 - (2) Dr. Scofield elsewhere trivializes the efforts of this era as "feeble" in his introductory comment to the Book of Ezra: "The post-captivity books deal with that feeble remnant which alone had a heart for God."
 - (3) Dr. Scofield actually aligns with the enemies of the faithful Jews who returned in his assessment of the Jews' efforts. **NEH 4:2.**
 - (4) Mind that what Dr. Scofield said was not then fulfilled, the Holy Spirit says was fulfilled!
 - (5) The Futurist school tends also, in order to support its own time table of prophetic fulfillment, to say that it was not Cyrus' decree that began the seventy weeks of **DAN 9:24-27** but rather Artaxerxes' decree many years later, which further trivializes the importance of Cyrus and what came about because of him.
 - (6) And so what if the returners seemed feeble? **ZEC 4:6-10.**

5. “Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites...” (v. 5).
 - A. Ezra's account focuses on the return of the remnant of Judah and Benjamin from Babylon, the other ten tribes having previously been overtaken, dispersed and mongrelized by the Assyrian empire. **2KI 17:6, 24.**
 - B. The first mention of those who *rose up* to go was the leadership of the people.
 - (1) Successful temple building very much depends upon good leadership. Gospel ministers should be forward in good teaching, cause and example. **1TI 1:3; 4:12, 16; 1TH 2:5-12.**
 - (2) “...with all them whose spirit God had raised...” (v. 5). Good leadership is only half the story. Good “fellowship” is also needed. **1CO 11:1; PHIL 3:17; HEB 13:7.**
6. The house of God was furnished with great and lesser vessels of gold and silver. **vs. 7-11.**
 - A. The gospel church likewise has great and lesser vessels, all of which are necessary. **1CO 12:14-25.**
 - (1) Some may have special gifts and others have them not. **1CO 12:28-31.**
 - (2) Some may be strong and others may be weak. **ROM 14:1; 15:1.**
 - (3) Some may be highly esteemed and others least esteemed. **1CO 6:4; 1TH 5:12-13.**
 - (4) Some may have wealth but others have it not. Partiality is to be shown to neither. **1TI 5:20-21; 6:17-18; JAM 2:1-5; LEV 19:15.**
 - B. Both the gospel church and the individual believer must discern the durable precious vessels from the transient unprofitable vessels and dispense with the latter. **1CO 3:12-15; 2TI 2:20-21.**
 - (1) Cyrus did not send back vessels from idols' temples, only those of God's house.
 - (2) The Jews' captivity was meant to purge from them the dishonorable vessels of sin and idolatry.
 - (3) True revival/rebuilding is often hampered by an unwillingness to separate fully from sinful living and idolatrous customs. **2CO 6:14-18.**

Chapter 2

1. This chapter sets forth an enumeration of the returning *men of Israel*. **v. 2.**
 - A. It corresponds with **NEH 7** and is a mix of names of families and cities.
 - B. There are differences in the detailed numberings of the two accounts but both agree that the total was 42360 plus 7337 servants. **EZR 2:64-65 c/w NEH 7:66-67.**
 - C. Some have noted that there are 1765 persons in NEH 7 not mentioned in EZR 2 and there are 494 persons in EZR 2 not mentioned in NEH 7. If the surplus from NEH 7 is added to the detailed tally of EZR 2 and the surplus from EZR 2 is added to the detailed tally of NEH 7, the totals of the two accounts are exactly equal.
 - D. He Who tells the number of the stars and calls them by name (**PSA 147:4**) also knows them that are His (**2TI 2:19**), though they be *a multitude that no man can number*. **REV 7:9.**
 - E. There is nothing wrong with recording the number of the church members. **ACT 1:15.**
2. These are called, “...the children of the province...” (v. 1). c/w **EZR 5:8.**
 - A. province: An administrative division of a country or state...
 - (1) Judah had once been a strong, independent, autonomous state; now it was a province of another state.
 - (2) This is what sin does to nations. **PRO 14:34.**
 - B. The returners went up “...every one unto his city” (v. 1). This may refer to their historic dwelling-places or to cities assigned to them by lot. **NEH 11:1.**

- (1) A successful building program recognizes the importance of “each to his own.”
 - (2) Paul followed this principle in evangelism. **2CO 10:13-18.**
 - (3) Consider these other applications of the same principle:
 - a. Piety begins at home. **1TI 5:4, 8.**
 - b. “Every tree is known by his own fruit...” (**LUK 6:44**).
 - c. Every man must prove his own work and bear his own burden. **GAL 6:4-5.**
 - d. Every able man must do his own business and eat his own bread. **1TH 4:11; 2TH 3:12.**
 - e. Bishops and deacons must rule their own houses well. **1TI 3:4-5, 12.**
 - f. Every man is to work out his own salvation. **PHIL 2:12.**
 - g. The churches in Asia were responsible for their own houses. **REV 2-3.**
 - h. Church membership is local.
3. The first names mentioned in **v. 2** are Zerubbabel (their secular leader) and Jeshua (their high priest). God essentially provided a new Moses and Aaron for the exodus from Babylon.
 - A. Believers today need such a combination if they are to successfully build.
 - B. God has provided such in Jesus Christ Who is both King and Priest. **HEB 6:20-7:1.**
 - (1) By King Jesus, believers reign in life through righteousness. **ROM 5:21.**
 - (2) By High Priest Jesus, believers have a propitiation and an access to the throne of grace. **1JO 2:1-2; HEB 4:15-16.**
 - (3) By His royal authority and His blood, believers prevail. **REV 12:10-11.**
4. Here are observations about a few names in this chapter.
 - A. Adonikam. **v. 13.**
 - (1) His name means, “high lord.”
 - (2) The number of his children is 666, the number of the beast which is the number of a man.
 - B. Bethlehem. **v. 21.**
 - (1) They numbered only 123 men.
 - (2) But Bethlehem is a good example of why we ought not to “...make ourselves of the number...” (**2CO 10:12**). **MIC 5:2.**
 - C. Anathoth. **v. 23.**
 - (1) This was the prophet Jeremiah's hometown. **JER 1:1.**
 - (2) Anathoth's small number (128) may well be owing to their persecution of Jeremiah. **JER 11:21-23.**
5. **Vs. 36-63** enumerate the households of the priests and Levites.
 - A. Some could not prove their ancestry. **vs. 59-62.**
 - B. One of the families of priests had changed their name. **v. 61.**
 - (1) Barzillai was a great man in David's day. **2SAM 19:31-39; 1KI 2:7.**
 - (2) For some reason, one ancestral priest had abandoned his own Aaronic registry and took the name of Barzillai.
 - (3) That priest's actions were not much different than Esau's selling of his birthright which was a despising of his birthright. **GEN 25:29-34.**
 - (4) Believers are straitly warned about the folly of Esau, lest they should deem their inheritance in Christ a thing of little value. **HEB 10:35; 12:15-17.**
 - C. Genealogies were carefully kept (**1CH 9:1**) and those whose parentage could not be shown were denied or stripped of what they thought was theirs.
 - (1) Jesus Christ's genealogy is a complete one all the way from Adam that survives.
 - (2) Genealogies are of no importance in the N.T. (**1TI 1:4; TIT 3:9**) but one must show his spiritual pedigree to have a right to God's house. **ACT 8:35-38; 2:41.**

6. **Vs. 64-67.**
- A. Among those who came up to Jerusalem were 200 singing men and women.
 - (1) These were likely lamenters. **2CH 35:25 c/w JER 50:4.**
 - (2) The building of God's house will have its share of lamenting, but not without hope. **ACT 8:2 c/w 1TH 4:13; JOH 16:20.**
 - (3) Weeping has its place in God's program for the church and our individual lives. **PHIL 3:18; JAM 4:9; ECC 7:2-4.**
 - B. The Spirit even recorded the number of their livestock that attended their campaign.
 - (1) The church will have its share of natural brute beasts. **2PE 2:12; 1CO 15:32.**
 - (2) Believers must ever be on guard against the beast within. **PSA 73:22; 32:9; JAM 3:7-8.**
 - (3) Mind that these were service animals that were assets of their estates. God still takes note of the material things that we bring to His house. **MAR 12:41-44; 14:9; ACT 5:1-3; 2CO 9:6 c/w LUK 16:10-11.**
7. **Vs. 68-70.**
- A. "...they came to the house of the LORD..." yet it was in ruins.
 - (1) True hearts delight even in the dust of Zion. **PSA 102:14.**
 - (2) Mind that the ruins still had the identity of *the house of the LORD*.
 - a. Caution should therefore be a byword when considering that an unruly church is no church at all. **REV 2-3.**
 - b. Similar caution should be exercised when looking at a person whose life or faith is in ruins (including one's own). **LUK 13:6-9; 2TI 2:17-19; 2CH 33:13; PSA 42:5.**
 - B. Some offered *freely*. Here were donors that weren't looking for kickbacks! Blessed are those who freely give. **MAT 10:8; 1TI 6:17-19; 1TH 2:5-6 ct/w TIT 1:11.**
 - C. They "...gave after their ability..." (v. 69) and this is ever God's rule. **DEU 16:17; MAR 14:8; ACT 11:29; 2CO 8:12.**

Chapter 3

- 1. The people gathered together on the seventh month (v. 1), which happened to be the same month in which Solomon completed the first temple. **2CH 7:10-11.**
 - A. The seventh month was noted for important services and feasts in Israel. **LEV 16:29; 23:24, 34, 39; 25:9.**
 - B. Thus, a new chapter in God's temple program opened at the time of an important season of worship. **JOH 2:19; 19:14 c/w ACT 2:1-4.**
- 2. They "...gathered themselves together as one man..."
 - A. Here were unity and cooperation, necessary elements of successful building.
 - B. All Persons of the Godhead were united in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. **ROM 6:4; 8:11; JOH 10:18.**
 - C. A blessed gospel church is a united, cooperative assembly with a common vision. **PHIL 1:27 c/w EPH 4:15-16; 2:19-22.**
 - D. The constituent parts of our persons must be likewise if we are to be built up in Christian faith and character. Things that belong together must be together and work together.
 - (1) Godly sorrow works true repentance. **2CO 7:10.**
 - (2) Faith must have works. **JAM 2:14-26.**
 - (3) Knowledge must govern emotion. **PRO 28:26; 23:19.**
 - (4) Will must meet with action. **ISA 1:19; 2CO 8:11.**

- (5) Outward cleansing must have inward cleansing. **MAT 23:25-26; 5:27-28.**
- (6) Outward duty must come from inward desire. **ROM 6:17.**
- (7) Conduct must accord with creed. **ROM 2:21-23.**
- 3. They were intent on doing "...as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God" (v. 2). Conformity to the word is the key to successful rebuilding. Even the rebuilding of the temple of Christ's body was that "...he rose again the third day *according to the scriptures*" (**1CO 15:3**).
- 4. The first thing that they tended to was the setting up of the altar for sacrifice. **vs. 2-3.**
 - A. Noah likewise first built an altar before rebuilding the world. **GEN 8:20.**
 - B. Sin must be dealt with before God blesses building.
 - (1) Christ promised, "...I will build my church..." (**MAT 16:18**).
 - (2) Before the Holy Ghost came upon the N.T. church (**ACT 2**), Christ had already been made both altar and sacrifice. **HEB 13:10-12.**
 - (3) Before a church can be started or a Christian life built, the sacrifice of personal sin and interests through repentance must occur. **ACT 2:38-39.**
 - (4) When things are done righteously, God will build the house. If not, the builders labor in vain. **PSA 127:1.**
 - C. That they designed to make their sacrifices without even having a temple (v. 6) is instructive.
 - (1) A believer may not yet have a church in his locale, yet he would do well to make his spiritual sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving and alms, etc. (**HEB 13:15-16**) and identify with a true church to the best of his ability.
 - (2) Circumstances may bar someone from ministering in God's house (e.g. **DEU 23:1**), in which case he would do well to be a *spiritual* Gibeonite (**JOS 9:27**) or a *spiritual* Nethinim (temple slave assigned to the Levites and priests). **EZR 8:20.**
- 5. They laid the foundation of God's house with praise and thanksgiving. **v. 11 c/w PSA 126:1-2.**
 - A. There was, however, a mixture of joy and weeping. **vs. 12-13.**
 - B. "This mixture of sorrow and joy here is a representation of this world. Some are bathing in rivers of joy, while others are drowned in floods of tears. In heaven all are singing, and none sighing; in hell all are weeping and wailing, and none rejoicing; but here on earth we can scarcely *discern the shouts of joy from the noise of the weeping*. Let us learn to *rejoice with those that do rejoice* and *weep with those that weep*, and ourselves to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not." (Matthew Henry)
 - C. Their prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, though, in time gave the godly a reason for unalloyed rejoicing. **HAG 2:7-9 c/w ZEC 2:10-11.**
 - (1) God here promised that He would come and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.
 - (2) There was already a sense in which He had returned to dwell there (**ZEC 1:16; 8:3**) but He speaks here of a future coming and dwelling.
 - (3) Zechariah conspicuously prophesied of Christ in other places. **ZEC 3:8-9; 6:12-13; 12:10; 13:6-7.**
 - (4) Every other place where the phrase, "Lo, I come..." appears in Scripture is seen to refer to a personal appearance amongst men by God Himself. **EXO 19:9; PSA 40:7 c/w HEB 10:5-9.**
 - (5) Compare "...I will dwell in the midst of thee..." with **JOH 1:1, 14.**
 - (6) Many nations were joined unto the Lord in the day of Messiah's power (**PSA 110:3**). **ACT 2:5-6, 38-41, 47; 5:14; 11:24; 10:35; 15:14-17.**
 - (7) They would be His people. **ROM 9:25-26.**
 - (8) This gathering in of Gentiles was the proof to Israel that Messiah had come.
 - (9) This was great cause to "Sing and rejoice..." (**ZEC 2:10**).

Chapter 4

1. This chapter begins to show the *troublous times* of the rebuilding program. **DAN 9:25.**
2. As might be expected when a door was opened for building God's house, adversaries abounded. **vs. 1-10 c/w 1CO 16:9.**
 - A. Solomon's temple was built without adversity. **1KI 5:4.**
 - B. The building of this temple would cast a better shadow of things to come than did the building of Solomon's temple.
 - C. But the building of the gospel church required a conspiracy of adversaries against Christ (**ACT 4:27**) and its continued work is with *much contention*. **1TH 2:2; ACT 14:22.**
 - D. Godly enterprises can go forward in all seasons. **ACT 5:41-42; 9:31; 2TI 4:2.**
3. These adversaries of the builders were "...the people of the land..." (v. 4), not the Chaldeans or Medo-Persians.
 - A. These would have been Samaritans: the mongrel society with mongrel religion formed by the Assyrian empire many years earlier. **v. 2 c/w 2KI 17:24, 32-33; 19:37.**
 - B. Therefore, the builders were being troubled by the corrupted element of their own history.
 - (1) This pattern was repeated in the apostolic era. **MAT 23:34.**
 - (2) It may be observed that some of the biggest opposition to one's conversion to the truth and growth in the truth comes not from the world but from the camp of religion with which you can no longer identify for the truth's sake.
 - C. These Samaritans falsely claimed identity in worship with the Jews so as to infiltrate.
 - (1) **2KI 17:33, 44** show that they were on a decidedly different track: polytheism and idolatry. They were the liberal ecumenics of the day.
 - (2) The church has ever had to deal with trouble from those who say they are Jews but are not so. **REV 3:9.**
 - (3) The church has also had its share of infiltrators. **JUDE 1:1-4.**
 - D. The faithful church leaders told them, "Nuthin' doin'!" (v. 3).
 - (1) They did not give them place by subjection at all. c/w **GAL 2:4-5.**
 - (2) Faithful leadership will adopt the same posture when a sham member or troubler is exposed. **ACT 8:21; 1TI 1:3.**
 - (3) NOTE: The church of Jesus Christ may receive various offers of help from unbelievers. But the compromise of principle that such offers represent will only result in God not being in the project. **ISA 31:1; PSA 127:1.**
4. Being rebuked thus, the Samaritans then set to weakening the workers. **vs. 4-5.**
 - A. The words, *troubled* and *frustrate* bring to mind things that happened in the early N.T. church era.
 - B. The Gentile churches in Galatia were being *troubled* by similar sham-artists. **GAL 1:7.**
 - C. This crowd had wormed its way into the Jerusalem church to further its own agenda. **ACT 15:1-5, 24.**
 - D. Their methods were very effective. **GAL 2:12-13.**
 - E. By their false doctrine of wedding Christ's work and human work, they were *frustrating* the grace of God. **GAL 2:21; 3:21.**
 - F. Paul, like Zerubbabel, was quite frank in his attitude towards such troublemakers. **GAL 5:12.**
5. Being upbraided but unable to stop the building project themselves, the Samaritans resorted to legal tactics. **vs. 5-10.**
 - A. The hiring of counsellors was later done to prevent the spread of the news of the greatest

- rebuilding project ever: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. **JOH 2:18-21; MAT 28:11-15.**
- B. In desperation, the Jews did likewise to condemn Paul. **ACT 24:1.**
- C. There is no new thing under the sun.
6. A copy of one letter the troublers wrote to the civil power was preserved by the Holy Spirit. **vs. 11-16.**
- A. This letter would have not been written in Hebrew for the same reason that the letter in **v. 7** was not written in Hebrew.
- B. Since the original autograph of Ezra was in Hebrew, there was obviously both translation and copying involved in putting it to the page.
- C. God is well able to speak all languages, translate all languages and preserve words in copies. **DEU 17:18-19.**
- D. From the letter, it appears that the Jews had been building more than the temple (**v. 12**), even as Cyrus was charged by God. **ISA 44:28; 45:13.**
- E. It is interesting that the troublers were concerned that *their* state support might be jeopardized by the building of God's house (especially if the builders didn't pay taxes)!
- F. Note that the adversaries were particularly concerned with the building of the temple, about which they had been insulted. **vs. 1-5.**
- (1) But in the counsellors' letter to Artaxerxes no mention was made of the temple, only of the city and the walls and the implications of these relative to civil order. **vs. 11-16.**
- (2) This tactic continues to this day: stop the testimony of the church and the truth by tax snares, zoning ordinances, insinuations of threats to the public good, etc.
7. The king rendered an *ex parte* judgment (**vs. 17-22**) contrary to just law (**JOH 7:51**) which resulted in the cessation of the building project. **vs. 23-24.**
- A. If the builders were entirely justified in ceasing because of this civil order, then why did Haggai reprove them? **EZR 5:1 c/w HAG 1:1-5.**
- B. Perhaps the spirit of David was lacking here. **1SAM 17:26.**
- C. NOTE: It may be observed that sometimes the unfavorable turns of civil power against the work of God are secretly welcomed by the weak workers.
- D. "Though now a stop was put to it by the violence of the Samaritans, yet that they might soon after have gone on by connivance, if they had had a due affection to the work, appears by this, that before they had that express warrant from the king for doing it (ch. 6) they were reprov'd by the prophets for not doing it, Ezr 5:1, compared with Hag 1:1, etc. If they had taken due care to inform Cambyses of the truth of this case, perhaps he would have recalled his order; but, for aught I know, some of the builders were almost as willing it should cease as the adversaries themselves were. At some periods the church has suffered more by the coldness of its friends than by the heat of its enemies; but both together commonly make church-work slow work." (Matthew Henry)
- E. And sometimes fear is a mask for sloth. **MAT 25:25-26; PRO 22:13.**
- F. **HAG 1:4-9** shows that the Jews had not abandoned building altogether; they only abandoned the building of God's house. c/w **PHIL 2:21.**
- (1) They were contentedly building *cieled* houses. **v. 4.**
- (2) cieled: Having the interior (roof or walls) overlaid or lined with wood, etc.; wainscoted.
- (3) Misguided building got in the way of the greatest of God's temple projects. **ACT 4:11.**
- (4) God loves His dwelling place more than ours. **PSA 87:2.**
- (5) Again, the spirit of David was markedly different than the spirit of the Jews during

this intermission (of perhaps as much as 19 years). **2SAM 7:2; PSA 132:3-5.**

Chapter 5

1. This chapter sets forth the reviving of the temple rebuilding project at the instigation of the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. **vs. 1-2 c/w EZR 6:14.**
 - A. An overview of their prophecies shows a mixture of reproof, comforts, hope, mercy, promises of good things to come and the centrality of Messiah: essential tenets of building faith in the believer and churches for God's praise.
 - B. How oft has a child of God's life fallen into ruin but is revived by such prophesying!
2. Haggai's word to Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people was, "...be strong....I am with you..." (**HAG 2:4**). c/w **EPH 6:10.**
 - A. The presence of the Lord strengthens. **2TI 4:17; PSA 23:4.**
 - B. "...If God be for us, who can be against us?" (**ROM 8:31**).
 - C. Zerubbabel was especially assured that God was with him. **ZEC 4:6-10; HAG 2:20-23.**
 - D. Believers have no less assurances in their efforts to build faith. **HEB 13:5-6; 1CO 10:13; ROM 15:13.**
3. As soon as they resumed the building of the temple, opposition arose. **vs. 3-4.**
 - A. Curiously, we read of no opposition while they were building their own houses, even though the king's commandment was that the city not be built. **EZR 4:21.**
 - B. As long as we are living after the flesh, neither Satan or the world opposes us! It's when we abandon the ways of the flesh for Christ's sake that the opposition starts. **1TH 2:13-14.**
 - C. This world tolerates Jesus in a manger or hanging on a cross (a weak, ineffectual Jesus) but let Him influence men contrary to the world's interests and the opposition is immediate.
 - D. This world even tolerates Christians constructing big houses of worship, as long as the doctrine preached there doesn't get in the way of the world's ambitions.
4. **vs. 3-4** present the short version of a letter which some regional civil authorities sent to King Darius about their concerns regarding the rebuilding project. **vs. 7-17.**
 - A. They demanded of the Jews two things:
 - (1) "Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?"
 - (2) "What are the names of the men that make this building?"
 - B. The first demand was a legitimate inquiry which the elders of the Jews answered.
 - C. The second demand was disregarded; they did not cough up the names of the brethren. Take heed!
 - D. Consider the wise response of the elders of the Jews.
 - (1) They made no mention of the conniving and misrepresentations of the troublers in the previous chapter and the mistakes of the previous administration. There was no sense in painting these officials with the same brush.
 - (2) They responded tactfully, factually and firmly. There is no need to resort to caustic belligerence or *ad hominem* attacks when God and truth are on one's side. c/w **ACT 26:24-25.**
 - (3) They appealed to the facts of divine authority and the decree of Cyrus, who had a special reverence to Judah's God. **EZR 1:3.**
 - a. They claimed to be "...the servants of the God of heaven and earth..." (v. 11), the Creator of all, not some nationalistic, geographical deity which could be construed as a political threat to the government of the Persians. c/w **1KI 20:23.**

- b. The God Whose house they were building was the "...house of the great God...", their enemies themselves being judges. **DEU 32:31.**
 - c. They focused on the pillars of the issue, not the rubble.
 - (4) They acknowledged that their national decline was just punishment for their sins but the current condition of ruin did not mean that rebuilding was futile.
 - (5) They affirmed that the building project had been underway for a long time but it was not yet completed, implying that to stop the work would have been an offense both to God and the unalterable law of the Medes and Persians. c/w **DAN 6:15.**
 - (6) This wisdom may be applied to the rebuilding of a life or spirit that is in ruins.
 - a. Satan will oppose such an effort with all manner of distracting questions and accusations to your conscience.
 - b. Don't deny the fact that you failed and deserved judgment or that you have struggled with weakness, but affirm that being *cast down* does not mean being destroyed. **2CO 4:9.**
 - c. Appeal to the authority of God's promises of mercy, cleansing, healing and grace.
 - d. Admit that you are a work in progress.
- 5. The gates of hell did not prevail against the church; "...the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews..." (v. 5), according to His faithful promises. **JER 24:6; PSA 33:18.**

Chapter 6

- 1. In the previous chapter, the Jews had affirmed that their project had royal direction from Cyrus and therefore was lawful and should not be stopped. **EZR 5:13-16.**
 - A. Cyrus' decree was not just oral but written. **EZR 1:1.**
 - B. Twice earlier, the inspired historian noted that they had copies of official correspondence that were relevant to their situation. **EZR 4:11; 5:6.**
 - C. Perhaps if they had brought with them an authenticated copy of Cyrus' decree, much trouble could have been averted.
 - D. Jeremiah wisely retained authenticated evidence of an important transaction. **JER 32:9-10.**
 - E. God blesses the making of authenticated copies of valuable decrees, laws, transactions and promises. **DEU 17:18-20; 2TI 3:15.**
 - F. Successful building of faith (**JUDE 1:20**) is 100% dependent upon authenticated copies of official documents. **1TH 2:13.**
- 2. King Darius made a more diligent search for this secular record than many professing believers make of the scriptures. **vs. 1-2 c/w ACT 17:11-12.**
 - A. The best decrees of God are found by diligent searching. **PRO 2:3-5.**
 - B. Such searching will unearth Christ. **JOH 5:39 c/w COL 2:3.**
 - C. God truly rewards them that diligently seek Him. **HEB 11:6.**
- 3. The written decree was similar to the oral proclamation but with added detail. **vs. 3-5.**
 - A. Construction details and dimensions for God's temple were in the written decree.
 - B. This should remind us that the details of Christ and Christian experience should be sought in the written record, not the oral.
 - C. God has given us His Spirit and taken great pains to record in writing for us the dimensions of His temple which is Christ Himself. **EPH 3:18-19.**
 - (1) Paul's great goal was to bring people to the fulness of the knowledge of God in Christ. **PHIL 3:8; COL 1:9-10.**

- (2) Though Christ is declared in prophecies, types and shadows, etc., He is best revealed in the written record of the apostles. **2CO 3:12-18; 1JO 1:3.**
- D. Similar observations may be made concerning the building of gospel churches and of faith in the believer. The construction details are plainly recorded and should be followed.
- E. Interesting that it was specified that the temple should be built "...with three rows of great stones..." **v. 4 c/w EPH 2:20-22.**
- F. Specific attention was given to the gold and silver vessels of God's house (**v. 5**), and the wise will note that great houses of God concentrate on such. **2TI 2:20-21.**
4. Darius then confirmed Cyrus' decree and embellished it. **vs. 6-12 c/w PRO 21:1; REV 12:16.**
- A. What Satan had meant to be a curse upon the Jews, God made into a blessing. **DEU 23:5 c/w PHIL 1:12.**
- B. Tatnai and his cohorts were told to steer clear of the rebuilding effort and leave them alone. **vs. 6-7.**
- (1) Amen! The best thing that civil government can do for the church of Jesus Christ is to just leave us alone. State benefits may be as dangerous as state belligerence.
- (2) Leaving the church alone also encourages the church in its prayers for the civil power. **v. 10 c/w 1TI 2:1-2.**
- C. Darius issued a dreadful pronouncement against any that should alter his word or destroy God's house. **vs. 11-12.**
- (1) The rest of the chapter shows that Tatnai and company took this very seriously.
- (2) How sad that men fear the similar decrees of the King of heaven less than these heathen feared the decree of Darius!
PRO 13:13; REV 22:18-19; 2CO 2:17; LUK 14:34-35; 1CO 3:17.
5. Under prophecy and adherence to God's commandment, the Jews built and finished the house of God. **vs. 13-15.**
- A. Christ's building program will not be finished until the end of the world. **MAT 28:19-20.**
- B. Until Christ's Second Coming, building of faith in the believer and the church will be work in progress. **PHIL 3:13-14; 1CO 13:12.**
- C. The finishing of our faith is in Christ's hands. **PHIL 1:6; HEB 12:2.**
- D. "Much opposition is given to this work by Satan and our own corruptions. We trifle, and proceed in it with many stops and pauses; but he that has *begun the good work* will see it performed, and will *bring forth judgment unto victory*. *Spirits of just men will be made perfect.*" (Matthew Henry)
6. The house being finished, it was then dedicated with great joy and Biblical worship. **vs. 16-22.**
- A. Coming to God's house should be with joy. **PSA 122:1.**
- B. Mind that this building program was in fact a *rebuilding* program and so has a correspondence with repentance and recovery, which is a cause for great joy. **2CO 7:11-16; LUK 15:21-23.**
- C. Mind their sensitivity to sin issues and the order of Scripture! **vs. 17-20.**
- (1) True worship begins with sin issues settled!
- (2) The ministry was ordered by the book. **c/w NUM 8:9-10.**
- (3) The passover was kept according to the book. **EXO 12:6.**
- (4) The priests and Levites were properly prepared. **ct/w 2CH 29:34; 30:1-3.**
- D. It is implied here that there were proselytes who joined them, a token of good things to come. **EPH 2:19.**
- E. Their separation from the filthiness of the heathen cannot be overemphasized. **2CO 6:14-7:1.**
- F. The LORD had made them joyful and strengthened their hands. **NEH 8:10.**

Chapters 7 & 8

1. Chapter 7 introduces Ezra himself, who with the blessing of God and decree of Artaxerxes leads a train of great wealth to Jerusalem for God's house. **EZR 7:11-23.**
 - A. Ezra began his journey on the first day of the first month (**EZR 7:9**). What a great New Year's resolution: determination towards God's house!
 - B. It was a four-month-long journey (**EZR 7:9**) that exposed them to dangers. **EZR 8:31.**
 - (1) Kingdom work may well involve exposing faithful men to perils. **2CO 11:26.**
 - (2) NOTE: Government decrees are not a goof-proof safeguard against wicked men.
 - (3) Ministers and believers do well to lean heavily upon God in prayer for safety, as Ezra did (**EZR 8:21-23**) and exercise prudent caution against perils. **2TH 3:1-2; ROM 15:31; LUK 22:36; PRO 22:3.**
 - C. Spiritually, we "...must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (**ACT 14:22**).
 - (1) Penitents may expect varied forms of Satanic resistance to their coming to God and His house. The world and the flesh are no friend to the potential convert. **JOH 12:42-43; MAR 10:23; MAT 18:2-4.**
 - (2) Once converted, there will still be enemies: "...such as lay in wait by the way" (**EZR 8:31**). c/w **EPH 4:14.**
 - (3) Wicked men laid in wait for Christ (**LUK 11:54**) and true disciples may expect similar tactics against them. **JOH 15:20.**
2. Consider Ezra.
 - A. He was a priest, a descendant of Aaron. **EZR 7:1-5, 12.**
 - (1) He was evidently the descendant of Seraiah, a chief priest put to death by the king of Babylon. **2KI 25:18-21.**
 - (2) Persecution of God's ministers does not extirpate His ministry (**MAT 28:19-20**). While Herod was killing James (**ACT 12:1-2**), God was grooming Paul for the work.
 - B. He was a "...ready scribe in the law of Moses..." (**EZR 7:6**) and a priest (v. 12) and therefore a teacher in Israel. **MAL 2:7 c/w NEH 8:9.**
 - (1) ready: In a state of preparation, so as to be capable of immediately performing (or becoming the object of) such action as is implied in the context.
 - a. He had prepared his heart to learn, do and teach. **EZR 7:10.**
 - b. This is the trifecta of a successful teaching ministry.
 - i. Study to show oneself approved. **2TI 2:15; PSA 119:80.**
 - ii. Seek understanding to facilitate obedience. **PSA 119:34.**
 - iii. Teach with conduct that is consistent with creed. **1TH 2:10.**
 - (2) scribe: A writer; one whose business is writing. In various specific or limited applications.
 - a. Not all scribes were/are bad scribes. **MAT 13:52; 23:34.**
 - b. Then there are the likes of Origen, Westcott and Hort, and Zondervan.
 - (3) Not all N.T. priests are scribes but they are all called to be ready. **1PE 3:15.**
 - C. Ezra was very much a man of prayer. **EZR 8:21-23; 9:5-10:1.**
 - (1) Mind also his boldness in glorying in God. **vs. 22-23.**
 - (2) Of a similar resolve to rely upon God for supply, Paul said, "...it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void" (**1CO 9:15**).
 - D. Ezra was also obviously someone held in esteem by King Artaxerxes; therefore he had a

- good report of them that are without as well as those within. **ACT 16:2; 1TI 3:7.**
- E. It is no wonder that it was said many times of him that *the hand of God was upon him for good* (**EZR 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18**) a lesson and encouragement for all. **EZR 8:22, 31.**
3. Artaxerxes demonstrated a fear of God. **EZR 7:23.**
- A. He not only referred to Him as Ezra's God (**EZR 7:14**), the Jews' God (**EZR 7:15-16**), and the God of Jerusalem (**EZR 7:19**) but also the God of heaven. **EZR 7:12, 21, 23.**
- B. The fear of God is the basis of all just rule. **2SAM 23:3.**
- C. His decree simply allowed for men's freewill access to God's house. **EZR 7:13.**
- D. He wanted things done specifically according to God's will. **EZR 7:18, 23, 26.**
- E. He encouraged Biblical justice and teaching. **EZR 7:25.**
- F. He forbade any form of tax on the servants of God's house! **EZR 7:24.**
- G. Ezra described the thrust of the order as a beautifying of God's house. **EZR 7:27.**
- (1) As noted earlier, the best thing that a civil power can do to beautify God's church is to leave it alone. Herod the Great beautified the temple years later but was a bloodthirsty monster to anyone that got in his way.
- (2) Blest is that church which abides in a land where the civil power does not get in the way of men's freewill access to it, nor tax it to death, nor meddle in its affairs, and which fears the God of heaven Who indwells it.
- H. God's church could do a lot worse than living under the civil rule of an Artaxerxes.
4. When Ezra began to gather his people for this great venture for God's house, he had to dredge up Levites. **EZR 8:15-20 c/w EZR 7:7.**
- A. Ezra did well, in that seeing a need for ministers, he undertook to meet that need.
- (1) Thus, Paul told Titus to "...set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders..." (**TIT 1:5**).
- (2) Ministers and saints in general should be praying at the appropriate season for "...the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (**MAT 9:38**).
- B. Where was the spirit of the Levites which once rallied to the call, "Who is on the LORD's side" (**EXO 32:26**)?
- C. The servants of God's house have ever needed the occasional rebuke, "...be zealous therefore, and repent" (**REV 3:19**).
- D. It is a sad thing that a man of God must sometimes prod and provoke believers to do what they should have been zealous to do themselves.
- E. Though he faced discouragements, thin support from his fellows and perils in the way, Ezra made it to Jerusalem for God's service.
- (1) He was strengthened by the hand of God being upon him. **EZR 7:28.**
- (2) "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (**PHIL 4:13**).
5. Ezra separated twelve priests and weighed unto them the Lord's treasure which they were to bring to Jerusalem, to God's house, the place where God dwelt. **EZR 8:24-30.**
- A. Ministers entrusted with the Lord's treasure must be faithful stewards. **1CO 4:1-2.**
- B. Both the priests and the vessels were holy unto God. **v. 28.**
- (1) Ministers are vessels of God's spirit and gospel (**ACT 9:15; 2CO 4:7**) and should be holy. **1TH 2:10.**
- (2) Saints are God's elect *vessels of mercy* (**ROM 9:23**) who likewise "...should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour" (**1TH 4:4**).
- C. Upon arrival at Jerusalem, the ministers were expected to give an accounting of what had been entrusted to their care. **vs. 33-34 c/w HEB 13:17.**
- (1) Everything was numbered, weighed and recorded upon arrival to verify that nothing

- had been lost.
- (2) Thus, on our march to New Jerusalem, we should be careful to “...lose not those things which we have wrought” (**2JO 1:8**), that we might have an abundant entrance. **2PE 1:4-11**.
- (3) God will reckon with us about the talents given us in trust. **MAT 25:19**.

Chapters 9 & 10.

1. Having no sooner arrived at Jerusalem and God's house with great treasure (**EZR 8:32-36**), the man of God discovers tolerated sin in the camp. **EZR 9:1-2**.
 - A. These are still typical hardships of building for God. **LUK 13:6 c/w 2CO 12:20-21**.
 - B. They had just completed a lovely church service replete with sacrifice and a fund drive (**EZR 8:33-36**) but what is the form of godliness without the godliness? **2TI 3:5**.
 - C. It was the *princes* that informed Ezra of the error (v. 1). It is a sad day when the civil authority has more sense of propriety than the ministry and the worshipper. The one thing that should not be revived in a season of revival is old sin.
 - D. A specific law was being broken. **DEU 7:1-4**.
 - (1) Mind that the reason for the proscription against marrying wives from the nations was not because of national or racial purity but because of the danger of being corrupted away from true religion.
 - (2) They were “...doing according to their abominations...” (v. 1). True to form, the Jews mingling with the heathen converted more Jews than heathen. **PSA 106:35**.
 - (3) The abominations were evidently the moral uncleanness for which Canaan vomited out its own inhabitants. **EZR 9:11-12 c/w LEV 18:25**.
 - (4) Sexual uncleanness is a continual thorn in the church's side. **REV 2:14, 20**.
 - E. The worst offenders had been the leadership, even amongst Levi! c/w **ISA 3:12**.
 - (1) Bad examples in leadership breed bad duplication in followers. **GAL 2:11-13**.
 - (2) Leaders are thus more greatly condemned for the error. **JAM 3:1**.
 - (3) In the building of faith in the individual, the heart and thoughts which lead to sinful actions are as repulsive to God as the actions. **MAT 5:28**.
2. Ezra had an interesting reaction to this bad news. **vs. 3-4 c/w PSA 119:53**.
 - A. Faithful ministers don't always react the same way to flagrant sin (**NEH 13:25**) and some sinners need unique, tailored “helps” unto salvation. **JUDE 1:22-23**.
 - B. He sat down *astonied* (stunned, stupefied, paralyzed). It can be quite a shock to a man of God to find out what is really going on in church members' lives.
 - (1) His astonishment was not permanent but only “...until the evening sacrifice” (v. 4). He didn't let the circumstances prohibit his duty.
 - (2) At such times of depression or consternation, it behooves us to rouse ourselves by dialoguing with our soul about God to bring it back to sense. **PSA 42:6**.
3. At the time of the evening sacrifice, Ezra offered a superior sacrifice: humble, broken-hearted confession to God. **EZR 9:5-15; 10:1 c/w PSA 51:16-17**.
4. A recommendation was made that the error be undone by putting away the strange wives in a manner that would be *according to the law*. **EZR 10:3 c/w DEU 24:1-2**.
 - A. Mind that there is no such provision under the N.T. **1CO 7:12-14**.
 - B. However, sins to which we have long been married must be put away with at least this much zeal and resolve when they are brought to our attention. **EPH 4:31**.
 - C. Likewise, publicly known sinners with whom we have walked in covenant must be put away regardless of how close they were to us. **1CO 5:13**.

5. With the stated support of the people, Ezra made them swear to do right and the oath was activated with a severe penalty. **EZR 10:5-8.**
6. The people obediently gathered within the stated time-frame even though the weather was miserable; the stubborn, stiff-necked attitude of their ancestors was not in play here. **EZR 10:9-12.**
 - A. Interesting how the weather was inclement while they were undertaking to repent of their sins, which complicated things for them.
 - B. We need not expect right acts to always be attended by rosy circumstances.
 - C. Those who superstitiously govern their conduct by signs should take heed: needed repentance is proper in any season, any condition. **HEB 3:15.**
7. A sensible, reasonable program was arranged because of the inclement weather and the magnitude of the task. **EZR 10:13-17.**
 - A. The godly will find a way to *strive together for the faith of the gospel*. **PHIL 1:27.**
 - B. God takes limitations into consideration. **2CO 8:12.**
8. It appears that they also put away the children of those bad unions. **EZR 10:3-4, 44.**
 - A. This is not to say that God would leave them without hope. c/w **GEN 21:9-20.**
 - B. This all may remind us that repentance means not only putting away the obvious sin, but also the fruits of that sin, for one sin usually generates others. **ROM 6:19.**