

Ezra Chapter 2

- These genealogies / listings are here for some specific reasons:
- God is into specifics: Specific people, specific numbers. So often we can generalize things, kind of like praying “Lord save the world...” as opposed to “Lord, would you work in my dad’s heart, or minister to my brother Brian today...”
- God is into the details of these events just like He’s into the details of our lives.
- The genealogies indicate that we are talking about real people, this is not a fictitious account, these are real events involving real people.

1 Corinthians 15:58 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

- God remembers and seemingly honors the hard work and sacrifice of those that left the comforts of Babylon to honor Him, and build Him a house.

Hebrews 6:10 “For God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

- None of those that stayed behind are listed...
- Looking at it from a different perspective we can see God’s grace to us that He didn’t actually list all 49,697 Israelites that left Babylon for Jerusalem - our God is gracious and merciful.

V: 1-2 Seemingly some of the ordinary every day kinds people that helped to make up an extraordinary movement of God as He stirred up their hearts.

- ²Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, grandson of Jehoiachin, and a leader of the people.
- Jeshua, of Joshua high priest, or chief priest.
- This Nehemiah is different than the one we will read about later.

V: 3-19 The listing of various families.

- These genealogies are important because they needed to be able to prove that they were indeed Jewish, thereby being qualified to claim the rights and privileges of the nation.
- The Jews returning to Judah couldn't reclaim their family property unless they could prove their lineage.
- This was especially important for the Levites & priests: if they couldn't certify their lineage they couldn't serve in the temple or share in the benefits of that service.

- Listing by families because God would have our entire families to be saved!

Acts 16:31 “And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

Hebrews 11:7 “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house...”

- Noah began building the ark to the saving of his house 20 years before his first son was born.

V: 20-35 Listing the names of cities and villages in Judea, the number of people from each.

- Jeremiah had prophesied their captivity; but he also prophesied of their return:

Jeremiah 31:15-17 “¹⁵Thus saith the Lord; a voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. ¹⁶Thus saith the Lord; refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for their work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. ¹⁷And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border.”

V: 36-39 Listing the priests.

V: 40-41 Describing specifically the Levites and the singers amongst them.

V: 42 The porters.

V: 43-54 The **Nethinims** (“those given”) the previously conquered people who had been subjugated and forced into servitude in Jerusalem. Those that were “hewers” or cutters, and carriers of wood, and those that carried water, like the Gibeonites that had deceived Joshua.

- This group of people isn't specifically numbered as the others have been.

Matthew 27:32 describes a man by the name of Simon, a Cyrenian whom the Romans forced to carry the cross of Jesus - a carrier of wood.

John 4:9 describes the Samaritan woman who Jesus asked for a drink of water at the well in Samaria - a carrier of water.

- Both these individuals served Jesus and ended up believing and were saved, included in the family - just as in a way the Nethinims were preserved through the captivity, serving, and were now part of the family.

V: 55-58 The descendants of Solomon's royal servants, also not specifically numbered until the end where we're given a total.

V: 59-60 These were in amongst the people but could not prove their genealogy to prove whether they were Jews or not.

- The cities & locations listed here are in Babylon, not Judah.

V: 61-63 Those who were Jews, Levites who claimed to be descendants of the priesthood, sons or descendants of Aaron - but could not show proof of that.

- "Tirshatha" means "your excellence" or "his excellency" a reference to Zerubbabel, the leader & prince.
- Zerubbabel determined that they would be held back until a priest with "Urim & Thummim" could make a determination.



- The High Priest of old wore a priestly garment with a vest embedded with 12 precious jewels into part of which was sewn a pouch containing two stones - the "Urim" and the "Thummim" - which mean "lights and perfections."
- Basically Zerubbabel is deferring to God, asking Him to speak on this situation.
- During the times before the kings, the High Priest would use the Urim and Thummim to discern or divine God's will regarding various matters. Later during the times of the kings they would seek out a prophet to inquire of the will of God.
- These prospective priests were rejected from the priesthood for a lack of evidence or proof.
- The same is true today; unless there is proof that we're part of the family, we can't serve God either.

Romans 8:16 “The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

- If we're not truly born again of the Spirit then we have nothing to offer in ministry except the works of the flesh, and God doesn't want that.

V: 64-65 The total thus far of 42,360 - which did not include their respective servants which added up to 7,337 for a grand total of 49,697.

- To have servants while in captivity means that they truly have prospered and seemingly have been treated well.
- The number of the children of Israel had doubled from the time that they went into captivity. Like in the days of their bondage in Egypt - the times of affliction bring the greatest growth.

James 1:2-4 “²My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

V: 66-67 Their live stock, listing the beasts of burden, those that could carry a load.

- There is no mention of sheep or goats, very important in Jewish culture and Temple worship.
- Prior to their captivity the Jews were primarily farmers and herdsman; being taken captive to Babylon, a great commercial or business center. So they became businessmen and prospered, which is why a great many didn't want to leave and go back to the farm.

V: 68-70 The chief of the fathers; the heads of households, those that were well off gave gold, silver, and priestly garments.

- Speaking of drams of gold, and pounds of silver - during Solomon's time these precious metals were measured in “talents” or 75 pound increments and were almost beyond measuring, we were talking in terms of tons.
- 16 drams = 1 oz. 62.5 ounces or 3.9 pounds of gold.
- As the children of Israel came over the hill to see the ruins of the city and Temple, they saw the need and they offered freely of what they had.
- As this group arrived they went to their respective cities, literally returning to where they'd been taken captive from in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

Ezra Chapter 3

V:1 Nothing is written of the 900 mile journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, we have the beginning and the end of the journey, and nothing more.

- The **7th month** is the month of **Tishri** which equates to mid September to mid October. (Jewish Calendar)
- During the month of Tishri 3 different Jewish feasts are celebrated.
 1. 1st day: **Trumpets**
 2. 10th day: **Yom Kippur**
 3. 15th day: (7 days) **Tabernacles**, Booths, In-gathering.
- The people gathered themselves from all the various cities unto Jerusalem - gathered together as one man to Jerusalem.

Psalm 133:1 “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

- Perhaps there is some degree of national or ethnic identity; but at this point there is the fact that they’ve just spent 4 months making their way to the promised land together. Now they face the perils of the land together, and there is nothing like difficulty and danger that knits people together.

V: 2-3 First things first - they built an altar so as to worship God; to offer burnt offerings.

Matthew 6:33 “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

- Right priorities; there were probably a lot of practical things to address, but one thing is always most important of all!
- Jeshua & Zerubbabel - key players.
- “Burnt offerings” - offering of consecrations; being dedicated to the Lord’s service.
- They placed the altar up, upon his bases.
- The Temple had long been destroyed, but the foundation stones of the original altar were still in place so they used them.

- In their absence, other people who were enemies of Israel had moved into the land and taken over, they outnumbered the Jews and were antagonistic to their presence - and still are.
- They continued with the morning and evening sacrifices.

Numbers 28:2-4 “²Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and My bread for My sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto Me, shall ye observe to offer unto Me in their due season. ³And thou shalt say unto them, this is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the Lord; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering. ⁴The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even;”

V: 4-6 While the Temple is not at all built, they do have an altar and the ability to keep various aspects of the sacrificial laws, so they do what they can.

- They keep the feast of Tabernacles / booths “as it is written.”
- Once again, remembering God’s faithfulness to them in the wilderness.
- Daily burnt offering by number.
- New moons, set feasts, and free will offerings.

V: 7 Cyrus king of Persia was still an influence in all of this; he had given the children of Israel a “grant” - a sum of money to be used to buy materials for the re-building of the Temple - which they now put into use.

- Tyre & Sidon were coastal cities, shipping centers - not agricultural centers, now the Jews enter into trade with them - food for lumber & materials.
- Once again purchasing cedar trees from the area of Tyre and bringing them to Joppa by sea then overland to Jerusalem.

V: 8-11 In the second year men are appointed from among the Priests and Levites “to set forward” the construction of the Temple.

- It takes time to gather timber, stone, and all the materials - but now they are at work building the foundation - things are in motion.
- They began to praise the Lord - because His mercy endureth forever, and the foundation is laid.
- The true temple of God; like the church is based on unity of Spirit with God, and with each other.

V: 1 “together as one man”

V: 9 “Jeshua and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the work...”

V: 11 “And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks to the Lord...”

- The tasks were varied, but they all had one goal before them: to glorify the Lord by rebuilding His Temple.

Philippians 2:2 “Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

V: 12-13 Some of those who hadn't seen the previous Temple were ecstatic to get the foundation built, others remembered the glory of Solomon's temple and wept.

- Certainly from a worldly perspective this was indeed a lesser Temple, primarily of stone - not much gold, etc.

God sends a prophet to tell them otherwise!

Haggai 2:9 “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.”

- **Why? Because Jesus will come into this Temple!**
- The elders were looking back, wanting to see the glory of the “good old days”, days gone by.
- The younger men were looking at the present, rejoicing at what they saw before them.
- **Unity is when we all look up, and see Him in His glory; past, present, and future!**