

We will now begin the fourth lecture on the Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah. /We will begin with Ezra chapter 7. /In verses 1-5 /is the genealogy of Ezra. /Verse 1 says, “After these things, during the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia.”

/This is not King Artaxerxes in chapter 4. /Artaxerxes, who issued an order that the construction of the temple be put to a stop, was Cambyses. /King Artaxerxes in today’s passage is the son of King Ahasuerus.

/This king reigned over Persia from 465 BC /to 425 BC. /Ezra was a descendant of Aaron the high priest in the sixteenth generation. /Ezra was a priest and a scholar of the Law. /God had the temple built through Zerubbabel, but Zerubbabel grew old.

/Thus, God brought Ezra the young scholar from Persia. /God’s providential plan was that Ezra work for the building up of the nation of Israel. /Ezra returned during the second return from captivity. /Ezra was Aaron’s descendant.

/In verses 6-10, /Ezra returns to Jerusalem from Babylon. /Ezra was a scholar who was very familiar with the Law of Moses. /Scholars of the Law wrote the Law onto books.

/They also studied the Law and taught God’s people. /They were like the scribes in the New Testament times. /Ezra returned from captivity and studied the Law, /and he devoted himself to teaching the laws and regulations, that God gave his people through Moses, to the people.

/Verse 6 says, “The king had granted him everything he asked.” /Ezra obeyed God’s word. /Ezra was faithful to the king of Persia and he was wise. /Hence, even the king considered Ezra worthy.

/Thus, the king gave Ezra everything he asked for. /Ezra aided the king, /and thus, the king helped Ezra. /We all reap what we sow.

/When we plant seeds, there will be a day of harvest. /Daniel too was faithful to the king and he won the king’s favor. /In this way, anyone who is faithful before God must be faithful before people as well. /Such believers are also faithful in their duties at church.

/In verse 7, Ezra returned to Jerusalem, along with priests, Levites, and singers. /He also came with gatekeepers and temple servants.

/In verse 9, it says that Ezra left Persia in the first day of the first month of the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. /He arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month of that same year. /This was the second return from captivity. /The distance straight from Babylon to Jerusalem was about 850 kilometers.

/If one traveled by road, it was about 1,440 kilometers in distance. /It took the people about four months to travel this long and harsh road.

/In verse 10, Ezra devoted himself to teaching the laws to the spiritually dry people of Israel. /Ezra considered it most urgent to provide the people with the daily bread of God's word.

/Ezra continued to study the Law, /and he decided to teach the people. /Ezra would have lived in peace if he stayed in Persia. /Ezra could receive anything he wanted from the king of Persia.

/Ezra had the king's trust, and Ezra was of high status in Persia. /However, Ezra left all that behind and returned to Jerusalem to fulfill his calling. /God allowed Ezra to be well educated in the Law. /Thus, Ezra returned so that he would teach the people about the Law and how they could serve God.

/Ezra returned to teach the Israelites the way they should go. /This was similar to Moses when he abandoned his status as the son of the princess of Egypt. /Moses rejoiced in receiving sufferings with God's people.

/Thus, Moses left Egypt with the Israelites. /We too must live for our calling for the gospel, and we must die for our calling.

/In verses 11-26 /is King Artaxerxes' letter. /King Artaxerxes issued a decree to Ezra. /There were seven commands in the letter. /First, /it says in verse 13 that the priests and Levites from Judah, who were in Persia, /were to go with Ezra to Jerusalem if they wished to (verse 13).

/Second, /it says in verse 15, the silver and gold that King Artaxerxes and his advisers had were to be freely given to God. /The people were to take these offerings to Jerusalem.

/Third, /it says in verse 16, the silver and gold that they obtained from Babylon /were to be given as offerings of the people and priests for the temple of God.

/Fourth, /verse 17 says, the money was to be used for rams and lambs as sacrifices for God. /Fifth, /verse 18 says, the rest of the money was to be used according to God's will.

/Sixth, /verse 19 says, the people were to take the articles entrusted for worship in God's temple. /Seventh, /verse 20 says, anything else needed for the temple of God was to be taken from the royal treasury.

/King Artaxerxes showed great kindness to the Israelites. /Judges 14:14 says, "Out of the eater, something to eat; /out of the strong, something sweet." /This applies to us today as well.

/When we obey God's word with faith and build up the spiritual temple, /God will move our enemies so that they help us. /God will also give us everything we need.

/Ezra devoted himself to his calling to teach the Israelites about God's word, /he gave

sacrifices for God's temple, /and he was prepared to receive sufferings for the construction of God's kingdom. /God gives good things to believers who are like Ezra.

/In verse 21, King Artaxerxes issued a decree to Trans-Euphrates. /It says in verse 22 that the treasurers there were to give certain amounts of silver, wheat, wine /and oil to Ezra. / They were to give salt without a limit.

/The king told them to give one hundred talents of silver. /One talent is about 34 kilograms. /Therefore, one hundred talents would be about 3,400 kilograms. /The king also told them to give one hundred cors of wheat. /One cor is about 22 liters.

/The king told them to give one hundred baths of wine. /One bath is 22 liters. /King Artaxerxes gave many offerings to God. /The king was very enthusiastic in serving God.

/Verse 23 says that this was because he was afraid that God's wrath would be on him and his children. /The king knew God as a fearful God. /Those who fear God are faithful to God.

/In verse 24, King Artaxerxes had the priests, Levites, singers, /gatekeepers, temple servants, or other workers at God's temple exempt from paying taxes. /The temple servants cut wood and drew water at the temple.

/The king even had them exempt from paying taxes. /In verse 25, the king gave Ezra the power to appoint and dismiss judges. /Ezra appointed magistrates and judges in Trans-Euphrates, all who knew the Law.

/Ezra was also given the power to teach the Law to those who did not know, /and also judge the people by the Law. /God must have been very pleased with this. /In verse 26, the king gave Ezra judicial power.

/He commanded that anyone who did not follow God's commands or the king's commands were to be put to death. /Anyone who did not obey were to be banished, confiscated of property, or imprisoned. /Ezra gained such authority, and he was able to work to rebuild Jerusalem.

/In verses 27-28, /Ezra praised the Lord. /Ezra praised God upon arriving at Jerusalem. /Ezra gave thanks to God for moving King Artaxerxes' heart, /and he also gave thanks for allowing them to beautifully build the Lord's temple.

/In verse 28, Ezra further gave thanks to God for his grace and for allowing him and other men to go to Jerusalem.

/Ezra said, "The hand of the LORD my God was on me." /Everything went well because the hand of God was with Ezra.

/God's hand was with Ezra because Ezra obeyed God's command, /devoted himself to his

calling, and was prepared to receive sufferings upon his return. /God's hand will be with us when we act in this way.

/In 8:1-14 /are the names of those who returned with Ezra. /There are the family names of those who returned to Jerusalem from Persia with Ezra. /This was the second return from captivity.

/In chapter 2 are the names of those who returned with Zerubbabel in the first return. /Chapter 2 includes the record of women. /Yet, chapter 8 only records the men in the second return.

/It is certain that women and children returned during the second return. /However, only the names of men are recorded. /There is a spiritual meaning in this. /This meant that only those who were vigorous in faith like men were able to go up to Jerusalem.

/Any women who were vigorous in faith like men were able to go to Jerusalem. /However, any men who did not have strong faith were not able to go to Jerusalem.

/We believers of Jesus /are also going up to the holy Jerusalem. /Therefore, we must have vigorous faith like that of men.

/In verses 15-20, /people were recruited to serve in the temple. /"Ahava" was the location of exile of the people of Judah in Babylon. /Ezra recruited people there who would go up to Jerusalem.

/They gathered and prepared for three days for their return to Jerusalem. /However, the Levites could not be found. /Many Levites were needed to serve in the temple at Jerusalem.

/However, it was a problem that there were no Levites. /Why didn't the Levites come? /It was because there was no temple of God in Babylon. /The Levites did not fulfill their duties in Babylon, and as a result, their faith regressed.

/Anyone who does not fulfill their God-given duties will lose courage of faith. /Therefore, in verse 16, Ezra sent eleven men to Casiphia. /Ezra had them bring the Levites. /In verse 17, Iddo, the leader in Casiphia may have been the man in charge of education there.

/Thus, Ezra asked Iddo to send Levites who would go serve in the temple at Jerusalem. /He needed to make the request to the person in charge. /It is important that we bring up workers who will serve in God's house.

/This applies to seminaries today. /Seminaries must properly educate and bring up workers so that they would work for God's church and the salvation movement. /At that time, Iddo encouraged the Levites who studied under him.

/Iddo moved the hearts of many Levites and temple servants so that they would go to Jerusalem. /In verse 18 it says, among them, forty were Levites. /There were also 220 temple servants.

/In verses 21-23, /Ezra proclaimed a fast and asked God for a safe journey. /Ezra proclaimed a fast for all who gathered by the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem. /The road to Jerusalem was a difficult one.

/There were many thieves and was a deserted road. /It would take four months to get to Jerusalem. /Therefore, the people prayed to God that they would have a safe journey to Jerusalem. /It is important that believers pray sincerely when they are faced with difficulties.

/There is hope for believers who pray when they face difficulties. /We will fail if we do not pray, rely on people, and go forward according to our own thoughts.

/Verse 21 says, “so that we might humble ourselves before our God.” /Ezra fasted and became humble in attitude. /Isaiah chapter 58 records the purpose for fasting.

/The purpose of fasting is to lower oneself and raise one’s voice up to God. /Therefore, when we fast, we must repent and deny ourselves. /Our voices must be raised to God.

/Then we must be strengthened with God’s grace and power. /Ezra received all that he asked for from the king. /Therefore, Ezra was able to receive soldiers and horsemen for the journey to Jerusalem if he had asked the king.

/However, verse 22 says, Ezra was ashamed to ask the king for help. /Why was he ashamed? /Ezra told the king in the past, /“The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him.”

/Therefore, if Ezra’s actions did not agree with /his preaching about God, /God would not have been pleased with Ezra. /The king would have also looked down on Ezra. /Thus, Ezra would be ashamed in his conscience.

/Hence, Ezra fasted and prayed to God, and God answered his prayer. /God answered Ezra’s prayers, and he set out on the long and difficult road with peace.

/Because God was with him, /Ezra was able to rely only on God and go to Jerusalem without any worries. /Ezra and the people of Judah sought after God and relied only on God.

/When Ezra set out towards Jerusalem, God helped him with his might.

/In verses 24-30, /the silver and gold and articles were given to the priests to carry. /Ezra entrusted all the things from the king of Persia to the twelve priests. /Ezra weighed the silver and gold and the articles of the temple, and he entrusted them to the priests.

/In verse 26, it says that the weight of the silver that Ezra gave the priests /was 650 talents. /This is about 22,100 kilograms of silver. /The articles of silver weighed 100 talents. /This was about 3,400 kilograms. /In verse 27 it says there were 20 bowls of gold. /They weighed approximately 1,000 darics. /One thousand darics is about 8.4 kilograms. / There were also two fine articles of polished bronze.

/Ezra entrusted these to twelve priests who were set apart. /This was so that the finances of God's house would be taken care of. /The articles were entrusted to trustworthy people.

/Finances in the church today must be well taken care of. /Pastors must entrust the finances to elders and deacons who are trustworthy. /In verse 25, King Artaxerxes, his advisers, his officials, and all the Israelite people gave offerings to God. /They weighed the silver and gold and temple articles that they people offered to God.

/They were then entrusted to the priests and Levites. /In verse 29, they weighed the articles before the leading priests and the Levites and the family heads of Israel upon arriving at Jerusalem. /They weighed the articles that were to be taken to the house of the Lord.

/All articles of the temple were considered sacred. /All silver and gold and temple articles that were to be given to God were considered sacred. /"Sacred" means that they were set apart and given as offerings to God. /All temple articles and offerings /were given to God. /Therefore, they were considered sacred.

/In verses 31-32, /Ezra and the people arrived safely in Jerusalem with God's help. /Ezra and the people of Judah left Babylon in the first month. /They arrived in Jerusalem within four months.

/Verses 33-36 /record what the people did upon their arrival at Jerusalem. /On the fourth day of Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem, /the priests and the Levites weighted out the silver and gold and temple articles that were offered to God.

/They weighed the offerings, and the priests recorded the numbers. /In the church, offerings must be counted by many people. /Those in charge of church finances must accurately record the numbers and deposit the money into the bank.

/In verse 35, the people who returned from Persia sacrificed burnt offerings to God in the temple at Jerusalem. /Then in verse 36, King Artaxerxes' orders were sent to the governors of Trans-Euphrates.

/I pray that you will believe in Jesus Christ, and that you would devote your lives to God.

/Here we will conclude the fourth lecture on Ezra and Nehemiah. /Thank you.