



*Biblical Building*

*Sermon #15*

*‘The Role of Pastoral Leadership!’*

*Ezra 8:1-14*

Sunday, August 24th, 2025

*Last Sunday in the Biblical Building Sermon Series:*

- Last Sunday we were able to study all of Ezra chapter 7!
  - *We looked at a sermon entitled ‘The Role of Pastoral Leadership!’.*
  - I asked the question: *How does Ezra exemplify Biblical Pastoral leadership in bringing another group of Jews home to Jerusalem to establish the law?*
    - **Truth #1: Gifted from God.** (vv. 1-6)
    - **Truth #2: Got to be dedicated to the study of the Word.** (vv. 7-10)

- **Truth #3: God’s man is Divinely protected.** (vv. 11-26)
- **Truth #4: Good leader of people.** (vv. 27-28)

- Based on last Sunday’s sermon, how do you interpret Pastoral leadership and do you follow it in a Biblical way?

*‘A Conscious Decision!’*

*Ezra 8:1-14*

*Sermon in a Sentence:*

*Ezra makes a conscious decision to add some important details outlining his personal hopes for the religious community of Jews in Jerusalem moving forward.*

*Intro:*

- A Conscious Decision is a choice that someone makes knowingly and deliberately.
  - *Those who took their next step in Believers Baptism this morning made a conscious decision to follow Christ in obedience, through believer’s Baptism.*
    - Being a follower of Christ is full of conscious decisions that we make out of love and obedience for Christ.
- *Similarly this morning, the writer of the book that we’ve studied for 14 sermons now, made a conscious decision to add some deliberate details about the*

*group who was leaving Babylon and going to Jerusalem with him.*

- *\*Illustration\**

- *I remember when Hannah and I did youth ministry we would plan and take our students on trips.*

- One summer camp trip we took 33 students and leaders to a summer camp trip that we had planned.
- *While we had a great week and God moved mightily with many students accepting Christ and rededicating their lives, one of the most valuable things we had that week, a roster.*
  - On that roster had each student's name, age, grade, spiritual situation, parents names, and any medical information.

- *We made a conscious decision to add certain things to that list and not have other things on the list.*

- We did that so that our leaders who received these rosters would know what to do in case any type of situation were to occur while at camp.

- *In a similar way, Ezra made a conscious decision to what he added and didn't add to the list of names of Israelites who returned with Him to Jerusalem in 458 B.C.*

- Earlier in our study of Ezra, we came across a list of names, back in Ezra 2.

- *That was the 42,000 who returned with Zerubbabel and Jeshua to Jerusalem from Babylon years earlier.*

- Nehemiah 7 mirrors that list from Ezra 2.

- *But, the list in Ezra 8:1-14, is different, why?*

- This is because the returnees in Ezra 8:1-14 are not the initial group that returned.
- It's an additional, smaller caravan that came back with Ezra years later.

- *57 years after the temple was rebuilt.*

- From the list that is given in the text, it was approximately 1,500 men who uprooted their families to head to Jerusalem.

- *This would mean around 5,000 Jews left the comforts of Babylon, and headed towards Jerusalem for theological restructuring that was going to occur under the leadership of Ezra.*

- Though it was a smaller group than before, it was still quite the considerable addition to the Jewish community in Jerusalem.

- *As Ezra sat down to compile the list of those who made the 500 mile journey with him, and he placed it into the book that is now named after him, I'm sure memories of the journey and the individuals listed flooded his mind.*

- Just as memories of my former students in the Youth Ministry flooded mine when I looked at that roster earlier this week, I'm sure Ezra was flooded too.

- *But in this list that Ezra put together and compiled into the book of Ezra, he made a conscious decision with the arrangement of names which shows the priorities and personal agenda Ezra had for leading more Jews to Jerusalem.*
  - In an odd yet interesting way, even in the listed names, we see the purpose of what Ezra wanted to accomplish. A conscious decision was made in the details that he included...

#### *Question to Ask:*

*How does the list of names and numbers illustrate a conscious decision that was made by Ezra?*

#### *Truth #1: Priority of Liturgical Worship. (v. 1-2a)*

- It is hard for you and I to understand the magnitude of liturgical worship, especially under the Torah, since we have been brought into the New Covenant through Christ death, burial, and resurrection.
  - *When we last left off in our series in Ezra, we left off with Ezra gaining courage from God's*

*involvement in the affairs of men, specifically political leaders.*

- Then, it seems (though not Scripturally proven) that Ezra recruited heads of the families of Israel to accompany him on his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.
  - This would have been big, not just for the priority of liturgical worship but for the promise of the Messiah (through David) and potential renewal that was to come...

- *But in the first two verses, Ezra makes it clear that the priestly line of which he is bringing to Jerusalem is very important.*

- There is one important thing to point out here...

#### ● *The Aaronic Priesthood. (vv. 1-2a)*

- 'These are the heads of their fathers' houses, and this is the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylonia, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king: 2 Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom. Of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel.'

- *In verse 1, Ezra makes it clear that the purpose of this passage is to mention the genealogy of those who returned with him and the fact that at that time, Artaxerxes was the King.*

- *The only other list of names in the book of Ezra is Ezra 2.*

- There, laity is mentioned first, and then the priests and levites.
- Here, the priests and levites are mentioned first (probably because this is the line of which Ezra comes from).
- *We must also notice that in Ezra 2 the females are included in the overall number of returnees by family, but here, it is just men. We must take note of this.*
- *In Ezra 8:2, there are only two priestly families mentioned.*

■ **Phineas.**

- This was the priestly line that Ezra was counted in and came through.
- Phineas came through the line of Eleazar and was the third son of Aaron according to Exodus 6:23-25.

■ **Ithamar.**

- Ithamar was Aaron's fourth son according to Exodus 6:23.
- *Why does Ezra mention the two priestly lines that he was bringing with him at the forefront of his letter?*
  - *I personally believe this was because it showed the increasing importance of the priestly office within the life of*

***Israel as well as Ezra's own personal stance in this community.***

- *Ezra was in the desert, 500 miles from Jerusalem just having left Babylon (with Artaxerxes I permission) and in the group he had with him, were descendants who had crossed the desert in the great exodus from Egypt (including himself).*
  - These families did remain in Babylon during the earlier migrations (538 BC for example), but now, they were taking the invitation to participate in God's Work in Jerusalem!
- ***What a beautiful thing it is that God's invitation is always open to those who will accept it!***

**Truth #2: *Promise of the Messiah.* (v. 2b)**

- After the names concerning the two lines of priests who descended from Aaron are mentioned, we are given a very small, but very important promise right here in the middle of the text.
  - ***A Davidic figure is named!***
- 'Of the sons of David, Hattush.'
  - *With the mention of a descendant of David, it is clear that Ezra is keeping the political ancestry in the minds of his readers (fellow jews).*

- *Ezra does not want his people to easily forget that David is the chosen line that God will use in the near future!*
- *So, who is Hattush?*
  - Hattush was a great-great-grandson (fourth generation) of Zerubbabel, which was in the line of David.
  - We must also notice that while Hattush was a descendant of David, he was not in a position of power/leadership like Zerubbabel was years before.
    - *This begins to show us/let us in on the fact that the line of David did not have the prestige that it once did...*
      - *Why?* We cannot possibly know...
  - *But notice by the time that the genealogy gets to Joseph he is 'just a carpenter'.*
- The genealogy of Hattush that is given here is confirmed by 1st Chronicles 3:21-22.
- *Christ would come from the line of David!*
  - While Ezra probably didn't know it within his lifetime that the Christ would come from the line of David (depending on how he interpreted 2nd Samuel 7:12-16) he mentions a descendant of David to remind the faith community that

‘HEY God is still in this! He’s not finished with us yet!’.

- *A lot of terrible things have happened in Israel since the time of David. But Ezra make the conscious decision to mention a descendant of David.*
- Throughout all the storms, decisions of disobedience, and strife, God remained faithful.
- *God Himself allowed a descendant of David to still be within the religious community so that He could continue His plan of redemption, through His Son Jesus Christ.*
  - *When we are tempted to think that the book of Ezra is outdated, doesn't matter, or isn't significant, may we be reminded that God chose to use this 'remnant' through 'Hattush' to bring His Son in the world to save us!*
- The Royal line of Israel being mentioned here in Ezra 8:2, is a gentle reminder that God is still in control and the Promise of the Messiah still remains!

**Truth #3: *Potential Renewal.* (vv. 3-14)**

- ‘Of the sons of Shecaniah, who was of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah, with whom were registered 150 men. **4** Of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai the son of Zerahiah, and with him 200 men. **5** Of the sons of Zattu,<sup>[a]</sup> Shecaniah the son of Jahaziel, and with him

300 men. **6** Of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him 50 men. **7** Of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him 70 men. **8** Of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him 80 men. **9** Of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him 218 men. **10** Of the sons of Bani, [b] Shelomith the son of Josiphiah, and with him 160 men. **11** Of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah, the son of Bebai, and with him 28 men. **12** Of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him 110 men. **13** Of the sons of Adonikam, those who came later, their names being Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them 60 men. **14** Of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, and with them 70 men.' Ezra 8:3-14

- *In the first two verses Ezra has mentioned the divisions of priests and then discussed the heir of David.*
- *In the following verses (3-14), there are 12 families that are mentioned.*
  - *While scholars argue the significance of the 12 families mentioned, I truly believe that this is Ezra's attempt at renewal for the nation of Israel.*
    - As mentioned a moment ago, the replenishing of the priesthood was a major aim of his trip, as well as renewing David's lineage in Jerusalem, once again.

○ *While those are big, and must not be overlooked (as they were more than likely the major reasons for the journey to begin with), I also want us to see more in verses 3-14 than just names.*

- By this time, Israel has already split into two kingdoms.
  - We've got the northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom.
- *While the majority of returnees were from the Southern Kingdom back in Ezra 2, it's important to note that all 12 tribes are represented here.*
  - In each verse, the amount of men that came back from that family are mentioned.
  - Notice that not all of the people in every tribe came back, with the amount of people in each tribe, these numbers are very, very small.
- *But, Ezra makes it clear that this new community that he is seeking to add theological structure to is going to be represented by all of the 12 tribes of Israel.*
- *Very quickly, let's look at each verse and break down a little bit of the meaning in the names given here...*

- *(One thing you will find is that all of the families that are mentioned here, their relatives were also mentioned in Ezra 2, and Nehemiah 7 for that matter).*

- **In verse 3**, the name '*Shecaniah*' is listed which means in the Hebrew 'YahWeh has taken up his abode'.
  - The name Parosh that is given means that this group was related to one of the original returnees, mentioned in Ezra 2:3.
  - The name Zechariah shouldn't immediately cause you to think this was one of the 'well known' Zechariahs (prophet or John the Baptist' Father), as there are around 30 individuals in the Bible with this name. (In Ezra 2:3, 2,172 of them returned initially, here, 150 men)
- **In verse 4**, these individuals were the descendants of the original returnees in Ezra 2:6. (There 2,812 returned! Here, it's just 50).
  - The Hebrew term '*Eliehoenai*' is only found here and in 1st Chronicles 26:3, but means 'to Yahweh are my eyes'.
- **In verse 5**, while the Hebrew lacks the name 'Zattu' (this could be with the Aramaic translation), this family is connected to Ezra 2:8.

- Back in Ezra 2:8, 945 members of this family returned, here in Ezra 8:5, another large amount, 300 men, return.

- **In verse 6**, in Ezra 8:6, these individuals are related to those of Ezra 2:15 (there 454 returned).
  - The Hebrew name '*Ebid*' here is possibly the shortened form for Obadiah in the Hebrew.
    - *Ebid*=Slave
    - *Obadiah*=Slave of Yahweh
  - The name 'Johnathan' was also a regular Hebrew name, as there are at least 16 different individuals with that name in the OT.
- **In verse 7**, these people were related to the returnees of Ezra 2:7. (There 1,254 returned)
  - '*Jeshaiah*' is a Hebrew word that means 'Yahweh has saved'.
  - '*Athaliah*' is interesting here, because it was also the same name of a famous queen in the OT, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel in 2nd Kings 11.
- **In verse 8**, these people were related to those in Ezra 2:4, who had already come back to Jerusalem, the first time. (In that first time, 372 returned).

- The name **'Michael'** is also mentioned in verse 8, and it means in the Hebrew **'Who is like God?'**
  - There are 10 individuals in the OT with this name including the archangel.
- **In verse 9**, we don't have a clear answer as to who their descendants were from Ezra 2.
  - But, **Joab** in the Hebrew means 'Yahweh is father'
  - And **Jehiel** means 'May God live'.
- **In verse 10**, these people are the relatives of those in Ezra 2:10. (there, 642 returned).
- **In verse 11**, these individuals are related to those who came back in Ezra 2:11, which then, were 623 returnees.
- **In verse 12**, this family is related to those who came back to Jerusalem from Babylon in Ezra 2:12.
  - The name **'Johanan'** is Hebrew for **'Yahweh has been gracious'**, and is the name of 13 people in the OT.
  - The name 'Hakkatan' is Hebrew for 'little one' and only appears here in the OT.
- **In verse 13**, the phrase 'last ones' here probably means that they were the last ones to arrive.

- Hence the ESV's translation 'those who came later', the KJV does not translate this Hebrew phrase.
- **In verse 14**, these people are related to the returnees of Ezra 2:2.
  - ***While that portion of the text and sermon, may not seem very interesting, it's important to note that contextually, to the original readers, the verses with the names of families would have been of utmost importance.***
    - ***And notice too that before Ezra gets to the hard task of setting theological structures in this religious community in Jerusalem, he mentions who came with him...***
  - ***But why?***
    - ***As there was great purpose in WHO Ezra mentioned in verses 1 and 2, there is a great desire for unity across the nation of Israel scattered through the names that you read in verses 3-14....***
- From these names in verses 3-14, let me share with you **2** things of what it can mean for us:
  - ***Extended Family Members make the hard decision.***



- Every family mentioned in Ezra 8, was also mentioned in Ezra 2.

- *What does this mean?*

- That earlier, nearly 80 years before Ezra's arrival, they (most likely their ancestors) had the opportunity to leave and head to Jerusalem, but did not.

- *In the first exodus out of Babylon at Cyrus's decree, 42,000 left and headed for Jerusalem.*

- And here, only 5,000 left.

- *While this would have by no means been the majority of Israel that left Babylon and decided to head back to Jerusalem, it was a small group that decided to go back with Ezra.*

- *Perhaps, the memories and stories they were told of their ancestors who were a part of the 42,000 that originally left Babylon due to Cyrus's decree under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, encouraged and inspired them to make the journey.*

- It's possible, that the legacy of their ancestors encouraged them to leave the comforts of Babylon.

- *What does this show us?*

- *That the decisions you make today (good or bad) can directly affect the*

*decisions that those who come after you may make, based on your example.*

- While it would have been a hard decision for these extended family members to make the move, almost 90 years after their ancestors did, they did it.

- Ezra was grateful, as he lists the heads of their families here.

- *These families, plus the family members they would reunite with in Jerusalem, would become imperative for the movement of God that would occur and leadership Ezra would exercise.*

- *Renewal is not necessarily overnight.*

- In 538 B.C., is when the decree of Cyrus was given, back in Ezra 1, for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

- *It was 458 B.C. when Ezra returned with this group (as listed in Ezra 8:1-14) to Jerusalem.*

- Nearly 90 years have gone by since some of these family members (their descendants at this point) have been reunited.

- *We must realize that just like Ezra 2, not all of the members of the families in Ezra 8:1-14,*

*decided to return back to Jerusalem.*

- *But, we still see Ezra's conscious decision and small hint at the fact that maybe, just maybe, God would renew these folks, families, and nation of Israel.*
- With it being 90 years since the Israelites first came back to Jerusalem, we can see that sometimes, Renewal takes a long time.
  - *It is not necessarily an overnight process.*
- *Whether this be the renewal of your family, business, friends, Church, sports team or much more, renewal is not a man-made event.*
  - But something that God Himself must allow and touch.
- Here, it was a 90 year process, but can you imagine how excited the relatives were to see their descendants walk into Jerusalem?

**Conclusion:**

- I understand this morning's text was definitely a 'different' one, and the second time in this series that we've dealt with a text made up with names for the majority!
  - *But, isn't it amazing that God can speak to us through ALL of His written Word? Even through names?*

■ *That was certainly the case this morning.*

- A conscious decision was made by Ezra to include these three subtle yet important details.
  - *Truth #1: Priority of Liturgical Worship. (v. 1-2a)*
  - *Truth #2: Promise of the Messiah. (v. 2b)*
  - *Truth #3: Potential Renewal. (vv. 3-14)*
- Question of Application #1:
  - *While we do not worship under the Old Covenant or prioritize liturgical worship, how and where does the worship of Jesus Christ play into your life?*
- Question of Application #2:
  - *How often have you thought of God's Scarlet thread of Salvation throughout Scripture and how that plays into the book of Ezra? Especially with the evidence given in Ezra 8:2.*
- Question of Application #3:
  - *What are areas of your life that God needs to renew? Whether that be family, work, Church, sports teams, or more? What can God renew this morning to allow you to be a bolder witness for Him?*