



*Biblical Building*

*Sermon #3*

***'A List of the Faithful!'***

*Ezra 2:1-70*

Sunday, May 18th, 2025 at FBCG

*The Last Time in our 'Biblical Building' Sermon Series:*

- Last Sunday we celebrated our young families as well as our mothers, so we did not continue in the book of Ezra last Sunday.
  - But, the last time we were in our 'Biblical Building' sermon series, I preached a sermon entitled ***'When God Moves Government!'***
  - I asked the question: ***How does this passage of scripture reveal that God can and does move earthly Governments for His Glory?***
    - ***Truth #1: The Probing of God. (v. 1)***
    - ***Truth #2: The Proclamation Made. (vv. 2-4)***

■ ***Truth #3: The Provision of God through Others. (vv. 5-11)***

- Based on that sermon from several Sunday's ago, do you trust that God is fully and completely in charge of the government?
- Have you been praying for our elected leaders regularly since that sermon, and have you reached out to your elected officials since then?

***'A List of the Faithful!'***

*Ezra 2:1-70*

***Sermon in a Sentence:***

***In Ezra 2, we find a list of the faithful Jews who returned back to Jerusalem. In addition to their names being record in Ezra 2, their vocational was also included for some of them.***

**Intro:**

- Your **NAME** matters.
  - It represents who you are, it triggers thoughts (good and bad), in the minds of others when they hear your name verbally mentioned.
  - For the most part, your name is your identity, it is who you are.
- ***\*Illustrations\* (When your name is called)***
  - Just last month, **257** college football players were able to hear their name announced, meaning a team was choosing them out of thousands of college football players.

- *For those young men, to hear their names called it represented in that one name, the following:*
  - *Countless hours of hard work.*
  - *Sacrifice on behalf of family and Friends.*
  - *Coaches believing in you.*
  - *Never giving up.*
- The list goes on and on, but when that name is called, it represents **WHO** that person is and **WHAT** they've gone through.
- *Similarly in this text, we find in Ezra 2 that it is all about the identity of the people of God.*
  - With these names mentioned, it specifically represents their legitimacy as Jews, as well as the loyalty they displayed in returning back to the land God had given them.
    - *Remember what we discussed in our overview sermon, not all of the Jews following Babylonian captivity chose to come home.*
  - A similar, but not identical list to this is found in Nehemiah 7. One may be inclined to ask the question, *why would a list like this be included in a narrative about God's people returning home and rebuilding His temple?*
    - *Some scholars say that this list was included to legitimize land rights after*

*the return from exile.* (so there wouldn't be the unneeded arguing over land).

- *To distinguish true (blood) Israelites from Samaritans.*
- *One scholar argues 'The genealogies are a guarantee that Israel is not adrift in a vacuum of this present generation but has security and credentials. And as long as Israel can name names, utter their precious sounds, it has a belonging which no hostile empire can deny.'*
- *I ultimately believe that this list is to honor the faithful Jews who CHOSE to return.*
  - Which signifies their faith in the promises of God and the value they placed on the Abrahamic Covenant, and in the land with which God has promised Abraham.
- *In Ezra 2, this lists sets us up for the great work of rebuilding that is going to take place in Chapter 3.*
  - *Then the list that is written in Nehemiah 7, confused the rebuilding of the temple, community, and the city.*
- Before describing the rebuilding of the temple, the writer of Ezra-Nehemiah wants the readers to know who is back in Jerusalem and who is a part of this building.

- *Because through them, God would accomplish His purposes.*

### Question to Ask:

*What can 70 verses of names show us of the Faithfulness of the Israelites and what group of people are identified as coming 'home' to Jerusalem?*

### Truth #1: *The Leaders Portrayed Symbolically. (vv. 1-2)*

- 'Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town. **2** They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.'
- *The word province in verse 1 is a reference to Judah, rather than Babylon.*
- *Since Sheshbazzar is mentioned as a leader in chapter 1, and then Zerubbabel appears here in chapter 2, I believe the return of the Israelites was scattered.*
  - (We do not know what happened to Sheshbazzar, but we do know that at this time Zerubbabel was the governor).
- Look at the phrase *'each to his own town'* there in verse 1.
  - *This phrase emphasizes that the survivors of the exile who return home, are to retake the*

*lands that their ancestors held prior to the exile, according to Mosaic Legislation, these were their lands.*

- *This shows us that even after 70 years, the memory was still alive of the lands they once had. That God had given them.*

- Therefore HOPE was still alive.

### ● *In Verse 2, the leaders of Israel at this time, are mentioned.*

- The list that is found in Nehemiah 7, contains one more name that is not found here, 'Nahamani'.
- The reason it is probably not also included here in Ezra could potentially be because of something as simply as a copying error.
- *I find that the number 12 (that's supposed to be here but is in Nehemiah 7), is so significant as well as symbolic because it emphasizes the continuity of the this post exilic community, with the Israel of their fathers.*
  - 'They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.' Ezra 6:17

- ***The number of 12 is significant here, showing them that God has still got this and will be faithful to them.***

- Now, this Zerubbabel is the Governor at this time.
- According to Haggai 1:1, Jeshua was the High Priest.
  - Now, the Nehemiah mentioned here is not the same Nehemiah who would later come to Jerusalem in 445 B.C. and rebuild the wall.
  - This was also not the same Mordecai from the book of Ezra.

- ***Both Nehemiah and Mordecai were common Hebrew names.***

- It is interesting to note that the name Seraiah was also the name of Ezra's father according to Ezra 7:1.
  - ***This is more than likely Ezra's Father, but we don't know for sure.***
  - Either way, the leaders are identified and the fact that there are 12 shows that God desires to restore them to Preexilic life.

- ***Leadership is important, but so are laymen!***

***Truth #2: The Laymen Presented Specifically. (vv. 3-20)***

- ***\*Illustration\****

- I will never forget the feeling I had during my senior year of Highschool when I walked down

to the Chorus room and found my name on the list of people who had earned a part in our upcoming Musical, Westside story.

- I felt elated and reassured to find my name on a list.

- ***In a similar way, these Israelites would have been reassured that they were the ones who had made it back, successfully, to Jerusalem.***

- This land represented to them, since the time of Abraham, God's commitment to redeem the earth from sin and judgment and to establish a divine and eternal Kingdom.

- ***This portion of the list is almost identical to that of Nehemiah 7, but there is a variation in the numbers due to the fact that copying Hebrew numbers is extremely difficult.***
- ***Without going into extreme detail on each family, I do want to mention some of the family names that are mentioned in particular verses in verses 3-20.***
  - In verse 3, the descendants of Parosh represent the largest family of priests returning from Babylon.
  - In verse 5 the name 'Arah' means 'wild ox' and this name appears in 1st Chronicles 7:39 and Nehemiah 6:18.
  - In verse 6 'Pahath-Moab' means 'Governor of Moab' and could be a reference to the descendants of the tribe of Reuben.

- In verse 7 'Elam' was the name of the county in southwestern Iran in the area of Susa.
- In verse 12 'Azgad' occurs and is the greatest numerical discrepancy of all these names. Ezra lists 1,222 and Nehemiah lists 2,322.
- In verse 13, it is interesting to point out that the name "Adonikam" means 'my Lord has arisen'.
- In verse 17 'Bezai' is a shortened form of 'Bezalel' and means 'in the shadow of God'.
- ***The Importance of Laymen:***
  - ***Other than what I briefly mentioned about the clans listed, there is not much that we know.***
  - But one thing we do know based on this list, is that the Laymen make up the majority of the individuals who returned.
    - We've got 12 leaders, some priests and levites, and temple servants. But for the majority we have laymen.
  - ***The role that laymen play in the work of the ministry in the local Church is essential for a local Church to reach their community for Christ and to fulfill their mission, the Great Commission.***
    - ***Please don't think that just because you aren't on staff or you aren't the Pastor that your role does not matter. It takes all of us.***

***Truth #3: The Lands Properly Spoken for. (vv. 21-35)***

- In verse 21 the list suddenly changes from personal family names being listed, to groups of people designated by their hometowns.
  - It is not clear why some of the returnees are mentioned by name and others by their hometown.
    - ***(It is important to point out that these towns were more than likely where the exiles were originally from, not necessarily where they settled.)***
  - ***One scholar suggests that the reason some of the returnees are mentioned by their hometown could suggest that they were poorer people prior to the exile and did not have land in their name.***
    - Therefore, their name would not have been written in legal documentation proving that they had land.
  - ***But, Ezra still includes them based on where they came from because they do matter!***
    - In the Hebrew text some of the phrases in verses 21-35 begin with 'the men of' and some 'the son of'. Either way, the term appears to be synonymous in the Hebrew text.
    - Many of the towns listed can be identified geographically either historical, or are still standing today.

- Most of these locations are from the Benjamite territory, only two of the towns listed 'Netophah and Bethlehem are south of Jerusalem.
- *If you're still wondering why a list is even being provided, I think Mervin Brenhem provides a solid reason from the perspective of the Israelites: 'They needed to recognize their roots in the pre exilic Israelite community as reassurance that they were the continuation of God's Redemptive plan, that God would not forsake them.'*
- While I won't give a deep dive on each town listed, there are several we can highlight that have theological significance.
  - *I can't help but notice that in [verse 21](#), Bethlehem is the first town to be mentioned.*
    - Three hundred years before this, Micah Prophetised that out of Bethlehem would come the Messiah.
    - 'But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.' Micah 5:2
    - *Among these 123 returnees, could be the ancestors of Jesus.*

- God had a plan, and this was all apart of it! It took faithful followers for God to send His Son, years later, through these people.
    - *What we give towards the building fund impacts generations that we will never see... Let's be faithful...*
  - *In verse 22*, 'Netophah' was a city south of Jerusalem, and was settled by Levites according to 1st Chronicles 9:16.
  - *In verse 25*, 'Kiriath-arim' is the Hebrew term that means 'Village of the woods' and according to 1st Samuel 6:21-7:1 is where the Ark of the Covenant rested.
  - *In verse 33*, 'Lod' is modern day Lyda, and today is the site of the Israeli International airport.
  - *In verse 34*, this is the famous 'Jericho' just north of the Dead Sea.
  - All of these towns are real and the returnees who were from there. The fact that we can recognize just a few, shows the validity that the Bible is real and we can depend on the truth that is God's Word.
- Truth #4: *The Levites and Priests Serving. (vv. 36-42)***
- The leaders and laymen have been mentioned, now the Levites and priests are mentioned.
    - *From a numerical perspective, the priests make up about 10% of the returnees.*

- *Back in 1st Chronicles 24, King David had organized the priests into 24 family groups, but only 4 of the 24 are listed here as returnees.*
- *Since the main purpose of returning to Jerusalem was to reestablish worship a large number of the priests accepted the call to return.*
  - The priests are mentioned in verses 36-39.
- *The Levites are then mentioned in verse 40-42 along with some other temple workers.*
  - *In looking at the numbers of priests returning compared to levites, you will see that there were a small number of levites in relation to priests.*
  - *Later on in Ezra, in Ezra 8:15-20, Ezra could only get 38 levites to go with him to Jerusalem.*
    - One scholar suggests the reason for this is, 'This may have been because Levites would have no inheritance to return to since their inheritance was the Lord'.
  - What's the difference between the priests and Levites?
    - *According to Genesis 29:34, the Levites were descendants of Levi and were originally viewed as priests.*
    - But, Numbers 3:9-10 makes it clear that they became subordinate to the priestly descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses.

- According to Numbers 16:40, the levites were even prohibited from offering sacrifices on the altar, but they could do other things.
- *They essentially became the assistants to the priests from Aaron's lineage.*
  - The Levites had no inheritance in land, but lived in 48 different levitical cities and were supported by the tithes of the other tribes (Deuteronomy 12:12).
- 1st Chronicles 15:22 and 1st Chronicles 16:4-7 give examples that the levites were doorkeepers, singers, scribes and teachers in the temple.
- *In verse 41, we are told that there were temple singers.*
  - *This is something that King David established according to 1st Chronicles 25.*
  - David was quite the musician and worshipper, and this is a big reason why we have music in Church today. It did not occur prior to David's assembling of singers in the temple.
- *In verse 42, we are introduced to the vocation of 'gatekeeper' and some translations prefer 'doorkeeper'.*



- 'So'er' is the Hebrew word for gatekeeper, occurs 37 total times in the OT.
- *This term 'doorkeepers' is used 13 times in Ezra-Nehemiah and 19 times in Chronicles.*
  - Most of the time in scripture (not all of the time) doorkeepers were levites.
  - 1st Chronicles 23:5 points out that there were 4,000 doorkeepers in the temple at one time.
    - Their primary function was to tend to the doors to the temple and any other small tasks, like an usher essentially.

**Truth #5: *The Loyal Temple Staff.* (vv. 43-58)**

- The list here in Ezra 2 continues with more temple staff, but these servants were much lower in social class than the ones previously listed.
  - *According to Ezra 8:20, these positions were created by David to help and assist the Levites.*
    - So the levites assisted the priest, and the temple staff assisted the levites.
    - *Either way, from all the workers in the temple staff to 10% of the Remnant being priests, this shows us that worship was the big reason why they returned, and that worship really and truly mattered to them.*

- Some scholars believe that these temple servants were slaves from people groups that the Israelites defeated in battle over Palestine.
- Numbers 31:25-47 does state that when the Israelites defeated a village, they would take the survivors as slaves.

■ *But, we cannot know this for sure.*

■ *But, the names in verses 43-54 are much more foreign and not Hebrew names like the ones we have previously read.*

● *In verses 55-58, we are introduced to 'servants of Solomon'.*

- They were temple servants that King Solomon took from the slave-labor force from among the conquered Canaanites in 1st Kings 9:20-21.
  - Only 392 of the Canaanite slave servants of Solomon came back to Jerusalem...

**Truth #6: *The Lost Survivors.* (vv. 59-63)**

- In verse 59, we are given the names of five Babylonian towns that some exiles returned from.
  - *These towns were Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer.*
  - Verse 59 also states that they couldn't prove their lineage and that they were indeed Israelites.
    - *These people, that Max Anders calls the 'disenfranchised' couldn't prove that they descended from Israel.*



- Since these individuals are listed last, they were excluded in some way, but which ways, we are not sure.
- *In verses 61-63, we are told that some of these 'lost survivors' were priests, but because they couldn't prove their lineage, in order to keep up with the Davidic monarchy and to stay clean, they could not longer serve as priests, as it would be unclean.*

- When the Israelites were in Babylon they really got away from the Biblical (Torah) mandates.
- *When we get away from the Biblical community it's much easier to drift farther away from God.*
- These survivors and sojourners were permitted, but were still unclean.
- Now that everyone is listed, here are the percentages of everyone that we have returning back to Jerusalem.

<i>Category of People Returning to Israel</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Families</i>	<i>53.2%</i>
<i>Villagers</i>	<i>29.6%</i>
<i>Priests</i>	<i>14.7%</i>
<i>Levites</i>	<i>0.2%</i>

<i>Singers</i>	<i>0.4%</i>
<i>Doorkeepers</i>	<i>0.5%</i>
<i>Temple Servants and the descants of the servants of Solomon</i>	<i>1.4%</i>
<i>Total:</i>	<i>100%</i>

**Truth #7: *The Lump Sum of Refugees.* (vv. 64-67)**

- In verse 64 we are told that the total number of returnees was 42,360.
  - *For Bible Students and scholars, this does present a little bit of a dilemma.*
  - *If you were to spend your Sunday afternoon adding up all of these names that are given, you would arrive at 29,818 (yes, I did add them up).*
    - Obviously, this is a discrepancy, a difference in the numbers.
  - *Some scholars suggest that women and children are left out of the totals of the families throughout this list.*
    - *But that would leave us with 12,542 women and children for 29,818 men, which would leave a LOT of single men. I don't think that's accurate.*
  - The total of 42,360 does occur in Nehemiah 7, and should be vied as correct.

- But, this could be viewed as a textual variant in both places, we just don't know for sure.
  - *We must trust God and know that very FEW out of all of Israel made the decision to return.*

**Truth #8: *The Large Offerings Already Given.* (vv. 68-69)**

- Ground had not yet been broken for the temple, but when they came to the rubble, what was once the temple their in Jerusalem, they began to give.
  - *Notice their 'Freewill offerings'*
    - *Not coerced, compelled conflicted offerings, but free will. Out of their love for the Lord.*
  - *What is happening here is that the people were pouring out their savings, most if not all of it, and their giving demonstrated a true spirit of dedication to God's service.*
    - *When we give, we do so not hoping we will GET anything back, but expecting God to use it for His Glory.*
  - Based on this verses, scholar Marvin Brenham said *'God's work is usually accomplished through the freewill offerings of the common people.'*
    - Are you giving today? If so, is it cheerfully or reluctantly? This is going to take all of us being open and willingly to WANT to see God MOVE through this building fund.

- Remember, it's a privilege that we get to come to this place and give God our tithes, and then our offerings towards the Field of Dreams vision.

**Truth #9: *The Location of Settlements Mentioned.* (vv. 70)**

- Though Nehemiah would move all people to Jerusalem to reinforce the population to defend potential enemy attacks, for now, the Israelites resided where they once did, in the land of their fathers.
  - The story isn't over, there's a lot of work to do.
  - *But they were faithful, they made the long 503 mile journey on foot, and they were now home.*
    - *As we will see next week, the rebuilding of God's home, the temple, would commence.*

**Conclusion:**

- We've talked a lot about names this morning and lists of names. As we close, we've seen how faithful God was to the Israelites and also how faithful He was to them.
  - *If we lived in Ezra's day today, would our name be written on a list like this?*
  - *Would we leave the comfort of our homes to go WHEREVER God would lead us?*
- *Another life altering question to ponder as we move into this time of invitation, is your name written in the lamb's book of life?*
  - It's not important that your name is called next in line at the doctor's office, that your name is in

lights going down the highway, or that your name is sitting beside a large number of digits in your bank account.

- *It is life or death if your name is written in the Lamb's book of life.*
- *'And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.' Revelation 20:15*
- *'and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.' Revelation 13:8*
- *Don't leave the Church house today without knowing that you know, that your name is written in the Lamb's book of life.*