



Biblical Building
Sermon #14

'The Role of Pastoral Leadership!'
Ezra 7:1-28

Sunday, August 10th, 2025

Last Sunday in the Biblical Building Sermon Series:

- Last Sunday we took a break in our current series through the book of Ezra.
 - *At that time with 13 sermons in, I felt we needed a small break, and to give Pastor Steve an opportunity to share with us.*
- Pastor Steve did an excellent job, as he preached from Ephesians 2:8-10, with a sermon entitled 'The Work of God!'.
 - You can go back and watch that sermon here:
<https://youtu.be/pQ6sBXp1PO4?si=NVeHAivFeObLTws2>
- The last time we were in Ezra (two weeks ago):

- *We had a unique study as we looked at Ezra 6:19-22 as they celebrated the Passover for the first time in 72 years with a sermon entitled 'Full of Joy!'*
 - I asked the question: *How does the returning of the Jews and their friends show us great Joy in the first Passover Celebration?*
 - **Truth #1: *A Celebration Sprouted from Obedience.* (v. 19)**
 - **Truth #2: *A Caring Spirit for Others (non-Jews).* (vv. 20-21)**
 - **Truth #3: *A Christ Shaking Joy.* (v. 22)**
- Then we transitioned into observing the Lord's Supper and it was truly a special time.

'The Role of Pastoral Leadership!'
Ezra 7:1-28

Sermon in a Sentence:

Ezra exemplifies the role of Pastoral leadership according to God's Word as we look at how he was gifted by God, dedicated to the study of the Word, protected Divinely by God and a good leader of people.

Intro:

- For many years in Baptist life the question is often asked, *'What does a Pastor even do?'*

- This question has stemmed from the previous, *'Do they only work two days a week?'*
- *'Why can't they be at everything, all they have to do is wing their sermons, right?'*
- While you may find these questions funny and some borderline disrespectful, I don't usually take offense when folks ask questions like that of me, or I hear them asked by others.
 - ***All across the Bible there are biblical accounts of Pastoral leadership.***
 - Obviously the Acts of the Apostles is a clear one, but there are also many accounts of Pastoral leadership in the Old Testament.
 - *Obviously the word 'Pastor' did not exist yet in the OT, but within the context and confines of the Torah, the Priests did act as Pastors.*
 - While they were to teach the Word, the primary duty of their responsibility was to keep up with the sacrifices, laws, and ensuring everyone was following them.
 - I would argue that Pastoral/Priestly responsibility was much more difficult then!
 - *So, what really is the key to Pastoral leadership?*
 - Before diving into the text this morning, let me give you the answer...
 - *'The Hand of God was upon me.'*

- This phrase is found a total of 6 times in Ezra 7-8...
- Within the context of our passage of Scripture this morning, Ezra is going to return back to Jerusalem and he is going to bring more of God's people (Israelites) back with him.
 - *While it's taken us 6 chapters to get to the character with which this book gets its name, we have arrived.*
 - *From Ezra 6:22 to Ezra 7:1, a total of 57 years have passed since the completion of the temple.*
 - Notice that the author of Ezra does not attempt to give a 'pretend' or 'fake' history of this period. Maybe he knew what occurred or maybe he didn't. Either way, the text doesn't tell us, so we can only wonder.
 - ***What the author does do, is dive into the theological significance for the continued existence of the Jewish community.***
 - After all, God still had big plans for them which included His Son being born in the coming centuries.
 - *What we are beginning in Ezra today is the second movement in the two books, Ezra-Nehemiah, that describes the rebuilding of the community from a theological perspective.*

- When Ezra and the Israelites he brought back with him returned, it was 458 B.C., Artaxerxes I was now the King, and there was needed theological change coming, and God used Ezra, a Pastor, to come in and lead.

Question to Ask:

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)*

- All the way back in Ezra 2:61-63 there were some priests in the Jewish remnant who could not prove their ancestry.
 - *Among the Jews that would have been a shameful thing to not be able to prove one's ancestry.*
- As these first six verses in our text this morning will show us, Ezra was not among those of whose ancestry could not be found. In fact, he was in Hebrew royalty in regards to ancestry.
 - *The name 'Ezra' is short for the Hebrew name 'Azariah' which literally means 'the Lord has helped'.*
 - The Lord certainly did help Ezra, and there are two ways in these first 6 verses that I think we see that.

● *A Godly Legacy. (vv. 1-5)*

- 'Now after this, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, **2** son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, **3** son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, **4** son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, **5** son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the chief priest—'
- These verses of genealogy are quite similar to that of 1st Chronicles 6:3-14 which tracks Aaron to Meraioth, but there are several names omitted from Meraioth to Ezra, here. **Why?**
 - *The author here in Ezra 7 wanted to show that Ezra was from the Aaronic-Zadokite High Priestly line.*
 - *And while Ezra himself was not a High priest, he came from those who were.*
- One Hebrew scholar stated, '*This sixteen-ancestor genealogy introduces Ezra with fan-fare and establishes him as 'the most prominent individual in the book. It also signals that something momentous is to come and Ezra is at the center of it.'*'
 - The community of Jews that God would allow Ezra to minister too, would have been fed by the presence of a person with such significant ancestry. God was using this as a gift, for Ezra to use in His

ministry that He Himself (GOD), may be exalted.

- *All the gifts God has given us, even legacy, should be given right back to Him for His Glory in how we use them! What a lesson.*
- While the legacy God gave Him was important, it's equally important what an individual does with it.
 - President Abraham Lincoln once said ***'I don't know who my grandfather was, I am much more concerned what his grandson will be.'***
 - Ezra knew the names of his ancestors and what they had done, but he still had to be faithful and follow the Lord.
- *If you have a Godly Heritage, I want to encourage you not to squander that. Don't make light of what your ancestors sought to accomplish for the Kingdom.*
- **A Gifted Leader. (vv. 6)**
 - 'this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the LORD, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.'

- *We are told that Ezra left Babylonia, which means he was apart of the majority of Jewish exiles who still resided there.*
 - Nehemiah would later come from Susa, so we know some Jewish Exiles were also there.
- ***Ezra didn't squander his ancestry, he followed the Lord and became a faithful teacher of the Word.***
 - The Bible says there in verse 6 that he was skilled. This Hebrew word 'Ma-hir' not only means skilled, but diligent.
- Not only did God gift him as a 'skilled' teacher of the Word, he gave him courage and boldness!
 - Verse 6 is clear that he went to the king and asked something, what he asked is not clear, what Ezra said to the king is not recorded in the Bible (though it would've been recorded in Persian court).
 - *The bulk of the rest of this chapter is the response from the King.*
- *The boldness though, that Ezra shared, is not something people like to think about, and many Churches don't want in a Pastor.*
 - But that kind of boldness and courage was a gift from God to Ezra. It's obvious he used it for His Glory.

Truth #2: *Got to be dedicated to the study of the Word. (vv. 7-10)*

- ***The biggest role in Biblical Pastoral leadership?***
 - The Study of the Word of God in order to teach the Word of God.
 - What we often expect of Pastoral Leadership often doesn't line up with that of the Scriptures...
 - Let's look at what is said about Ezra as a Pastor (Priest within context of the OT).
- 'And there went up also to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king, some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants. **8** And Ezra[a] came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. **9** For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. **10** For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.'
 - ***Ezra was on a mission, but what was the mission?***
 - ***Ezra and others returned to Jerusalem to teach the Word and ensure that the theological traditions of the Torah were being followed.***
 - ***He didn't go alone. Like any good leader, he must've encouraged and even inspired other***

Jews to leave the comfort of Babylon, to go and return home, for the purpose of worship.

- ***We don't know how many went on this journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, but we know it would've been a difficult journey to take.***
 - If they took the direct route from Babylon to Jerusalem, it would have been 500 miles. But, they probably took the longer route that went through northern Syria to avoid the desert.
 - Either way, in those days, it would've been a difficult traveling experience. At that time, a rebellion had occurred in Egypt which made most of the highways safe.
 - ***Which is probably why in verse 9, the author says that 'the good Hand of His God was on him.' in regards to their safe arrival.***
- ***In verse 10, we are told of what Ezra did as a Pastor of these people, what separated him!***
 - 'For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.'
 - ***Ezra is a great example to follow from the Pastor to the people alike.***

- Ezra was devoted to the Word, and had a prepared heart.
- The way Ezra treated the Word of God was reflective of Psalms 119:97...
 - ‘Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.’
- *Ezra studied the Word, obeyed the Word, and taught the Word.*
 - *When you remember the fact that Ezra was born in Babylon and grew up in Babylon, you can better appreciate his achievement as a skilled study of the Jewish Scriptures.*
 - I’m sure that some of the Jews brought with them OT scrolls and that Ezra was able to read some of them. But, there was no temple. So, the priests weren’t obligated to minister.
 - But, there were some, like Ezra, who decided to Minister despite their circumstances.
 - *I think Ezra’s actions here, in Ministering without a temple, are along the lines of what the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy (2nd Timothy 4:12) when he said, ‘preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort,*

with complete patience and teaching.’

- Ezra wasn’t perfect. No Pastor or person is. But, he taught the Word, obeyed the Word, and studied it.
 - A Pastor must study the Word and seek to teach in order to equip the saints (Ephesians 4:12).

Truth #3: *God’s man is Divinely protected.* (vv. 11-26)

- *Ezra had begun to teach and study God’s Word, and it seems that God was moving and stirring among the people!*

○ *Now we get to take a step back, and read a copy of the letter that Artaxerxes sent that shows how God Himself was moving in the heart and mind of Artaxerxes to cause him to do what he did for Israel.*

- Earlier in Ezra we studied how God moved in Cyrus’s heart (Ezra 1:1-4) and Darius’s heart (Ezra 6:1-12), now God has moved in Artaxerxes I heart to allow Ezra and His people to come down to Jerusalem and assist the Jews in the worship in the temple.

○ *Now to be clear, the Biblical text does not record the letter that Ezra actually wrote to Artaxerxes.*

- But based on the two different Decrees (still in one letter) from Artaxerxes that

are recorded here in Ezra 7:11-26, we can infer that Ezra had asked the King that he be allowed to bring people with Him to Jerusalem for the sake of theological restructuring.

- *We must also remember that Ezra was leaving Babylon, and bringing another group of Israelites to Jerusalem. In order to do this, he would need the King's approval.*
 - While verses 7-10 that we just looked at told us this, Ezra backs up for a moment (which he did earlier in chapter 4), and inserts the documentation that he received from Artaxerxes.
- *Not only would he get the king's approval, he would also see God's hand divinely protect him and allow for more than Ezra probably ever imagined to come from these requests.*
 - In verse 11, Ezra is praised and spoken of in the third person voice. Some believe this is an indication that Ezra is not the author. Maybe, or it could be Ezra adding in someone's comments that they had said. Either way, from a continuation of verses 7-10, Ezra is praised for His knowledge of God's Word.
 - In verse 12, we see the salutation of the letter. Typical for that time period.

- *Within this letter, there are 5 Stipulations that are given from Artaxerxes to Ezra:*

- **Authorization of Ezra (and others) to go from Babylon to Jerusalem. (vv. 13-14)**

- 'I make a decree that anyone of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom, who freely offers to go to Jerusalem, may go with you. **14** For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God, which is in your hand,'
- *Because the Israelites were under Persian rule, even at this time in 458 B.C., they could not relocate without the King's permission.*
 - Not only does the king give permission that Ezra can leave Babylon **AND** bring people with him, but he also seems to restate the purpose of why Ezra is going (perhaps he restated it from Ezra's original letter):
 - *'Make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God,'*
 - Not according to Persian ways and rules, but according to YOUR God.
- *God uses Ezra's passion and knowledge of the Torah and LOVE of the Word to send Ezra to ensure that the Jews in Jerusalem were*

worshiping in a Biblically correct way, according to the Torah.

- With 57 years having gone by since the events of Ezra 6 and the passover we witnessed in Ezra 6:19-22, he wants to check it out and help the people.
 - *Though many don't like it, this is what Pastors are supposed to do! They are to come into a group of believers and clean up anything that is not in line with God's Word and replace with methods that are effective for reaching people with the Gospel message.*
- What Ezra was sent by God to do in Jerusalem and authorized by Artaxerxes I is right in line with what Paul said Pastors are to be doing in the NT:
 - 'And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds[c] and teachers,[d] **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,' Ephesians 4:11-12
 - *Within the context of the OT, this is what Ezra was doing, equipping the OT saints with the law to be able to properly worship within the confines of the Torah.*

- Pastors, like Ezra, are to elevate Biblical principles over your preferences and traditions.

● *Approval of a grant to buy sacrifices and temple vessels. (vv. 15-19)*

- 'and also to carry the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, **16** with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, vowed willingly for the house of their God that is in Jerusalem. **17** With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and you shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God that is in Jerusalem. **18** Whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do, according to the will of your God. **19** The vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God, you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem.'
- While there have been many times throughout history where government leaders have opposed and oppressed God's people, there are cases where God has used rulers to benefit His people. And that is the case here.

- *In Haggai 2:8, God had made it clear that the silver is Mine and the Gold is Mine, now He is proving it by opening the royal persian treasury.*
 - ‘The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts.’
- *In verses 16-17 Artaxerxes I makes it clear that he knows according to the Torah, what they will need for sacrifices.*
 - Liberal scholars will sometimes take these verses (and those like it) and run with it in a way that paints this picture as if a Jew wrote the letter and dropped it into Ezra’s account.
 - *I find this false because of what we’ve found already in Ezra, is that the Perisan kings usually had Jewish theologians in their courts to aid in matters such as this.*
 - If God does not do blessings for us halfway, why do we do ministry for Him halfway at times?
- **Additional supplies will be given throughout the journey. (vv. 21-23)**
 - “And I, Artaxerxes the king, make a decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of

the Law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence, **22** up to 100 talents^[d] of silver, 100 cors^[e] of wheat, 100 baths^[f] of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. **23** Whatever is decreed by the God of heaven, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons.’

- *The journey was not a short one from Babylon to Jerusalem.*
 - A little less than a 500 mile journey.
- Once Ezra and his men crossed the Jordan, they might need supplies, and they were going to be given by the Treasurers of the provinces.
 - *A separate decree affirming the decree that was sent to Ezra, would be sent to them.*
- *While artaxerxes did give limits, 100 talents, we must take into consideration that 100 talents was equivalent to four tons of silver.*
 - God was providing over and in abundance.
 - I truly believe when a people trusts their Pastor to lead them in the right direction and the Pastor is on the right path because of the Lord, that God will bless that.
 - It clearly happened here!

- **A Tax Exemption for Temple Officials. (vv. 24)**

- ‘We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on anyone of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.’
- Hey Ezra, by the way, we’re going to give you and your temple officials a tax exemption.

- *This seems awesome to us and I’m sure we would jump for joy if we were told this news, but as seen with other religious groups in Persian history, it was Persian policy to allow tax exemption from those involved in temple service.*

- This is just another blessing for the Israelites.

- **Appointment of Judges for the people of Israel approved. (vv. 25-26)**

- “And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God. And those who do not know them, you shall teach. Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment.”

- *A secular, non-believing king was able to see that Ezra had good judgement with God’s Word as His source!*

- *Wow! Even those who might not be saved can recognize if or how we use God’s Word as our source!*

- This goes to show how we act does indeed matter.

- *Because Artaxerxes I saw this in Ezra, Ezra is given the authority of a governor though he was not a governor.*

- The text is clear, that Ezra’s newfound jurisdiction included authority over Jews who did not obey the Torah.

- *This could include those who remained in Palestine during the exile and neglected the law and started to intermarry with non-jews.*

- I don’t think that verse 26 means that Ezra was to execute these punishments, but that the persian government would enforce and back him up as need be.

- *With what transpires in verse 25 & 26, Ezra is very similar to Joseph from many years before.*

- Like Joseph, he is given command in a foreign land.
 - God’s providence in both cases were used to fulfill God’s purposes for His people.

- *An incredible thing happened, when Ezra had the right heart and motives, he was given the authority he never would've had otherwise.*

Truth #4: *Good leader of people. (vv. 27-28)*

- *There are many books out there on leadership.*
 - Bestsellers from great authors with tons of credentials.
 - *Over the years there have been several well-known businesses who have gone through Ezra-Nehemiah and extracted leadership lessons and sought to teach them in their own business model.*

● *As our text revealed this morning, Pastors must lead.*

- While this looks different for different men that God has called, leadership is a common denominator of what a Pastor is expected to be able to do.
- *This is the first time that we find Ezra speaking in first person.*
 - These two verses close the commission from Artaxerxes, but also gives Ezra's response to the commission.
 - *Something I see here that differentiates Ezra from the leaders of his time as well as the leaders of today, is that Ezra didn't strategize to accomplish his goals through manipulation, espionage, cunning tactics, armed revolt, or even a peaceful protest.*

- Ezra set his heart to Study the Word and Teach the Word.

- Then, God gave Him the wisdom needed to make requests, and they were then granted.
 - Based on this text, a good leader of people, such as Ezra here, will do two things:

● *Praise God. (v. 27)*

- 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem,'

○ *Because Ezra knows who ultimately caused and allowed this to happen (God), He praises Him!*

- *A common theme throughout the book of Ezra is that God has worked with secular rulers to make provision for His people.*
- Many leaders, and even Pastors today, will be quick to try and gain praise when things go well. We see this happen often.
 - *Ezra does not take this approach, look at the clear statement given: 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king.'*
 - Ezra didn't try and get credit for his smooth talking or ability to have

Artaxerxes act favorably, Ezra's clear, thanks be to God, He did this!

- *All that God has done or will do in our Church is all because of Him!*

- Not because of one individual person, group or ministry in the Church. It's because God has allowed things to happen that give Him praise, honor, and glory! To Him, we must give thanks.

- Proverbs 21:1 comes to mind, *'The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.'*

- Ezra recognizes what many of us do not, *God is ultimately the deciding factor, no matter how great we think we are.*

- **Humble Decision. (v. 28)**

- 'and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers. I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.'
- Ezra has given credit to the only one who was due credit, God Himself!
- *Ezra humbly recognizes God's goodness to Him and God's work on His behalf, then he begins his work that the commission stated he could begin...*

- Ezra can begin the work of appointing other leaders.

- *One of the keys of leadership of any kind, especially Pastoral in this case, is surrounding yourself with good Godly men.*

- Ezra began the task of doing so after he received the commission from Artaxerxes I.

- We will see next week as we follow Ezra in his leadership journey in chapter 8.

Conclusion:

- This morning, straight from the text we've been able to see what Pastoral leadership is from Ezra's viewpoint.
 - *He was faithful, and God clearly blessed.*
- Did you notice that not all of Israel came back with Ezra to Jerusalem from Babylon?
 - *No matter how much a Pastor Studies, how well he teaches, or how well he seeks to try and live, there will be those who don't respond in a Biblical way to Pastoral leadership.*
- *What about you?*
 - Do you follow your Pastoral leaders as they seek to follow the Bible?
 - Or, do you try to do your own thing in hopes of getting your own power and recognition?
 - In Ezra 7, we find Pastoral Leadership. May we as Pastors seek to lead, and you as Christians, follow.