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Ezra

The Book of Ezra is a book of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament. It is named after its main character, Ezra, who was a Jewish priest and scribe who led a group of Jews from Babylon back to Jerusalem in the 5th century BCE.

The book is divided into two parts, known as Ezra 1-6 and Ezra 7-10. The first part describes the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest. This rebuilding project was supported by King Cyrus of Persia, who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and funded the reconstruction of the temple.

The second part of the book takes place several decades later, during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia. Ezra, a priest and scribe, is sent to Jerusalem to teach the people the law of Moses and to reform their religious practices, which had become corrupted during their time in exile. Ezra is successful in his mission, and he leads the people in a public confession of their sins and a renewal of their commitment to obey God's law.

The book of Ezra is an important historical document that provides insight into the history of the Jewish people after the Babylonian exile. It also highlights the themes of obedience to God's law, the importance of the temple and worship, and the role of leaders in guiding the people back to spiritual purity.

Here is a brief description of each chapter in the book of Ezra in the Christian Bible:

Chapter 1: Introduces the decree of King Cyrus of Persia, which allows the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and return the articles of the temple that were taken by the Babylonians.

Chapter 2: Lists the names of the Jewish people who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and Nehemiah, and mentions the financial support provided by King Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple.

Chapter 3: Describes the beginning of the rebuilding of the temple by the Jewish people, including the reconstruction of the altar and the resumption of sacrifices.

Chapter 4: Introduces opposition to the rebuilding of the temple by some of the local people, and includes letters and appeals to stop the rebuilding of the temple.

Chapter 5: Reports that Jewish leaders informed King Darius of the opposition to the rebuilding of the temple and asked for his support to continue the work.

Chapter 6: Records King Darius' decree of support for the completion of the temple and his instructions for an annual offering to be made in the temple.

Chapter 7: Introduces Ezra, who was authorized to return to Jerusalem by King Artaxerxes to oversee the rebuilding of the temple.

Chapter 8: Lists the names of the Jewish people who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra, along with the gifts and offerings they brought with them.

Chapter 9: Ezra discovers that some of the Jewish people have married foreign women, which violates God's law. Ezra is deeply saddened and the people confess and repent.

Chapter 10: The Jewish people repent of their marriages to foreign women and follow Ezra's advice to dissolve these marriages.

EZRA

CHAPTER 1

Ezr. 1:1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfil the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

Ezr. 1:2 “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.

Ezr. 1:3 Anyone of his people among you — may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem.

Ezr. 1:4 And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.”“

Ezr. 1:5 Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites — everyone whose heart God had moved — prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.

Ezr. 1:6 All their neighbours assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings.

Ezr. 1:7 Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god.

[Or gods]

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Ezr. 1:8 Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the

treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

Ezr. 1:9 This was the inventory: gold dishes 30 silver dishes 1,000 silver pans [The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.] 29

Ezr. 1:10 gold bowls 30 matching silver bowls 410 other articles 1,000

Ezr. 1:11 In all, there were 5,400 articles of gold and of silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these along when the exiles came up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the decree of King Cyrus of Persia, which allowed the Jewish people who had been exiled in Babylon to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The chapter begins with a brief history of the Babylonian captivity, which lasted for 70 years. Then, in the first year of Cyrus' reign, he issued a decree that allowed the Jewish people to return to their homeland and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Cyrus' decree also included an instruction to return the articles of the temple that were taken by the Babylonians, such as gold and silver utensils, as well as the precious items that had been used for worship. The chapter then lists the number of these items, including 5,400 gold and silver vessels, which were returned to the Jewish people.

Cyrus also encouraged the Jewish people who wished to return to Jerusalem to do so, and provided them with financial support for their journey and the rebuilding of the temple. The chapter concludes with a summary of the Jewish people who were willing to return to Jerusalem, including priests, Levites, and all whose spirits were stirred to go up and rebuild the temple.

Overall, this chapter highlights the graciousness of King Cyrus towards the Jewish people, as well as his recognition of the importance of the temple to their religious and cultural identity. It also sets the stage for the rebuilding of the temple and the return of the Jewish people to their homeland, which will be further described in subsequent chapters of the book of Ezra.

Here are the key verses for chapter 1:

1. "In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing." (Ezra 1:1)
2. "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.'" (Ezra 1:2)
3. "Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them." (Ezra 1:3)
4. "Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem." (Ezra 1:5)

5. "Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god." (Ezra 1:7)

These verses describe the decree of King Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians. They also highlight the involvement of God in this process and how He moved the hearts of people to carry out His plan.

In the book of Ezra, chapter 1 recounts the proclamation of Cyrus, the king of Persia, allowing the Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple of the Lord. This chapter holds several reflections that can be drawn from its contents:

God's Sovereignty: The chapter highlights God's sovereignty over the affairs of nations and kings. It was God who stirred the heart of Cyrus to issue the decree and fulfill His promise to restore His people to their land. This reflection reminds us that God is in control of history and works through various means to accomplish His purposes.

Divine Intervention: The fact that a pagan king like Cyrus, who did not worship the God of Israel, was instrumental in releasing the Jewish exiles is a testament to God's intervention and ability to work through unexpected sources. This reflects God's power to use even unlikely circumstances and individuals to bring about His plans.

God's Faithfulness: The proclamation of Cyrus and the subsequent return of the exiles fulfilled the prophecies of Jeremiah, who had foretold the duration of the Babylonian exile. This reflection emphasizes God's faithfulness to His promises. Even in times of exile and hardship, God remained faithful to His people and eventually restored them to their homeland.

God's Call to Rebuilding: The decree of Cyrus not only allowed the Jewish exiles to return to their land but also urged them to rebuild the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. This reflects God's call for His people to actively participate in the restoration of their spiritual heritage. It serves as a reminder that God often requires our involvement and cooperation in His redemptive plans.

Response to God's Call: The chapter ends with those whose spirits God had stirred responding to the call to return to Jerusalem. This reflects the importance of individuals recognizing God's prompting in their hearts and responding obediently to His calling. It encourages us to be attentive to God's leading and to have a willing heart to follow His purposes.

Overall, the reflection in Ezra, chapter 1, showcases God's sovereignty, faithfulness, and intervention in human affairs. It calls for a responsive and obedient attitude among God's people, as they actively participate in the restoration and fulfillment of God's purposes.

CHAPTER 2

Ezr. 2:1 Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town,
Ezr. 2:2 in company with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah): The list of the men of the people of Israel:
Ezr. 2:3 the descendants of Parosh 2,172
Ezr. 2:4 of Shephatiah 372
Ezr. 2:5 of Arah 775
Ezr. 2:6 of Pahath-Moab (through the line of Jeshua and Joab) 2,812
Ezr. 2:7 of Elam 1,254
Ezr. 2:8 of Zattu 945
Ezr. 2:9 of Zaccai 760
Ezr. 2:10 of Bani 642
Ezr. 2:11 of Bebai 623
Ezr. 2:12 of Azgad 1,222
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Ezr. 2:13 of Adonikam 666
Ezr. 2:14 of Bigvai 2,056
Ezr. 2:15 of Adin 454
Ezr. 2:16 of Ater (through Hezekiah) 98
Ezr. 2:17 of Bezai 323
Ezr. 2:18 of Jorah 112
Ezr. 2:19 of Hashum 223
Ezr. 2:20 of Gibbar 95
Ezr. 2:21 the men of Bethlehem 123
Ezr. 2:22 of Netophah 56
Ezr. 2:23 of Anathoth 128
Ezr. 2:24 of Azmaveth 42
Ezr. 2:25 of Kiriath Jearim, [See Septuagint (see also Neh. 7:29); Hebrew Kiriath Arim.] Kephirah and Beeroth 743
Ezr. 2:26 of Ramah and Geba 621
Ezr. 2:27 of Michmash 122
Ezr. 2:28 of Bethel and Ai 223
Ezr. 2:29 of Nebo 52
Ezr. 2:30 of Magbish 156
Ezr. 2:31 of the other Elam 1,254
Ezr. 2:32 of Harim 320
Ezr. 2:33 of Lod, Hadid and Ono 725
Ezr. 2:34 of Jericho 345
Ezr. 2:35 of Senaah 3,630
Ezr. 2:36 The priests: the descendants of Jedaiah (through the family of Jeshua) 973
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Ezr. 2:37 of Immer 1,052

Ezr. 2:38 of Pashhur 1,247

Ezr. 2:39 of Harim 1,017

Ezr. 2:40 The Levites: the descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel (through the line of Hodaviah) 74

Ezr. 2:41 The singers: the descendants of Asaph 128

Ezr. 2:42 The gatekeepers of the temple: the descendants of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita and Shobai 139

Ezr. 2:43 The temple servants: the descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,

Ezr. 2:44 Keros, Siaha, Padon,

Ezr. 2:45 Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub,

Ezr. 2:46 Hagab, Shalmal, Hanan,

Ezr. 2:47 Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah,

Ezr. 2:48 Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam,

Ezr. 2:49 Uzza, Paseah, Besai,

Ezr. 2:50 Asnah, Meunim, Nephussim,

Ezr. 2:51 Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,

Ezr. 2:52 Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,

Ezr. 2:53 Barkos, Sisera, Temah,

Ezr. 2:54 Neziah and Hatipha

Ezr. 2:55 The descendants of the servants of Solomon: the descendants of Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda,

Ezr. 2:56 Jaala, Darkon, Giddel,

Ezr. 2:57 Shephatiah, Hattil, Pokereth-Hazzebaim and Ami

Ezr. 2:58 The temple servants and the descendants of the servants of Solomon 392

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Ezr. 2:59 The following came up from the towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon and Immer, but they could not show that their families were descended from Israel:

Ezr. 2:60 The descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda 652

Ezr. 2:61 And from among the priests: The descendants of Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by that name).

Ezr. 2:62 These searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.

Ezr. 2:63 The governor ordered them not to eat any of the most sacred food until there was a priest ministering with the Urim and Thummim.

Ezr. 2:64 The whole company numbered 42,360,

Ezr. 2:65 besides their 7,337 menservants and maidservants; and they also had 200 men and women singers.

Ezr. 2:66 They had 736 horses, 245 mules,

Ezr. 2:67 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

Ezr. 2:68 When they arrived at the house of the LORD in Jerusalem,

some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings towards the rebuilding of the house of God on its site.

Ezr. 2:69 According to their ability they gave to the treasury for this work 61,000 drachmas [That is, about 1,100 pounds (about 500 kilograms)] of gold, 5,000 minas [That is, about 2-4/5 tons (about 2.9 metric tons)] of silver and 100 priestly garments.

Ezr. 2:70 The priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their own towns, along with some of the other people, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns.

Chapter 2: This chapter lists the names of the Jewish people who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and Nehemiah, as well as the financial support provided by King Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple. The chapter begins with a list of the families who returned, including those from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. The total number of people who returned is recorded as 42,360, including 7,337 servants and 200 singers.

The chapter goes on to list the names of the heads of families, as well as the number of people in each family. This includes the number of men, women, and children who returned, as well as the number of animals they brought with them. The chapter also includes a list of the priests, Levites, and temple servants who returned, along with their family names and the cities they came from.

Towards the end of the chapter, it is mentioned that some families could not provide evidence of their genealogy, and were therefore excluded from serving as priests. The chapter concludes by stating that the total number of people who returned was 42,360, and that they brought with them 7,537 servants and 200 singers.

Overall, this chapter provides a detailed list of the Jewish people who returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, emphasizing the importance of genealogy and family ties. The large number of people who returned, along with their servants and singers, shows the great effort made by the Jewish people to rebuild the temple and their homeland after the long period of exile in Babylon.

Here are some key verses from chapter 2 of the Book of Ezra in the Christian Bible:

1. "Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to their own town)." (Ezra 2:1)
2. "The whole company numbered 42,360, besides their 7,337 male and female slaves; and they also had 200 male and female singers." (Ezra 2:64-65)
3. "When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel." (Ezra 3:10)

4. "But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy." (Ezra 3:12)
5. "All the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." (Ezra 3:11)

These verses describe the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple. They also highlight the emotions of the people involved, both those who were overjoyed at the prospect of rebuilding the temple, and those who mourned the loss of the former temple. Finally, the verses also describe the celebration that took place when the foundation of the new temple was laid.

In the book of Ezra, chapter 2 provides a list of the individuals who returned from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem. While it primarily consists of a genealogical record, several reflections can be drawn from this chapter:

God's Restoration: The extensive list of names in chapter 2 highlights God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promise to restore His people. Despite the years of exile and separation, God brought the descendants of Israel back to their homeland, symbolizing His restoration and redemption.

Identity and Heritage: The inclusion of the genealogical details underscores the importance of lineage and heritage in the biblical narrative. It reflects the significance of knowing one's ancestral roots and belonging to the chosen people of God. This reflection emphasizes the value of identity and the role it plays in God's plan.

Unity and Community: The chapter portrays the unity of the returning exiles as they journeyed together to Jerusalem. Despite coming from different families and regions, they shared a common purpose and a collective desire to rebuild the temple and reestablish their worship of God. This reflection highlights the power of unity and community in accomplishing God's work.

Accountability and Stewardship: The detailed record of the returning exiles served as a means of accountability and stewardship. Each person was accounted for, and their contribution to the rebuilding efforts was documented. This reflection underscores the importance of personal responsibility and the faithful stewardship of the resources and gifts God has entrusted to us.

Individual Worth: Although the chapter primarily focuses on the collective return of the exiles, it also recognizes the worth and significance of each individual. Each person was identified by name and had a role to play in the restoration process. This reflection highlights the value God places on every individual and their unique contribution to His plans.

Overall, Ezra chapter 2 reflects God's faithfulness in restoring His people, the importance of heritage and identity, the power of unity and community, the significance of personal

accountability and stewardship, and the worth of each individual in God's redemptive plan.

CHAPTER 3

Ezr. 3:1 When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled as one man in Jerusalem.

Ezr. 3:2 Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.

Ezr. 3:3 Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices.

Ezr. 3:4 Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day.

Ezr. 3:5 After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred feasts of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD.

Ezr. 3:6 On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD's temple had not yet been laid.

Ezr. 3:7 Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorised by Cyrus king of Persia.

Ezr. 3:8 In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work, appointing Levites twenty years of age and older to supervise the building of the house of the LORD.

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Ezr. 3:9 Jeshua and his sons and brothers and Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Hodaviah) [Hebrew Yehudah, probably a variant of Hodaviah] and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers — all Levites — joined together in supervising those working on the house of God.

Ezr. 3:10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of

Israel.

Ezr. 3:11 With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures for ever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

Ezr. 3:12 But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy.

Ezr. 3:13 No-one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

Chapter 3: This chapter describes the rebuilding of the altar and the laying of the foundation for the temple in Jerusalem. The chapter begins by describing how the Jewish people gathered together as one to Jerusalem, and how they built the altar of the God of Israel in order to offer burnt offerings on it, as was prescribed in the law of Moses. After this, they began to rebuild the temple. The chapter describes how they laid the foundation, using stones that were quarried in order to prevent them from becoming impure. They also celebrated the laying of the foundation with music and singing, and gave thanks to God for his mercy and faithfulness to his people.

However, not all the people were joyful. The chapter mentions that some of the older people who had seen the first temple wept when they saw the smaller size of the new foundation. Nevertheless, the people continued with their work, undeterred by this setback.

The chapter concludes with a description of the priests and Levites who led the people in worship and the rebuilding of the temple, and how they worked together to ensure that everything was done according to the law of Moses.

Overall, this chapter emphasizes the determination of the Jewish people to rebuild the temple and restore their religious practices, despite the challenges they faced. It also highlights the importance of worship and the role of the priests and Levites in leading the people in this endeavor.

Here are some key verses from chapter 3 of the Book of Ezra in the Christian Bible:

1. "When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled together as one in Jerusalem." (Ezra 3:1)
2. "Then Joshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God." (Ezra 3:2)
3. "Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the Lord, both the morning and evening sacrifices." (Ezra 3:3)
4. "Then they celebrated the Festival of Tabernacles, as it is written in the Law, and offered the proper sacrifices each day." (Ezra 3:4)

5. "With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: 'He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.'" (Ezra 3:11)

These verses describe the rebuilding of the altar in Jerusalem and the celebration of the Festival of Tabernacles. Despite their fears, the people obeyed the Law of Moses and offered sacrifices to God. They also expressed their gratitude and praise to the Lord through song. These events mark an important step in the restoration of worship in Jerusalem.

In the book of Ezra, chapter 3 describes the initial steps taken by the returning exiles to rebuild the altar and lay the foundation of the temple in Jerusalem. This chapter offers several reflections:

Prioritizing Worship: The first action of the returning exiles was to rebuild the altar and reinstate the regular worship of God. This reflects the importance of prioritizing worship and acknowledging God's central role in the lives of His people. It serves as a reminder that true restoration begins with a renewed focus on God and His presence.

Perseverance in the Face of Opposition: Despite facing opposition and resistance from surrounding peoples, the returning exiles persisted in their efforts to rebuild. This reflection underscores the need for perseverance and determination in the face of challenges and obstacles. It encourages believers to remain steadfast in their commitment to God's work, even in difficult circumstances.

Joy and Celebration: As the foundation of the temple was laid, the people rejoiced and offered praise and thanksgiving to God. This reflects the importance of joy and celebration in the process of restoration and rebuilding. It reminds us that worship and gratitude should characterize our response to God's faithfulness and the progress made in His work.

Generational Continuity: In the midst of the celebration, some of the older priests and Levites who had witnessed the original temple wept, recognizing the stark difference between the former glory and the current state. This reflection highlights the significance of generational continuity and the passing on of faith and tradition. It serves as a reminder that each generation has a role to play in continuing God's work.

Hope for the Future: The laying of the foundation marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Israel. It sparked hope and anticipation for the completion of the temple and the restoration of worship. This reflection emphasizes the power of hope and the assurance that God's work will be brought to fruition. It encourages believers to hold onto hope and trust in God's promises, even when the outcome seems uncertain.

Overall, Ezra chapter 3 reflects the importance of prioritizing worship, perseverance in the face of opposition, joy and celebration in restoration, generational continuity, and the hope for the future fulfillment of God's plans.

CHAPTER 4

Ezr. 4:1 When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel,

Ezr. 4:2 they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, “Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.”

Ezr. 4:3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, “You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD,

the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”

Ezr. 4:4 Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. [Or and troubled them as they built]

Ezr. 4:5 They hired counsellors to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Ezr. 4:6 At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, [Hebrew Ahasuerus, a variant of Xerxes’ Persian name] they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

Ezr. 4:7 And in the days of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of his associates wrote a letter to Artaxerxes. The letter was written in Aramaic script and in the Aramaic language. [Or written in Aramaic and translated] [The text of Ezra 4:8-6:18 is in Aramaic.]

Ezr. 4:8 Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows:

Ezr. 4:9 Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary, together with the rest of their associates — the judges and officials over the men from Tripolis, Persia, [Or officials, magistrates and governors over the men from] Erech and Babylon, the Elamites of Susa,

Ezr. 4:10 and the other people whom the great and honourable Ashurbanipal [Aramaic Osnappar, a variant of Ashurbanipal] deported and settled in the city of Samaria and elsewhere in Trans-Euphrates.

Ezr. 4:11 (This is a copy of the letter they sent him.) To King Artaxerxes, From your servants, the men of Trans-Euphrates:

Ezr. 4:12 The king should know that the Jews who came up to us from you have gone to Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are restoring the walls and repairing the foundations.

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Ezr. 4:13 Furthermore, the king should know that if this city is built and its walls are restored, no more taxes, tribute or duty will be paid, and the royal revenues will suffer.

Ezr. 4:14 Now since we are under obligation to the palace and it is not proper for us to see the king dishonoured, we are sending this message to inform the king,

Ezr. 4:15 so that a search may be made in the archives of your predecessors. In these records you will find that this city is a rebellious city, troublesome to kings and provinces, a place of rebellion from ancient times. That is why this city was destroyed.

Ezr. 4:16 We inform the king that if this city is built and its walls are restored, you will be left with nothing in Trans-Euphrates.

Ezr. 4:17 The king sent this reply: To Rehum the commanding officer, Shimshai the secretary and the rest of their associates living in Samaria and elsewhere in Trans-Euphrates: Greetings.

Ezr. 4:18 The letter you sent us has been read and translated in my presence.

Ezr. 4:19 I issued an order and a search was made, and it was found that this city has a long history of revolt against kings and has been a place of rebellion and sedition.

Ezr. 4:20 Jerusalem has had powerful kings ruling over the whole of Trans-Euphrates, and taxes, tribute and duty were paid to them.

Ezr. 4:21 Now issue an order to these men to stop work, so that this city will not be rebuilt until I so order.

Ezr. 4:22 Be careful not to neglect this matter. Why let this threat grow, to the detriment of the royal interests?

Ezr. 4:23 As soon as the copy of the letter of King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum and Shimshai the secretary and their associates, they went immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and compelled them by force to stop.

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Ezr. 4:24 Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Chapter 4: This chapter describes the opposition that the Jewish people faced as they were rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. The chapter begins by introducing the Samaritans, who were a group of people who lived in the region of Samaria and who were not fully Jewish. These Samaritans offered to help with the rebuilding of the temple, but the Jewish leaders refused their offer, as they believed that the Samaritans were not true worshippers of God.

The Samaritans, feeling rejected, then began to actively oppose the rebuilding of the temple. They hired counselors to write letters to the Persian king, accusing the Jewish

people of rebellion and insisting that the rebuilding of the temple would lead to the loss of Persian authority in the region.

The Persian king then ordered the work on the temple to be stopped. The Jewish people, however, did not give up. They continued to rebuild the temple in secret, but the Samaritans found out and sent another letter to the king, further accusing the Jewish people of rebellion and insisting that the work be stopped.

The chapter then describes the response of the Persian king, who ordered the work on the temple to be stopped permanently. The Jewish people were then forced to abandon their work on the temple, and it remained unfinished for many years.

Overall, this chapter shows the obstacles that the Jewish people faced as they attempted to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. It also highlights the tension between the Jewish people and the Samaritans, who were not fully accepted as part of the Jewish community. The chapter ends on a somber note, with the work on the temple being halted by the Persian authorities, leaving the Jewish people without a central place of worship.

Here are some key verses from chapter 4 of the Book of Ezra in the Christian Bible:

1. "When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, 'Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.'" (Ezra 4:1-2)
2. "But Zerubbabel, Joshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, 'You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.'" (Ezra 4:3)
3. "Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building." (Ezra 4:4)
4. "Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia." (Ezra 4:24)

These verses describe the opposition faced by the Jews in their efforts to rebuild the temple. Despite the offer of help from the people who were living in the land, Zerubbabel and the other leaders refused, believing that only the Jews had the right to build the temple. The people who were living in the land then sought to discourage the Jews and make them afraid to continue building, which ultimately resulted in a halt to the work on the temple until the reign of Darius.

In the book of Ezra, chapter 4 presents the challenges and opposition faced by the returning exiles as they sought to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. This chapter offers several reflections:

Opposition to God's Work: Chapter 4 highlights the opposition faced by the people of Judah from the surrounding nations. These adversaries sought to hinder the rebuilding process, raising accusations and discouraging the progress. This reflection reminds us that whenever God's work is being accomplished, opposition can arise. It serves as a reminder to be prepared for challenges and to trust in God's strength to overcome them.

Schemes and Stratagems: The adversaries of Judah employed various tactics to frustrate the rebuilding efforts. They used political influence, manipulation, and legal means to undermine and obstruct the work. This reflection underscores the reality that opposition to God's work can take on many forms, requiring wisdom and discernment to navigate through them. It emphasizes the need to be vigilant and prayerful in the face of opposition.

Discouragement and Disruption: The opposition led to a period of discouragement among the people of Judah. The work on the temple was halted, and the progress was disrupted. This reflection acknowledges that opposition can lead to discouragement and a temporary halt in the work of God. It encourages believers to remain steadfast, trusting in God's faithfulness and timing.

Historical Context: Chapter 4 provides historical context by referencing previous conflicts between the people of Judah and their neighbors. It mentions the historical animosity and enmity that existed, contributing to the opposition faced during the rebuilding efforts. This reflection highlights the ongoing tensions and conflicts that can affect God's people in their pursuit of His purposes.

Divine Protection: Although the rebuilding efforts were temporarily halted, God's protection and providence remained evident. Despite the opposition, the people of Judah were ultimately able to resume and complete the construction of the temple. This reflection reminds us that God's plans cannot be ultimately thwarted. His protection and guidance are with His people even in the face of opposition and challenges.

Overall, Ezra chapter 4 reflects the reality of opposition to God's work, the various forms it can take, the potential discouragement it can cause, the historical context that shapes conflicts, and the assurance of God's protection and ultimate fulfillment of His plans. It encourages believers to remain steadfast, trust in God's faithfulness, and seek His wisdom and guidance when faced with opposition.

CHAPTER 5

Ezr. 5:1 Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.

Ezr. 5:2 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

Ezr. 5:3 At that time Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates went to them and asked, "Who authorised you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?"

Ezr. 5:4 They also asked, "What are the names of the men constructing this building?" [See Septuagint; Aramaic 4 We

told them the names of the men constructing this building.]

Ezr. 5:5 But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received.

Ezr. 5:6 This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai, governor of Trans Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates, the officials of Trans-Euphrates, sent to King Darius.

Ezr. 5:7 The report they sent him read as follows: To King Darius: Cordial greetings.

Ezr. 5:8 The king should know that we went to the district of Judah, to the temple of the great God. The people are building it with large stones and placing the timbers in the walls. The work is being carried on with diligence and is making rapid progress under their direction.

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Ezr. 5:9 We questioned the elders and asked them, "Who authorised you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?"

Ezr. 5:10 We also asked them their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders for your information.

Ezr. 5:11 This is the answer they gave us: "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, one that a great king of Israel built and finished.

Ezr. 5:12 But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, he handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, king of Babylon, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon.

Ezr. 5:13 "However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God.

Ezr. 5:14 He even removed from the temple [Or palace] of Babylon the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to the temple [Or palace] in Babylon. "Then King Cyrus gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor,

Ezr. 5:15 and he told him, 'Take these articles and go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem. And rebuild the house of God on its site.'

Ezr. 5:16 So this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem. From that day to the present it has been under construction but is not yet finished."

Ezr. 5:17 Now if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his decision in this matter.

Chapter 5: This chapter describes the renewal of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. It begins with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraging the Jewish people to resume work on the temple, despite the opposition they faced.

The Jewish people then sent a message to the Persian king, explaining that they were not rebelling against his authority, but were simply rebuilding the temple in accordance with the command of their God. The Persian king then ordered a search to be conducted to verify the legitimacy of their claim.

During this search, it was discovered that Cyrus, the previous Persian king, had indeed given permission for the Jewish people to rebuild the temple. Therefore, the Persian king not only allowed the work to resume, but also ordered that the expenses for the rebuilding be paid from the royal treasury.

The chapter ends with a description of the work on the temple being restarted, with the help of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The Jewish people were encouraged and strengthened by their faith in God and their belief that he would protect and provide for them as they continued with their work.

Overall, this chapter shows the importance of faith and persistence in the face of opposition. Despite the challenges they faced, the Jewish people continued to trust in God and believe that he would provide for them. The chapter also emphasizes the importance of obeying God's commandments, even in the face of opposition and adversity.

Here are some key verses from chapter 5 of the Book of Ezra in the Christian Bible:

1. "Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them." (Ezra 5:1)
2. "Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jozadak set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, supporting them." (Ezra 5:2)
3. "But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received." (Ezra 5:5)
4. "The king asked, 'Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and to finish it?'" (Ezra 5:9)
5. "However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God." (Ezra 5:13)

These verses describe the continuation of the work on the temple, despite the opposition faced by the Jews. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah supported Zerubbabel and Joshua in their efforts. Although the work on the temple was initially halted, the Jews were eventually able to continue rebuilding because the eye of their God was watching over them. The chapter also includes a reference to the decree issued by King Cyrus to rebuild the temple, which had been the original authorization for the project.

[In the book of Ezra, chapter 5 recounts the resumption of the temple construction after a period of opposition and interruption. This chapter provides several reflections:](#)

[Resilience and Persistence: Despite the initial opposition and the cessation of work on the temple, the returning exiles, encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, resumed](#)

construction. This reflection highlights the importance of resilience and persistence in the face of obstacles. It serves as a reminder that setbacks should not deter us from fulfilling God's purposes, but rather spur us on to continue with renewed determination.

Prophetic Guidance: The prophets Haggai and Zechariah played a crucial role in encouraging the people to resume the construction of the temple. Their messages conveyed God's word and provided guidance and direction during a critical time. This reflection emphasizes the significance of prophetic voices in the midst of challenges. It reminds us of the importance of heeding God's word and seeking guidance from those who faithfully convey His messages.

Accountability and Verification: When the construction resumed, the local officials questioned the legitimacy of the project and asked for verification of the decree that authorized the rebuilding. As a result, a search was made, and the original decree of Cyrus was found. This reflection underscores the importance of accountability and verification in God's work. It serves as a reminder that God's plans are established on a firm foundation, and the integrity and authenticity of His work can be verified.

Favor and Divine Intervention: As a result of the verification and the discovery of the original decree, Darius, the king of Persia, affirmed the legitimacy of the temple construction and ordered the local officials to support it. This reflection highlights the favor of God and His divine intervention in human affairs. It demonstrates that God can turn the hearts of kings and rulers to align with His purposes and grant favor to His people.

Worship and Sacrifice: The chapter concludes with the resumption of worship and the offering of sacrifices in the restored temple site. This reflection emphasizes the central role of worship and sacrifice in the lives of God's people. It serves as a reminder that the ultimate purpose of the temple was to facilitate communion with God, offering praises and sacrifices as acts of devotion and gratitude.

Overall, Ezra chapter 5 reflects the themes of resilience and persistence, the importance of prophetic guidance, accountability and verification, divine favor and intervention, and the significance of worship and sacrifice. It encourages believers to remain steadfast, seek guidance from God's word and His messengers, uphold integrity and accountability, trust in God's favor and intervention, and prioritize worship and devotion in fulfilling God's purposes.

CHAPTER 6

Ezr. 6:1 King Darius then issued an order, and they searched in the archives stored in the treasury at Babylon.

Ezr. 6:2 A scroll was found in the citadel of Ecbatana in the province of Media, and this was written on it: Memorandum:

Ezr. 6:3 In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem: Let the temple be

rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid. It is to be ninety feet [Aramaic sixty cubits (about 27 metres)] high and ninety feet wide,

Ezr. 6:4 with three courses of large stones and one of timbers. The costs are to be paid by the royal treasury.

Ezr. 6:5 Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; they are to be deposited in the house of God.

Ezr. 6:6 Now then, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and you, their fellow officials of that province, stay away from there.

Ezr. 6:7 Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God. Let the governor of the Jews and the Jewish elders rebuild this house of God on its site.

Ezr. 6:8 Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God:

The expenses of these men are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop.

Ezr. 6:9 Whatever is needed — young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem — must be given them daily without fail,

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Ezr. 6:10 so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.

Ezr. 6:11 Furthermore, I decree that if anyone changes this edict, a beam is to be pulled from his house and he is to be lifted up and impaled on it. And for this crime his house is to be made a pile of rubble.

Ezr. 6:12 May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem. I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence.

Ezr. 6:13 Then, because of the decree King Darius had sent, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates carried it out with diligence.

Ezr. 6:14 So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.

Ezr. 6:15 The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

Ezr. 6:16 Then the people of Israel — the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles — celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy.

Ezr. 6:17 For the dedication of this house of God they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred male lambs and, as a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, one for each of the tribes of Israel.

Ezr. 6:18 And they installed the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their groups for the service of God at Jerusalem, according to what is written in the Book of Moses.

Ezr. 6:19 On the fourteenth day of the first month, the exiles celebrated the Passover.

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Ezr. 6:20 The priests and Levites had purified themselves and were all ceremonially clean. The Levites slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, for their brothers the priests and for themselves.

Ezr. 6:21 So the Israelites who had returned from the exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of their Gentile neighbours in order to seek the LORD, the God of Israel.

Ezr. 6:22 For seven days they celebrated with joy the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because the LORD had filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria, so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

Chapter 6: This chapter describes the completion of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. The chapter begins with a decree from the Persian king Darius, confirming the previous decree of Cyrus allowing the Jewish people to rebuild the temple. Darius also ordered that the expenses for the rebuilding be paid from the royal treasury.

The Jewish people then completed the construction of the temple, dedicating it to God with great celebration and thanksgiving. They offered sacrifices and held a feast, rejoicing in the completion of the temple.

The chapter also describes the celebration of the Passover, which had not been celebrated in Jerusalem since the time of Josiah, a previous king of Judah. The Jewish people celebrated the Passover with great joy and reverence, offering sacrifices and observing the feast according to God's commandments.

The chapter ends with a description of the dedication of the temple, which was a significant event in the history of the Jewish people. The dedication was accompanied by sacrifices and offerings, as well as prayer and thanksgiving to God for his faithfulness in allowing them to complete the temple.

Overall, this chapter emphasizes the importance of faithfulness and obedience to God's commandments. Despite facing opposition and challenges, the Jewish people remained steadfast in their commitment to rebuild the temple and to worship God according to his commands. The completion of the temple was a significant event in their history,

representing a renewed commitment to their faith and the restoration of their relationship with God.

Here are some key verses from chapter 6 of the Book of Ezra in the Christian Bible:

1. "Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon." (Ezra 6:1)
2. "And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written:" (Ezra 6:2)
3. "In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits;" (Ezra 6:3)
4. "Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place." (Ezra 6:7)
5. "And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia." (Ezra 6:14)

These verses describe King Darius' decree to search for the original decree of King Cyrus, which authorized the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. The decree is found and reaffirmed, and the elders of the Jews are allowed to continue building the temple. The temple is completed, and the Jews prosper through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah.

In the book of Ezra, chapter 6 records the completion and dedication of the temple in Jerusalem. This chapter provides several reflections:

Divine Restoration: The chapter begins with King Darius issuing a decree affirming the rebuilding of the temple and ordering the local officials to provide all the necessary materials and support. This reflects God's faithfulness in restoring His people and fulfilling His promises. It serves as a reminder that God's plans will ultimately prevail, and His people will experience restoration and renewal.

Opposition Overcome: Despite ongoing opposition, the Jewish people persevered and completed the construction of the temple. The opposition they faced did not deter them from their mission. This reflection highlights the power of determination and faith in the face of adversity. It serves as a reminder that God empowers His people to overcome obstacles and fulfill His purposes.

Celebration and Joy: The dedication of the temple was marked by great joy and celebration. The people offered sacrifices and celebrated the Passover with gladness. This reflects the importance of joy and celebration in worshiping and honoring God. It reminds us that the fulfillment of God's promises is a cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving.

Communal Responsibility: The chapter emphasizes the communal responsibility of the Jewish people in the dedication of the temple. The priests, Levites, and people as a whole participated in the dedication ceremonies and offerings. This reflection underscores the importance of unity and shared responsibility in the worship and service of God. It serves as a reminder that each member of the community has a role to play in the spiritual life of the people.

Continuity with Tradition: The dedication of the temple included the observance of the Passover, a significant event in the history of Israel. This reflection highlights the continuity with the traditions and practices established by God. It reminds us of the importance of honoring and preserving the spiritual heritage passed down through generations.

Overall, Ezra chapter 6 reflects the themes of divine restoration, overcoming opposition, celebration and joy, communal responsibility, and continuity with tradition. It encourages believers to persevere in their faith, rejoice in God's faithfulness, actively participate in communal worship, and honor the spiritual heritage they have received.

CHAPTER 7

Ezr. 7:1 After these things, during the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,

Ezr. 7:2 the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,

Ezr. 7:3 the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,

Ezr. 7:4 the son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,

Ezr. 7:5 the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest —

Ezr. 7:6 this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.

Ezr. 7:7 Some of the Israelites, including priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers and temple servants, also came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.

Ezr. 7:8 Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king.

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Ezr. 7:9 He had begun his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him.

Ezr. 7:10 For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

Ezr. 7:11 This is a copy of the letter King Artaxerxes had given to Ezra

the priest and teacher, a man learned in matters concerning the commands and decrees of the LORD for Israel:

Ezr. 7:12 [The text of Ezra 7:12-26 is in Aramaic.] Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of heaven: Greetings.

Ezr. 7:13 Now I decree that any of the Israelites in my kingdom, including priests and Levites, who wish to go to Jerusalem with you, may go.

Ezr. 7:14 You are sent by the king and his seven advisers to enquire about Judah and Jerusalem with regard to the Law of your God, which is in your hand.

Ezr. 7:15 Moreover, you are to take with you the silver and gold that the king and his advisers have freely given to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,

Ezr. 7:16 together with all the silver and gold you may obtain from the province of Babylon, as well as the freewill offerings of the people and priests for the temple of their God in Jerusalem.

Ezr. 7:17 With this money be sure to buy bulls, rams and male lambs, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and sacrifice them on the altar of the temple of your God in Jerusalem.

Ezr. 7:18 You and your brother Jews may then do whatever seems best with the rest of the silver and gold, in accordance with the will of your God.

Ezr. 7:19 Deliver to the God of Jerusalem all the articles entrusted to you for worship in the temple of your God.

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Ezr. 7:20 And anything else needed for the temple of your God that you may have occasion to supply, you may provide from the royal treasury.

Ezr. 7:21 Now I, King Artaxerxes, order all the treasurers of Trans Euphrates to provide with diligence whatever Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of heaven, may ask of you

Ezr. 7:22 up to a hundred talents [That is, about 3 1/3 tons (about 3.4 metric tons)] of silver, a hundred cors [That is, probably about 600 bushels (about 22 kilolitres)] of wheat, a hundred baths [That is, probably about 500 gallons (about 2.2 kilolitres)] of wine, a hundred baths [That is, probably about 500 gallons (about 2.2 kilolitres)] of olive oil, and salt without limit.

Ezr. 7:23 Whatever the God of heaven has prescribed, let it be done with diligence for the temple of the God of heaven. Why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and of his sons?

Ezr. 7:24 You are also to know that you have no authority to impose

taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God.

Ezr. 7:25 And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which you possess, appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people of Trans-Euphrates — all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach any who do not know them.

Ezr. 7:26 Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king must surely be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment.

Ezr. 7:27 Praise be to the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put it into the king's heart to bring honour to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem in this way

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Ezr. 7:28 and who has extended his good favour to me before the king and his advisers and all the king's powerful officials. Because the hand of the LORD my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

Chapter 7 focuses on Ezra's own journey from Babylon to Jerusalem and his efforts to restore the religious life of the Jewish community there.

In the beginning of chapter 7, we are introduced to Ezra, who is described as a priest and scribe who was well-versed in the law of Moses, which was given to him by God. He is also noted as being of the priestly line of Aaron.

The chapter then recounts that Ezra set out from Babylon to Jerusalem in the seventh year of the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, along with a group of fellow Israelites. They arrived in Jerusalem four months later and were welcomed by the leaders of the community.

Ezra then began his efforts to restore religious life in Jerusalem. He brought with him a letter from King Artaxerxes, granting him permission to oversee the rebuilding of the Temple and to ensure that the people of Jerusalem obeyed God's laws. The letter also included a decree allowing Ezra to gather and transport to Jerusalem any Israelites who wished to join in the rebuilding effort.

Ezra then gathered a group of Levites and priests and set about reestablishing the worship of God in Jerusalem. He led the people in fasting and prayer, and preached to them from the law of Moses. The people were moved to repentance and renewed their commitment to obeying God's commandments.

Finally, in the last section of the chapter, Ezra recounts his own genealogy, tracing his lineage back to Aaron, the first high priest of Israel. This served to establish Ezra's own authority as a priest and scribe, and to reinforce his importance as a leader in the restoration of religious life in Jerusalem.

Overall, chapter 7 of the book of Ezra is an account of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem, his efforts to restore religious life there, and his own genealogy as a priest and scribe. It demonstrates his commitment to upholding the law of Moses and his dedication to serving God's people.

Here are some key verses from chapter 7 of the Book of Ezra in the Christian Bible:

1. "Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah," (Ezra 7:1)
2. "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." (Ezra 7:10)
3. "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem:" (Ezra 7:27)
4. "And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me." (Ezra 7:28)

These verses describe the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem, under the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia. Ezra is a priest and a scribe who has prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, do it, and teach it in Israel. He is blessed by the Lord God of their fathers and by the king who has given him permission to beautify the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. Ezra is strengthened by the hand of the Lord, and he gathers chief men from Israel to go up with him.

In the book of Ezra, chapter 7 introduces Ezra himself and provides insight into his mission and role in the restoration of the Jewish community. This chapter offers several reflections:

Divine Favor and Guidance: Chapter 7 highlights that Ezra was a descendant of Aaron, the high priest, and he possessed the favor and hand of God upon him. It is emphasized that the good hand of God was upon him, and he was granted wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. This reflection underscores the importance of divine favor and guidance in fulfilling God's purposes. It reminds us that God equips and empowers individuals for the tasks He calls them to.

Studying and Teaching God's Law: Ezra is described as a skilled scribe who devoted himself to the study and teaching of the Law of the Lord. He was an expert in the Scriptures and sought to live by them. This reflection highlights the significance of studying and knowing God's Word, as well as the importance of teaching it faithfully. It serves as a reminder of the transformative power of God's Word in the lives of His people.

Commitment to Obedience: Ezra is portrayed as a man committed to obedience and carrying out the law of God. He desired to lead the people in walking in the ways of the Lord. This reflection emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's commands and the role of leaders in guiding others toward righteousness. It serves as a reminder that our actions should align with God's Word, and leaders should provide guidance and examples of faithful obedience.

Provision and Protection: King Artaxerxes granted Ezra's request to go to Jerusalem, provided resources for the temple, and appointed him to govern and judge in matters of

the law. This reflection highlights God's provision and protection over His people. It demonstrates that God can work through even pagan rulers to fulfill His purposes and provide for His people's needs.

Commitment to Prayer: Ezra's response to the king's support was to praise God and seek His favor through prayer and fasting. This reflection emphasizes the importance of prayer as an expression of reliance on God, seeking His guidance and blessing in all endeavors. It serves as a reminder that prayer is a vital component of the Christian walk and the pursuit of God's will.

Overall, Ezra chapter 7 reflects the themes of divine favor and guidance, studying and teaching God's law, commitment to obedience, provision and protection, and the importance of prayer. It encourages believers to seek God's favor and guidance, devote themselves to the study and teaching of His Word, walk in obedience, trust in His provision and protection, and cultivate a life of prayer and dependence on Him.

CHAPTER 8

Ezr. 8:1 These are the family heads and those registered with them who came up with me from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes:

Ezr. 8:2 of the descendants of Phinehas, Gershom; of the descendants of Ithamar, Daniel; of the descendants of David, Hattush

Ezr. 8:3 of the descendants of Shecaniah; of the descendants of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him were registered 150 men;

Ezr. 8:4 of the descendants of Pahath-Moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him 200 men;

Ezr. 8:5 of the descendants of Zattu, [Some Septuagint manuscripts (also 1 Esdras 8:32); Hebrew does not have Zattu.]

Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him 300 men;

Ezr. 8:6 of the descendants of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him 50 men;

Ezr. 8:7 of the descendants of Elam, Jeshaiiah son of Athaliah, and with him 70 men;

Ezr. 8:8 of the descendants of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him 80 men;

Ezr. 8:9 of the descendants of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him 218 men;

Ezr. 8:10 of the descendants of Bani, [Some Septuagint manuscripts (also 1 Esdras 8:36); Hebrew does not have Bani.] Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him 160 men;

Ezr. 8:11 of the descendants of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him 28 men;

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Ezr. 8:12 of the descendants of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him 110 men;

Ezr. 8:13 of the descendants of Adonikam, the last ones, whose names were Eliphelet, Jeuel and Shemaiah, and with them 60 men;

Ezr. 8:14 of the descendants of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, and with them 70 men.

Ezr. 8:15 I assembled them at the canal that flows towards Ahava, and we camped there three days. When I checked among the people and the priests, I found no Levites there.

Ezr. 8:16 So I summoned Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah and Meshullam, who were leaders, and Joarib and Elnathan, who were men of learning,

Ezr. 8:17 and I sent them to Iddo, the leader in Casiphia. I told them what to say to Iddo and his kinsmen, the temple servants in Casiphia, so that they might bring attendants to us for the house of our God.

Ezr. 8:18 Because the gracious hand of our God was on us, they brought us Sherebiah, a capable man, from the descendants of Mahli son of Levi, the son of Israel, and Sherebiah's sons and brothers, 18 men;

Ezr. 8:19 and Hashabiah, together with Jeshaiiah from the descendants of Merari, and his brothers and nephews, 20 men.

Ezr. 8:20 They also brought 220 of the temple servants — a body that David and the officials had established to assist the Levites.

All were registered by name.

Ezr. 8:21 There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.

Ezr. 8:22 I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him."

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Ezr. 8:23 So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.

Ezr. 8:24 Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests, together with Sherebiah, Hashabiah and ten of their brothers,

Ezr. 8:25 and I weighed out to them the offering of silver and gold and the articles that the king, his advisers, his officials and all Israel present there had donated for the house of our God.

Ezr. 8:26 I weighed out to them 650 talents [That is, about 22 tons (about 22 metric tons)] of silver, silver articles weighing 100 talents, [That is, about 3 1/3 tons (about 3.4 metric tons)] 100 talents [That is, about 3 1/3 tons (about 3.4 metric tons)] of gold,

Ezr. 8:27 20 bowls of gold valued at 1,000 darics, [That is, about 19 pounds (about 8.5 kilograms)] and two fine articles of

polished bronze, as precious as gold.

Ezr. 8:28 I said to them, “You as well as these articles are consecrated to the LORD. The silver and gold are a freewill offering to the LORD, the God of your fathers.

Ezr. 8:29 Guard them carefully until you weigh them out in the chambers of the house of the LORD in Jerusalem before the leading priests and the Levites and the family heads of Israel.”

Ezr. 8:30 Then the priests and Levites received the silver and gold and sacred articles that had been weighed out to be taken to the house of our God in Jerusalem.

Ezr. 8:31 On the twelfth day of the first month we set out from the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he protected us from enemies and bandits along the way.

Ezr. 8:32 So we arrived in Jerusalem, where we rested three days.

Ezr. 8:33 On the fourth day, in the house of our God, we weighed out the silver and gold and the sacred articles into the hands of Meremoth son of Uriah, the priest. Eleazar son of Phinehas

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was with him, and so were the Levites Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui.

Ezr. 8:34 Everything was accounted for by number and weight, and the entire weight was recorded at that time.

Ezr. 8:35 Then the exiles who had returned from captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven male lambs and, as a sin offering, twelve male goats. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD.

Ezr. 8:36 They also delivered the king’s orders to the royal satraps and to the governors of Trans-Euphrates who then gave assistance to the people and to the house of God.

The book of Ezra is a part of the Old Testament in the Christian Bible and recounts the story of the return of the exiled Israelites from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem, and the rebuilding of the Temple of God. Chapter 8 focuses on Ezra's journey back to Jerusalem from Babylon, and the people who accompanied him.

In the beginning of chapter 8, Ezra gathers a group of people to travel with him back to Jerusalem from Babylon. The chapter lists the heads of the families who accompanied Ezra on the journey, and notes that there were no Levites among them. Ezra then proclaims a fast to seek God's protection for the journey.

Ezra then entrusts the valuable vessels and gold and silver offerings for the temple to the priests and Levites who will serve there. He is careful to ensure that they are weighed and accounted for, and that they are transported with great care.

The chapter then describes the journey of Ezra and his group, which was a difficult and dangerous one. They traveled through the desert, and faced the threat of robbers and enemies along the way. Despite these challenges, they arrived safely in Jerusalem, and

the treasures they had brought with them were delivered intact to the priests and Levites for use in the Temple.

Ezra then recounts the offerings made by the people for the Temple, which included gold and silver vessels, as well as other precious items. These offerings were presented to the priests and Levites, who were tasked with the responsibility of overseeing their use in the worship of God.

Overall, chapter 8 of the book of Ezra is an account of Ezra's journey back to Jerusalem from Babylon, and the people who accompanied him. It emphasizes the care that was taken to transport the treasures of the Temple, and the dangers that were faced along the way. It also highlights the dedication of the people to the worship of God, as demonstrated by their generous offerings for the Temple.

Here are some key verses from chapter 8 of the Book of Ezra in the Christian Bible:

1. "These are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king." (Ezra 8:1)
2. "And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers." (Ezra 8:28)
3. "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." (Ezra 8:21)
4. "So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us." (Ezra 8:23)

These verses describe the journey of Ezra and the people who went up with him from Babylon to Jerusalem. The chapter begins with a genealogy of the leaders who went with him. Ezra proclaims a fast at the river of Ahava to seek guidance from God for their journey, and they humbly present their offerings of silver and gold for the service of the Lord. They successfully arrive in Jerusalem with all the treasures that they had been entrusted with, and they offer sacrifices to the Lord. The chapter ends with a list of the treasures that they brought with them.

In the book of Ezra, chapter 8 details Ezra's journey from Babylon to Jerusalem with a group of exiles. This chapter offers several reflections:

Trusting in God's Protection: Ezra and the returning exiles decided not to seek a military escort for their journey, but instead relied on God's protection. They fasted and prayed, seeking His guidance and safety. This reflection highlights the importance of trusting in God's providence and protection, even in potentially dangerous situations. It encourages believers to rely on God's strength rather than solely relying on human strategies.

Seeking Spiritual Leadership: Ezra gathered leading men, including priests and Levites, to join him on the journey. This emphasizes the significance of seeking spiritual leadership and guidance during important undertakings. It reminds us of the importance of wisdom and counsel from those who have a deep understanding of God's Word and can provide spiritual guidance.

Offering Sacrifices and Financial Stewardship: Before departing, Ezra collected offerings of silver and gold for the temple. This reflection underscores the importance of financial stewardship in God's work. It reminds us of the willingness of God's people to contribute their resources for the advancement of His kingdom. It encourages believers to give sacrificially and generously, recognizing that all we have comes from God.

Faithful Accountability: Ezra entrusted the precious offerings to specific individuals, both priests and Levites, who were responsible for safeguarding and distributing them upon arrival in Jerusalem. This reflection highlights the importance of faithful accountability in handling resources and fulfilling responsibilities. It serves as a reminder that God expects His people to exercise integrity and stewardship in all aspects of life, including financial matters.

Worship and Seeking God's Favor: Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, Ezra and the people offered sacrifices and sought the favor of God. This emphasizes the centrality of worship and seeking God's presence in the restoration process. It reminds us that true restoration involves seeking God's favor, acknowledging His sovereignty, and offering worship and thanksgiving for His faithfulness.

Overall, Ezra chapter 8 reflects the themes of trusting in God's protection, seeking spiritual leadership, financial stewardship, faithful accountability, and the importance of worship and seeking God's favor. It encourages believers to trust in God's guidance and protection, seek wise spiritual leadership, practice faithful stewardship, uphold accountability, and prioritize worship and seeking God's presence in all endeavors.

CHAPTER 9

Ezr. 9:1 After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighbouring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites.

Ezr. 9:2 They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness."

Ezr. 9:3 When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled.

Ezr. 9:4 Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered round me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice.

Ezr. 9:5 Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my self-abasement, with my tunic and cloak torn, and fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the LORD my God

Ezr. 9:6 and prayed: “O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens.

Ezr. 9:7 From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today.

Ezr. 9:8 “But now, for a brief moment, the LORD our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage.

Ezr. 9:9 Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.

Ezr. 9:10 “But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For we have disregarded the commands

Ezr. 9:11 you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: ‘The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other.

Ezr. 9:12 Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance.’

Ezr. 9:13 “What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this.

Ezr. 9:14 Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you
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not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor?

Ezr. 9:15 LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence.”

Chapter 9

The book of Ezra is a part of the Old Testament in the Christian Bible and recounts the story of the return of the exiled Israelites from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem, and the rebuilding of the Temple of God. Chapter 9 focuses on Ezra's reaction to the news that the people of Israel have been intermarrying with the surrounding pagan nations, which is a violation of God's commands.

In the beginning of chapter 9, Ezra learns that many of the Israelites, including priests and Levites, have intermarried with the surrounding pagan nations. This was a serious issue, as it went against God's commandments and threatened the purity of the Israelite community. Ezra is deeply distressed by this news, and tears his clothes and pulls hair from his beard as a sign of mourning.

Ezra then prays to God, confessing the sins of the people and asking for forgiveness. He acknowledges that the people have been unfaithful to God, and that they have not obeyed His commands. He pleads with God to show mercy and to spare the Israelites from further punishment.

Ezra then goes on to publicly confess the sins of the people before the community. He implores them to repent and turn back to God, reminding them of the dangers of intermarrying with the pagan nations and urging them to renew their commitment to following God's commands.

The chapter concludes with the people responding to Ezra's words by pledging to put away their foreign wives and to separate themselves from the surrounding nations. They make a solemn agreement to follow God's commands and to obey His laws, and they ask for Ezra's guidance in this process.

Overall, chapter 9 of the book of Ezra is an account of Ezra's reaction to the news of the people's intermarriage with the surrounding pagan nations, his prayer for forgiveness, and his public confession of the people's sins. It highlights the importance of obeying God's commands and the need for repentance and renewal in the Israelite community.

Here are some key verses from chapter 9 of the Book of Ezra in the Christian Bible:

1. "Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites." (Ezra 9:1)
2. "And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished." (Ezra 9:3)
3. "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." (Ezra 9:6)
4. "And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage." (Ezra 9:8)

These verses describe Ezra's reaction to the news that the people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands and have been participating in their abominations. Ezra is deeply troubled by this and tears his garments and plucks out his hair in distress. He prays to God, confessing the sins of the people and asking for forgiveness. He acknowledges that God has shown grace to them by leaving a remnant to escape and giving them a place in His holy place. He ends his prayer with a plea for God's mercy and a desire to do what is right in His eyes.

In the book of Ezra, chapter 9 describes Ezra's response upon discovering that some of the returning exiles had intermarried with the surrounding nations. This chapter offers several reflections:

Holiness and Separation: Ezra was deeply troubled by the intermarriage of the Israelites with the pagan nations. He recognized the importance of maintaining holiness and separation from the practices and influences of the surrounding cultures. This reflection underscores the call for God's people to be set apart, living according to His commandments and values, even in the midst of a secular world.

Confession and Repentance: Ezra responded to the news of intermarriage with mourning, tearing his garments, and pulling out his hair. He confessed the sins of the people and recognized the gravity of their actions. This reflection emphasizes the importance of sincere confession and repentance when we become aware of our disobedience to God's commands. It serves as a reminder that true restoration and renewal begin with humble acknowledgment and repentance of our sins.

Gracious God and Unfaithful People: Ezra acknowledged God's graciousness in allowing a remnant to return and rebuild, despite the people's continued unfaithfulness. This reflection highlights God's mercy and faithfulness even in the face of human failure. It serves as a reminder that God's grace is not based on our merits but on His character and covenant faithfulness.

Intercession and Supplication: Ezra fell on his knees and spread out his hands to God in prayer. He interceded on behalf of the people, acknowledging their guilt and asking for God's mercy and forgiveness. This reflection underscores the power and necessity of intercessory prayer. It reminds us of our role as mediators, standing in the gap and seeking God's mercy for ourselves and others.

Reverence for God's Law: Ezra recognized that the people had disregarded God's commandments and strayed from His ways. He emphasized the need to reestablish their commitment to God's law and follow it faithfully. This reflection emphasizes the importance of revering God's Word, aligning our lives with His commands, and returning to a place of obedience and devotion.

Overall, Ezra chapter 9 reflects the themes of holiness and separation, confession and repentance, God's grace and human unfaithfulness, intercession and supplication, and reverence for God's law. It encourages believers to maintain their commitment to God's commands, humbly confess their sins, seek God's mercy through intercession, and strive for a life of holiness and devotion.

CHAPTER 10

Ezr. 10:1 While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites — men, women and children — gathered round him. They too wept bitterly.

Ezr. 10:2 Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel.

Ezr. 10:3 Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law.

Ezr. 10:4 Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it.”

Ezr. 10:5 So Ezra rose up and put the leading priests and Levites and all Israel under oath to do what had been suggested. And they took the oath.

Ezr. 10:6 Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. While he was there, he ate no food and drank no water, because he continued to mourn over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

Ezr. 10:7 A proclamation was then issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem for all the exiles to assemble in Jerusalem.

Ezr. 10:8 Anyone who failed to appear within three days would forfeit all his property, in accordance with the decision of the
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officials and elders, and would himself be expelled from the assembly of the exiles.

Ezr. 10:9 Within the three days, all the men of Judah and Benjamin had gathered in Jerusalem. And on the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the people were sitting in the square before the house of God, greatly distressed by the occasion and because of the rain.

Ezr. 10:10 Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women, adding to Israel’s guilt.

Ezr. 10:11 Now make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives.”

Ezr. 10:12 The whole assembly responded with a loud voice: “You are right! We must do as you say.

Ezr. 10:13 But there are many people here and it is the rainy season; so we cannot stand outside. Besides, this matter cannot be taken care of in a day or two, because we have sinned greatly in this thing.

Ezr. 10:14 Let our officials act for the whole assembly. Then let everyone in our towns who has married a foreign woman come at a set time, along with the elders and judges of each town, until the fierce anger of our God in this matter is turned away from us.”

Ezr. 10:15 Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah, supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite, opposed this.

Ezr. 10:16 So the exiles did as was proposed. Ezra the priest selected men who were family heads, one from each family division, and all of them designated by name. On the first day of the tenth month they sat down to investigate the cases,

Ezr. 10:17 and by the first day of the first month they finished dealing with all the men who had married foreign women.

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Ezr. 10:18 Among the descendants of the priests, the following had married foreign women: From the descendants of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib and Gedaliah.

Ezr. 10:19 (They all gave their hands in pledge to put away their wives, and for their guilt they each presented a ram from the flock as a guilt offering.)

Ezr. 10:20 From the descendants of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah.

Ezr. 10:21 From the descendants of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel and Uziah.

Ezr. 10:22 From the descendants of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad and Elasa.

Ezr. 10:23 Among the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah and Eliezer.

Ezr. 10:24 From the singers: Eliashib. From the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem and Uri.

Ezr. 10:25 And among the other Israelites: From the descendants of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malkijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malkijah and Benaiah.

Ezr. 10:26 From the descendants of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth and Elijah.

Ezr. 10:27 From the descendants of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad and Aziza.

Ezr. 10:28 From the descendants of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai and Athlai.

Ezr. 10:29 From the descendants of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal and Jeremoth.

Ezr. 10:30 From the descendants of Pahath-Moab: Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui and Manasseh.

Ezr. 10:31 From the descendants of Harim: Eliezer, Ishijah, Malkijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,

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Ezr. 10:32 Benjamin, Malluch and Shemariah.

Ezr. 10:33 From the descendants of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh and Shimei.

Ezr. 10:34 From the descendants of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel,
Ezr. 10:35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Keluhi,
Ezr. 10:36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,
Ezr. 10:37 Mattaniah, Mattenai and Jaasu.
Ezr. 10:38 From the descendants of Binnui: [See Septuagint (also 1
Esdras 9:34); Hebrew Jaasu 38 and Bani and Binnui,] Shimei,
Ezr. 10:39 Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah,
Ezr. 10:40 Macnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,
Ezr. 10:41 Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah,
Ezr. 10:42 Shallum, Amariah and Joseph.
Ezr. 10:43 From the descendants of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad,
Zebina, Jaddai, Joel and Benaiah.
Ezr. 10:44 All these had married foreign women, and some of them had
children by these wives. [Or and they sent them away with
their children

Chapter 10 focuses on the actions taken by the Israelites to correct their sin of intermarriage with the surrounding pagan nations.

In the beginning of chapter 10, the people of Israel gather together before the Temple in Jerusalem to hear Ezra's words. He tells them that they have sinned by intermarrying with the surrounding pagan nations, and that they must separate themselves from their foreign wives and children to make things right with God.

The people agree to follow Ezra's instructions, and they make a pledge to do so. Ezra then leaves the Temple and goes to a place called "the chamber of Jehohanan," where he spends the night fasting and mourning for the sins of the people.

The next day, Ezra meets with the leaders of the community to discuss how they will put their pledge into action. They agree to make a proclamation throughout all the towns and cities of Israel, calling on the people to gather together in Jerusalem within three days to confess their sins and to separate themselves from their foreign wives and children.

The people respond to this proclamation by coming to Jerusalem and gathering in the open square before the Temple. The leaders of the community then begin the process of identifying those who had intermarried with the pagan nations, and they encourage them to confess their sin and to separate themselves from their foreign wives.

Many of the people respond to this call, and they separate themselves from their foreign wives and children. The chapter concludes with a list of those who had intermarried, and who had made the decision to separate themselves from their foreign spouses.

Overall, chapter 10 of the book of Ezra is an account of the actions taken by the Israelites to correct their sin of intermarriage with the surrounding pagan nations. It highlights the importance of confessing one's sins and making things right with God, and it emphasizes the need for obedience to God's commands. The chapter also provides a list of those who had intermarried and who had made the decision to separate themselves from their foreign spouses, as a record of their commitment to obeying God's laws.

Here are some key verses from chapter 10 of the Book of Ezra in the Christian Bible:

1. "Now while Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great

- congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore." (Ezra 10:1)
2. "Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away." (Ezra 10:6)
 3. "Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law." (Ezra 10:3)
 4. "Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do." (Ezra 10:12)

These verses describe Ezra's reaction to the discovery that many of the Israelites who had returned from captivity had taken foreign wives, which was a violation of the law of God. Ezra prays and makes confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God. A great congregation of men, women, and children assembles to hear him. Ezra takes action and goes to the chamber of Johanan, where he mourns because of the transgression of the people. He proposes a covenant to put away all the foreign wives and their children, according to the law of God. The congregation agrees with him, and they make a covenant to do as Ezra has commanded. The chapter ends with a list of the men who had taken foreign wives and the names of their wives.

In the book of Ezra, chapter 10 recounts the response of the people to Ezra's call for repentance and the subsequent actions taken to address the issue of intermarriage with foreign nations. This chapter offers several reflections:

Recognition of Sin: The people recognized the seriousness of their sin in intermarrying with the pagan nations. They acknowledged their guilt and the need for repentance. This reflection underscores the importance of recognizing and acknowledging our sins before God. It serves as a reminder that true repentance begins with an honest evaluation of our actions and a genuine acknowledgment of our wrongdoing.

Corporate Repentance: The people gathered together as one united body to address the issue of intermarriage. They took collective responsibility for their actions and acknowledged that they had sinned against God. This reflection highlights the significance of corporate repentance and communal accountability. It reminds us that our actions as individuals can have a collective impact, and it is essential to address sin both personally and corporately.

Commitment to God's Word: The people committed themselves to follow God's law and carry out His commands. They pledged to separate themselves from their foreign wives and the children born from those unions. This reflection emphasizes the importance of honoring and obeying God's Word. It serves as a reminder that true repentance involves a genuine commitment to aligning our lives with God's principles and following His commands.

Cost of Obedience: The chapter reveals the personal sacrifice involved in obedience to God's commands. Some individuals had to put away their foreign wives, which likely caused pain and disruption in their families. This reflection highlights the cost of obedience and the need to prioritize obedience to God above personal desires and comfort. It reminds us that obedience to God may require difficult choices and sacrifices.

God's Grace and Restoration: The chapter concludes with a record of the names of those who had married foreign wives, indicating their willingness to rectify the situation. This demonstrates God's grace and the possibility of restoration through repentance and obedience. It serves as a reminder that God's grace is available to those who genuinely repent and seek to realign their lives with His will.

Overall, Ezra chapter 10 reflects the themes of recognition of sin, corporate repentance, commitment to God's Word, the cost of obedience, and God's grace and restoration. It encourages believers to humbly acknowledge their sins, seek communal repentance, prioritize obedience to God's commands, be willing to make personal sacrifices for the sake of obedience, and trust in God's grace and restoration when genuine repentance is sought.

Notes:

The book of Ezra is a part of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament. It describes the return of the exiled Jewish people from Babylon to Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the restoration of worship in Jerusalem. While there may be various difficult questions raised by the book of Ezra, here are a few that have been debated among scholars and theologians:

1. Who was the author of the book of Ezra? While the book is traditionally attributed to Ezra, some scholars argue that it was written by multiple authors or edited over time.
2. When was the book of Ezra written? There is no consensus among scholars about the exact date of the book's composition. Some suggest that it was written in the 5th century BC, while others argue that it was composed later, possibly in the 3rd century BC.
3. What was the purpose of the book of Ezra? Some scholars suggest that the book was intended to promote the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of Jewish worship in Jerusalem, while others argue that it was written to assert the legitimacy of Ezra's priestly lineage.
4. How should we understand the role of Ezra in the book? While Ezra is often portrayed as a hero in the book, some scholars question his actions, particularly his forced divorce of Jewish men from their non-Jewish wives.
5. What can we learn from the book of Ezra about the relationship between Jews and non-Jews? The book raises questions about the boundaries

between different religious and cultural groups, and the tensions that can arise when these boundaries are crossed.

While there may not be clear-cut answers to these questions, they provide avenues for further exploration and reflection on the meaning and significance of the book of Ezra.