

Ezra

By A. S. Copley

PREFACE

REFERENCES USED IN THIS PUBLICATION

- **American Standard Version** (ASV or AV) is a version of the Bible that was released in 1901. It soon came to have other names such as the American Revised Version, the American Standard Revision, the American Standard Revised Bible, and the American Standard Edition. By the time its copyright was renewed in 1929, it had come to be known by its present name, the American Standard Version.
- **Diaglott** is a two-language polyglot translation, of the New Testament by Benjamin Wilson, first published in 1864. It is an interlinear translation with the original Greek text and a word-for-word English translation in the left column, and a full English translation in the right column.
- **King James Version** (KJV) references are used throughout this publication unless otherwise noted.
- **Revised Version** (RV) (or English Revised Version) of the Bible is a late 19th-century British revision of the King James Version of 1611. It was the first and remains the only officially authorized and recognized revision of the King James Bible.
- **Wuest:** Kenneth Samuel Wuest (1893–1962) was a noted New Testament Greek (Κοινή) scholar of the mid-20th century...produced his own English translation of the New Testament (the Wuest Expanded Translation – abbreviated WET) based on Nestle's critical text.

Note: *Definitions of references pulled from WikipediA, The Free Encyclopedia, January 2013.*

DISCLAIMER

This document has been formatted, proofed, and its verbiage modernized so as to save it into an easily read and/or printed electronic format.

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation thru-out all his kingdom and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah." [Ezr.1:1-2; compare 2Ch.36:22-23]

The name **Ezra** means "*help*." Ezra was more than a help to his people Israel. We have this interesting bit of history from his pen. It covers a period of about 80 years, 536 to 456 B.C. Twelve years later, Nehemiah appeared on the scene and labored with Ezra.

DIVISIONS IN EZRA

The book falls naturally into 2 great divisions, marked by 2 deportations to Jerusalem: The first 6 chapters embrace the 1st deportation in 536 B.C. The last 4 chapters, the 2nd deportation, was led by Ezra in 458 B.C. For convenience in studying the record, we will observe the following 12 divisions:

1st Deportation — 536 B.C.	Ezr.1
Names & Numbers of People Going to Jerusalem	Ezr.2
Altar Erected & Feasts Observed	Ezr.3:1-7
Temple Foundation Laid	Ezr.3:8-13
Adversaries to Progress	Ezr.4
Haggai and Zechariah Prophesied/ Building of the Temple Resumed	Ezr.5-6
2nd Deportation Led by Ezra — 458 B.C.	Ezr.7-8
Darius' Decree, 520 B.C., of No Interference With Jews' Work on the Temple	Ezr.8
Israel's Transgression	Ezr.9:1-5
Ezra's Prayer	Ezr.9:6-11
Ezra's Entreaty	Ezr.9:12-15
Israel's Confession	Ezr.10

THE 1ST DEPORTATION [EZR. 1]

Jeremiah had prophesied a captivity of the Jews of 70 years duration, which came to pass. The first 5 chapters of Daniel are occupied with that period, namely the duration of the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus, the first king of the Medo-Persian empire overthrew the former and became the 2nd world ruler of the divinely decreed Gentile Times, which covers 2,520 years, beginning with 606 B.C.

By taking Babylon, Cyrus freed the Jews from captivity. He was a remarkable character. Isaiah wrote about him giving his name, before he was born, and 100 years before he liberated the Jews. Read Isaiah 45:1-13 and you will appreciate his place and words all the more. When Jehovah wants something accomplished, He has the instrument prepared for the occasion. How safe and happy are we who trust Him fully and always. He announces His plans beforehand; then fulfills them. Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the house of God (in God's will); then 70 years later, Cyrus gave orders to rebuild it (in God's will).

“He's real to me, He's real to me,
My blessed Lord is real to me,
A living bright reality,
My blessed Lord is real to me.”

NAMES & NUMBERS OF PEOPLE GOING TO JERUSALEM [EZR.2]

The names and numbers of those who went to Jerusalem at the first are given in Ezra 2. Among the prominent names, were Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Joshua) who became respectively governor and high priest. Sheshbazzar [Ezr.1:8] was another name for Zerubbabel. Also Nehemiah and Mordecia went up. Ezra went and returned [Neh.12:1].

“*The Nethinims*” should not be overlooked. There were 392 in the first going up and 220 in the second [Ezr.2:46-54 and Ezr.8:20]. That was rather a religious title than a nation. **Nethinims** means “*dedicated or devoted ones*”. They stood in sharp contrast with the “*princes and rulers*” who led in the trespass of intermarrying with the nations [Ezr.9:2].

Nehemiah 10:28 is a clear commentary on the Nethinims. They were unlike the Gibeonites, who served Israel by compulsion, because they were caught in their trickery. With others, the Nethinims voluntarily “*separated themselves from the people of the land unto the law of God.*” They claved to their brethren. They speak to us of an entire surrender to the Lord. We call such saints full overcomers today. The total number of the first deportation was 10 less than 50,000 (see also Neh.7).

ALTAR ERECTED & FEASTS OBSERVED [EZR.3:1-7]

We infer from Ezra 7:9 that the people were at least 4 months journeying from Babylon to Jerusalem. Therefore, in the 7th month [Ezr.3:1] they builded an altar upon which to offer sacrifices [Ezr.3:2]. That was a wise beginning. It speaks to us of beginning our lives at Calvary, and doing everything as based upon Christ's atoning death for us. “*Fear was upon Israel because of the people of those countries*” [Ezr.3:3]. Typically, the cross was their protection. If we find refuge from God's wrath against sin by faith in Jesus' death for us, we are also safe from the power of Satan and wicked men.

We have supposed that the temple must be rebuilt at the close of this age before the Jews could offer sacrifices. But here we learn that on returning

to Jerusalem after the 70 years captivity, they offered burnt offerings and kept the 3rd feast—The Feast of Tabernacles, before anything was done toward restoring the temple. Why may it not be after a similar fashion in these days? We are expecting to learn any day, that Israel is offering sacrifices somewhere in Jerusalem. Will we hasten off to glory beforehand? God knows. We are believing, hoping, and longing for the trumpet to blow.

TEMPLE FOUNDATION LAID [EZR. 3:8-13]

The foundation of the temple was laid in the next year. It was not a cold, formal affair. The trumpeters and singers performed happily after the ordinance of David.

“And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, because He is good; for His mercy endureth forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord.” [Ezr.3:11]

Should not we praise our God more vehemently and shout much louder because He has laid a great foundation for an eternal salvation and a sublime spiritual structure, by the death and resurrection of His Son? What brokenness of spirit, what tears of joy, what volume of mellow praises redemption deserves from us in Christ Jesus.

ADVERSARIES TO PROGRESS [EZR. 4]

The building of the temple was hindered by the people of the land.

1st: The adversaries of Israel said, “*Let us build with you; for we seek God, as ye do.*” Satan sought at once to trip God’s people. What a warning to us not to allow the world to join with us in building the church, much less not appeal to the world for help. We should say as did the Jews, “*We ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel.*” We need none but God and ourselves. Thousands of saints are snared by a 50-50 business with the world, which ties their hands and shuts out Divine Power.

2nd: When the enemy could not get in by craft then they troubled the Jews and hindered their work. They hired folks to frustrate their plans for 7 years of Cyrus’ reign. During the 7 years’ reign of Ahasuerus and the 8 months’ reign of Artaxerxes (Pseudo-Smerdis), their foes wrote to the kings to have the building stopped. “*So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius (Hystaspes) king of Persia*”; that was 520 B.C. [Ezr.4:24]. There was possibly some cause of that hindrance among the Jews themselves, as is intimated by the later prophecy of Haggai. Some of them were showing more interest in their own homes than in God’s House. We should always give his cause the preference.

Let sorrow do its work,
Come grief or pain,

Sweet are thy messengers,
Sweet their refrain;
When they can sing with me,
More love, O Christ, to Thee.

HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH PROPHESED/ BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE RESUMED [EZR.5]

The Lord always stirs up someone to lead out in bringing about a revival. The prophets brought the message of God, which wrought conviction. Then the officers began to build the temple. No sooner had they begun, then the enemy arose to oppose them saying, "*Who hath commanded you to build this house and to make up this wall?*" [Ezr.5:3]. Governor Tatnai wrote to King Darius, complaining against the Jews for building; but they refused to be hindered anymore. Therefore, God came forth in their behalf.

DARIUS' DECREE (520 B.C.) OF NO INTERFERENCE WITH JEWS' WORK ON THE TEMPLE [EZR.6]

Darius made a decree (520 B.C.) that the Jews should not be interfered with in their work of building. Darius (Hystaspes) reigned from 521 to 485 B.C. Having made search in the records of the kings, he found the decree which Cyrus had made 16 years previous, that God had ordered him to build for Him a house. From that time forward, the building went up without any more delay. Hence, we read, "*And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar (the 12th month), which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king*" [Ezr.6:15]. That was 516 B.C.

The children of Israel kept the dedication of that temple with joy. They brought offerings of many bullocks, rams and lambs; and they kept the Passover on the 14th day of the first month of the next year. They observed also the feast of unleavened bread; "*for the Lord had made them joyful and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them to strengthen their hands in the work*" [Ezr.6:22].

When we yield to His Word, God fights for us against our foes, makes the wrath of men to praise Him, and fills our hearts with gladness and adoration to Him. We prove His faithfulness and great goodness again and again. "*There is no want to them that fear Him*" [Psa.34:9].

SMILING THROUGH ADVERSITY

It is easy enough to be pleasant
When life flows by like a song.
But the one worthwhile is the one who can smile
When everything goes dead wrong.

For the test of the heart is trouble,
And it always comes with the years.
And the smile that is worth the praises of earth
Is the smile that shines through tears.

2ND DEPORTATION [EZR. 7-8]

"This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king." [Ezr.7:6-7]

The 2nd deportation to Jerusalem was led by Ezra. It was in the 7th year (457 B.C.) of the reign of **Artaxerxes** (LONGIMANUS or "long handed"), who reigned over Persia (465 to 425 B.C.). In this place, Artaxerxes is a significant type of Jesus Christ as King. Let us observe at least 5 striking points of comparison:

1st: **Artaxerxes, his name means "venerable or honored king."** Arta (or Arya) is the old name for Persian, and means "great, honored, venerable." **KSHERSHE**, the root word, means "king." **Ahasuerus** [Est.1:1] is from the same root and has the same meaning. They were used interchangeably as official titles. Now who else is Jesus Christ destined to be but the "great, venerable and honored King?" Indeed, Isaiah 9:6 declares that He "*shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*" Our captured hearts adore Him gladly as such. We cannot speak too highly of Him. We fail to find terms of adequate praise and adoration by which to extol our coming Bridegroom. The most high-sounding titles we ascribe to Him and our most vociferous notes of honor are feeble, as compared with what He deserves; but He accepts them and is pleased. We hope to glorify Him more in our glorified bodies. Hallelujah for the hope!

2nd: **Artaxerxes announced himself to be "king of kings"** [Ezr.7:12]. And such he was, being one of the rulers of the 2nd World Empire by Divine Rite. Cyrus had said, "*The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth*" [Ezr.1:2]. Even as God had declared concerning the first Gentile World Empire, saying, "*And now have I given all these lands into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him and his son and his son's son*" [Jer.27:6-7]. These were each king of kings during their dominions.

Much more will our glorious Bridegroom be "*King of kings and Lord of lords*" for a millennium of years [1Ti.6:13, Rev.17:14, Rev.19:16].

Every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue acknowledge Him in those days [Isa.45:23, Phi.2:11]. Even the unregenerate will yield feigned obedience unto the Lord; for Satan and his angels will be bound in the pit [Psa.18:44, 66:3, 81:15 RV margin]. Men will be utterly powerless before the rightful Despot of the 5th universal empire.

3rd: Artaxerxes' authority. This is emphatically expressed by 7 positive utterances by him. Twice he said, "*I make a decree*:"

once concerning the people going with Ezra, and

once to all the treasurers that Ezra should have whatever he required [Ezr.7:13, 15-16, 21].

He assured Ezra that he was "*sent of the king to enquire concerning his land and people*" [Ezr.7:14]. He gave orders to "*deliver before the God of Jerusalem*" the vessels given to him for his use there [Ezr.7:19]. He said with vehemence, "*Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done*" [Ezr.7:24]. He safeguarded all the Jewish officers from all taxation, saying, "*We certify you...not to impose toll, tribute, or custom upon them*" [Ezr.7:24]. He gave Ezra full authority to "*set magistrates and judges*" over Israel in Judah and Jerusalem [Ezr.7:25]. And finally, "*whosoever will not do the law of thy God, let judgment be executed speedily upon him*" [Ezr.7:26]. He had unbounded authority and he made it manifest. He was a dictator indeed.

Much more shall Jesus Christ reign supreme. He exclaimed soon after His resurrection, saying, "*All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth*" [Mat.28:18]. "*Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you all the days even unto the consummation of the age* (that is, the Millennial Age) [Mat.28:19-20]. Inasmuch as our Lord is now only in the place of Mediator, at the right hand of His Father's throne [Heb.1:3, Rev.3:21], He is not yet exercising that kingly authority. During this Church Period of 1,900 years, Jesus has been the Lord and Head of His body, The Church. His ministers have not been making disciples of the nations for the millennial kingdom on earth, which Matthew 28:19-20 demanded. They have been the agents of "*gathering out a people to His name*" whom He beforehand called "*My church*" (Mat.16:18; compare Act.15:14). When we perceive that Matthew 28:16-20 pertains to Christ's millennial reign and not at all to this dispensation, it is plain why the disciples apparently disobeyed Jesus' words and baptized in His name only and not in the name of the Trinity. All the doings of The Church are in the name of Jesus Christ, including water baptism, because He is her Head; and He will be the Bridegroom of the Bridal Company in the coming ages. He is not King now, except in surrendered hearts; hence, He cannot exercise regal authority outwardly.

He is not yet crowned universal King on His own throne (as far as we know). According to Revelation 4, we hope to be transported to heaven before His coronation. We shall reign with Him. We shall be joined with Christ in judging the world. When the above citation in Matthew is fulfilled by Jewish missionaries on earth, The Church will be enjoying her Lord in glory. The Bride will enjoy her honeymoon of 1,000 years, while Israel will be evangelizing the nations (study Isa.60 with Act.15:14-17). These facts explain why some of us do not seem to have the visible success that many others seem to have in getting sinners saved. We are moved by the

whole counsel of God to feed and build up those who are saved in view of them being fitted for their destined heavenly place [Act.20:32]. He means to put us on exhibition in the ages to come [Eph.2:4-8]. Most folks want to be on display now; hence, they refuse to let the Spirit by the Word *“work effectually in them”* and *“fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power”* in them [1Th.2:13, 2Th.1:11]. If you insist on being in the limelight here, our gracious Lord will let you go in your way; but you will miss the acme glory light and blush in a far lesser place in the future ages. Do you want a position far removed from the throne of glory? Then continue to make for yourself a place and name down here. Continue to be chummy with everybody, the meanwhile looking out for number ONE, your own self. Let us exercise the authority of faith over ourselves now; then we will be privileged to exercise regal authority with Christ hereafter.

4th: **Artaxerxes honored the God of Israel.** Artaxerxes mentioned the name of God 16 times in his interesting charge to Ezra. He spoke of *“the God of heaven”*, *“the God of Israel”*, the *“law of God”*, the *“house of God”*, the *“will of God”*, and the *“wisdom of God”* in a captivating manner. Much more, one of the most impressive facts in Jesus’ life was the honor He bestowed upon His heavenly Father. He sought His Father’s will continually in frequent times of devotion. He said,

“I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me” [Joh.4:34; 6:34, 40].

“The Father that sent me beareth witness of me” [Joh.8:18].

“The Father hath not left me alone” [Joh.8:29].

“I honor my Father,” and *“my Father honoreth me”* [Joh.8:49, 54].

“But that the world may know, that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do” [Joh.14:31].

“For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth; and He will show Him greater works than these that ye may marvel” [Joh.5:20].

The Son mentions *“the Father”* more than 100 times in John’s Gospel record alone.

5th: The **fullness of the king’s grant to Ezra** is another point of likeness between himself and King Jesus. Note the following 7 overflowing statements: *“Silver freely offered to the God of Israel.”* *“All thou canst find.”* *“Whatsoever Ezra shall require.”* *“Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven.”* And *“whosoever.”* How typical of the words of Christ! Only His words are far more abundant and reach way beyond in their unbounded wealth of meaning and grant of privileges and blessings. Jesus said to the disciples:

“Freely ye have received; freely give.”

“Give, and it shall be given unto you, pressed down, shaken together and running over.”

“Ask what ye will.”

“If ye ask anything of the Father in my name, it shall be granted unto you.” “Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray believe that ye do receive them...and ye shall have them.”

“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”

“Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”

“He that eateth of this Bread shall live forever.”

“He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

“He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.”

“And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever...He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

How unspeakably rich and happy we are in Christ Jesus. Amen and Amen! With this, Artaxerxes' typical resemblance to Christ ends.

ISRAEL'S TRANSGRESSION [EZR.9:1-5]

Israel had not separated themselves from the nations. Ezra 9:2-4 expresses it:

“For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons; so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of the lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. 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. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.”

It is a great calamity for saints to intermarry with sinners or have any fellowship in any manner with them. They tie their hands thus and limit their activities for God. Their usefulness and happiness are sure to be curtailed. Hence, the injunction, *“Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord”* [2Co.6:17]. Study closely and calmly the Apostle Paul's advice in this matter in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. God cannot be a Father in actual experience to those who flirt with the world and have fellowship therewith.

EZRA'S PRAYER [EZR.9:6-11]

Ezra, as identified with the Jews in their crime cried out to God; he said, *“O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God.”* He confessed their sins to God and acknowledged His justice in chastising them. Their sin was the greater, considering God's goodness in leaving a remnant of the people to escape. He showed wondrous grace by delivering them and giving them favor with the kings, so that they could rebuild the temple.

His cry was effectual. Spiritual saints are always grieved and pained at the carnality and worldliness of other believers. Much of their most effectual ministry is intercession for those who pray little, but talk incessantly and flirt with the world. Shallow saints will probably never know the pools of hot tears and the hours of sighs and groans, which their conduct has occasioned.

EZRA'S ENTREATY [EZR.9:12-15]

*"Now therefore, give not your daughters unto their sons; neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace, or their wealth forever, that ye may be strong and eat the good of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever."
[Ezr.9:12]*

A carnal pity, steeped in self-interest, often seeks the welfare of the wicked professedly. Jesus said, "*Let the dead bury the dead; but go thou*" in God's way [Luk.9:60]. Rubbing up against the world weakens believers without fail. It induces a sickly appetite for the Word and robs the next generation of its spiritual right.

What legacy have we to leave to our children if a life of prayer and faith, a career of devotion to God, and spirituality do not follow us? How can any believer be so criminal as to live for himself and court a Christ-rejecting world? He makes himself Christ's enemy [Phi.4:18] and the devil's prey.

ISRAEL'S CONFESSION [EZR. 10]

Ezra's prayer proved effectual. A very great congregation of adults and children came to him. "*The people wept very sore*" [Ezr.10:1]. They entered into a covenant to put away their strange wives and husbands. Four men were appointed to look after the matter. They were 106 days accomplishing the task; for the number of transgressors exceeded 100.

How very gracious is our God. "*If any man (any saint) sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.*" Praise God for His unbounded mercy, and praise Jesus for His untiring intercession. Praise Him more abundantly for His keeping love and power of those who yield to be kept.

*"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."
[Isa.57:15]*

"For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." [Isa.66:2]

When Jesus Comes

I'm looking now beyond these days of fear,
And see the world devoid of strife, with Jesus here –
No war, no want, all hatred gone,
World peace and joy for everyone.

With Jesus sitting on His golden throne,
While all the nations His Lordship own.
From end of earth, from sea to sea,
They'll praise His Name eternally.

— √ —