

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

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The Returnee's

We are studying the oft forgotten Book of Ezra. Remarkably Ezra is one of the most important Messianic books of the OT. The lesson is that God is faithful to His promises in the Davidic Covenant to preserve the Messianic line from the satanic strategy of assimilation during the Exile. Ezra is writing from Israel's Exile which was prophesied by Daniel to be ruled by four Gentile kingdoms. Jesus referred to these four Gentile kingdoms as "the times of the Gentiles." When Ezra wrote the first kingdom, Babylon, had already conquered Judah, reigned for seventy years and been conquered by the second kingdom, Persia. Cyrus was the first king of Persia and we learned last time that God was sovereign over his heart as he had been over the hearts of prior Gentile kings in Babylon. In Ezra 1 He stirred up Cyrus' heart to issue a decree allowing the Jews to return to their land (1:1-4). This decree fulfilled the prophecies of Jeremiah (Jer 25:11; 27:19-22; 29:10). Thus, God was still working on behalf of His people even in Exile. The Exile had not abrogated God's covenant program. Just as God had providentially preserved His elect nation through the seventy-year exile, He was now continuing His work on their behalf by allowing them to return to their land. This work was consistent with Cyrus' polytheistic beliefs to restore proper worship in the various provinces of his kingdom. On top of this God also stirred up the hearts of many Israeli's to desire to return to rebuild the Temple which was in ruins. Remarkably God even stirred up the hearts of others in the Persian kingdom to financially contribute to them so they could make the return trip (1:5-6). Beyond even all this, God's sovereignty even caused Cyrus to return to the Jews the temple treasures (1:7-11) that had been taken from the Jewish temple by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar nearly seventy years earlier (Dan 1:2). The theme of Ezra 1 is clearly the sovereignty of God.

Tonight we come to Ezra 2 and you immediately see that it is a big long list of names and numbers that to you can't pronounce. How could a list of 135 names we can't pronounce be important? Well, that's why we study the Bible, to discover the point. There is a point. Everything in the word of God makes a point and if it didn't make a point God wouldn't have wasted words putting it in His book. So tonight we'll be studying this long list of names. And if you don't want to do that you know where the door is. Just be happy we're not studying 1 Chronicles because the genealogy there is ten chapters. We're only studying one chapter. Now one of the best ways to do this without boring you to tears is to simply make a series of observations, especially where there are peculiarities, deviations from the norm. Once we've made these observations we'll see if we can draw some conclusions for why this chapter was written.

The first observation is that these returnees are among those who came in the first return of 537BC. There were two other later returns, once in 458BC led by Ezra and one in 444BC led by Nehemiah. As verse 1 shows this is the first one that we saw discussed in Ezra 1 when Cyrus gave the right of return. Notice 2:1, **Now these are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city.** The first to return were those who lived in a Persian province that contained the region of **Judah** and the city of **Jerusalem**. There were 127 provinces in the Persian kingdom, Judah was one of them and note they were all of Jerusalem and Judah. Jerusalem is the central city; Judah is the region that was given to the tribe of Judah. So those from Jerusalem and Judah, or their ancestors, who had been carried away to Babylon in one of the three deportations of **Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon** were now returning. Some of them had never been to Jerusalem or were too young to remember and others had been to Jerusalem and did remember. For those who remembered it would be especially painful to see the city in desolation since they remembered its prior splendor. Jerusalem was one of the most beautiful cities in the ancient world. The Temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was covered in gleaming white marble that when the sun shone on it was described by some as appearing as if covered in snow. It was a remarkable and beautiful site so for those who had seen it before, to see the foundations exposed in total desolation was very painful. So the first observation is that these returnees were among those who were the first to return in 537BC.

The second observation, already alluded to, since Ezra was not among these returnees he is recording the history of prior Israeli's. It was important for Ezra to sketch the historic roots of the people he ministered to nearly 80 years later. This record would link them and God's work through them to the people of his day. If God had so worked in the lives of prior generations in Exile to stir them up to return and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and God had given them success, then God was certainly at work among them too. Obviously the Exile had not abrogated God's covenants and He was at work to preserve them so as to fulfill His covenants. Knowing that God is for you and in the midst of you is always a good source of hope and encouragement.

The third observation is simply that these people must be the ones from 1:5 whose spirit God had stirred to return and rebuild the Temple. In other words, they did not have it in mind themselves to go up and rebuild the Temple that lay in ruins. They were quite happy living in Exile among the Gentiles. We studied how wealthy they had become in Babylon and how relaxed and easy their lives were among the Gentiles. There are indicators of their wealth in this very chapter when mention is made in v 65 of the number of servants who returned with them and in verse 66 and 67 the quantity of their possessions is listed and in verse 69 how much money they gave to the treasury for rebuilding the Temple. These Jews were rich and so had no natural inclination, left to themselves, to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. Therefore God gave them the inclination by doing a specific work in their hearts as 1:5 revealed.ⁱ

The fourth observation is that the hearts He inclined to return, according to verse 64, numbered 42,360. Some people add the verse 65 servants who numbered 7,337 to give the round figure of 50,000. But God did not necessarily incline the servants to return, the servants had to return because they were servants and their livelihood depended on their Jewish masters. So the Lord only inclined the hearts of 42,360 Jews to return. The problem is that if you add up all the numbers listed, starting in verse 3 you don't get anywhere near 42,360, you get only 29,818, a difference of 12,542. How do we account for this discrepancy? The issue is tied up in the difficulties associated with scribal transmission of numbers. At the time Hebrew numbers were becoming attributed to Hebrew letters. This can lead to confusion when names and numbers are involved since we aren't sure if the letter is acting as

a part of the name or part of the number. For example, if a letter is not part of a name but a number but the scribe thinks it's part of the name then the number will be reduced in value. That appears to be what has happened here. So it's not that there is a problem with the text, it's a problem with the scribal transmission of numbers. As Tom Constable says, "There is general agreement that the divergences are copying errors, arising from the special difficulty of understanding or reproducing numerical lists."ⁱⁱ But the basic observation is that God stirred up the hearts of 42,360 Jews to return and it's these 42,360 that form a very interesting group.

The fifth observation is that the list in Nehemiah 7 is similar enough to Ezra 2 to be the same list but different enough to put into question which list is correct. For example, in Ezra 2:2 he lists Seraiah but in Nehemiah 7:7 he lists Azariah. Probably this is only a spelling difference. The same accounts for the differences in spelling of Reelaiah/Raamiah, Mispar/Mispereth and Rehum/Nehum. The differences are easily explained as spelling differences. However, Ezra 2:2 lists only eleven leaders whereas Nehemiah 7:7 lists twelve. Was it eleven or twelve that lead the return? Andy Woods explains, "These differences can be explained in terms of Ezra compiling his list from early sources that he had access to while in Babylon and Nehemiah simply recording those that actually arrived in Jerusalem. Thus, Nehemiah's list may be different due to deaths and the change of heart of some of the early volunteers."ⁱⁱⁱ In any case, the lists are not identical but the differences relate to earlier and later sources that document the original volunteers and the actual volunteers respectively. These differences are therefore, not inexplicable.

The sixth observation is that the list begins in verse 2 with **Zerubbabel**. Zerubbabel is an important figure in the genealogy of Christ so turn to Matt 1:11. Matthew divides his genealogy into three groups of fourteen. He's not trying to document every generation, we know there are some gaps in his genealogy. What he's trying to do is give believing Jews a memory device for the genealogy of Jesus Christ so they can use it in apologetics with unbelieving Jews. Jews thought in sevens while we think in tens. So Matthew organized his genealogy into a multiple of seven, three fourteens. And notice in verse 11, "Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon." Josiah was the boy king before the Exile, he became king at age 8, he was a good king, the last good

king and the greatest king of Judah since David. He was an awesome believer but his son Jeconiah did not walk in his father's footsteps. Jeconiah is also known as Coniah and God cursed him in Jer 22, He said no one from his line would sit on the throne of David or rule again in Judah. So the branch of David's line that came through Coniah is being recorded here and it's this line that ultimately comes through Zerubbabel. Verse 12, "After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel" the Zerubbabel of Ezra 2, and it comes all the way down to verse 16, "Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah." So **Zerubbabel** is in the line of Joseph, the husband of Mary. But Joseph was not the father of Jesus because his line was cursed and if Jesus had been the son of Joseph it would have meant Jesus was disqualified under the Coniah curse to sit on the throne of David. That's why vv 18-25 explain that he had to be born of a virgin, to avoid coming under the Coniah curse. But if this is the case then it creates another problem, "How if Jesus has no earthly father can he have any inheritance?" The answer comes from Levitical law. Under Levitical law if Mary's father did not have a son then he could transmit his inheritance to Mary and she could transmit it to her son if she married a man within the same tribe. Since Joseph was from the same tribe then Mary qualified to receive an inheritance from her father and thereby transmit it to her son Jesus when she married Joseph. All in all then, Zerubbabel is a critical name standing at the head of all the returnees in Ezra 2:2 because it was his line through which Joseph came which qualified Mary to receive an inheritance from her father that she could transmit it to her son, Jesus. So the pre-eminent importance of **Zerubbabel** in this list of returnees should be clear. The Lord stirred up **Zerubbabel** to return in order to preserve the Messianic line in the land of Israel so that when the time came Joseph and Mary could be married, securing the inheritance of the Messiah as well as providing for Him to be born in Bethlehem as prophesied by the prophet Micah.

The seventh observation is the second man in verse 2, **Jeshua**. **Jeshua** is the name Jesus or Yeshua and is an alternate spelling of Joshua. This **Jeshua** is referred to by the contemporary prophets Haggai and Zechariah as Joshua (Hag 1:1, 12, 14; 2:2, 4; Zech 3:1, 3, 6, 8, 9; 6:11). So **Jeshua** in Ezra and Joshua in Haggai and Zechariah are the same man. This **Jeshua** was the high priest who returned with Zerubbabel and plays a major role in the first six chapters of the book (cf 2:2, 36, 40; 3:2, 8, 9; 4:3; 5:2; 8:33; 10:18). He is

specifically called the high priest in Hag 1:1 and Ezra 2:36 mentions him at the head of the four priestly families that returned after the captivity.

Observe verse 36, **the sons of Jedaiah of the house of Jeshua. Jedaiah** was one of the twenty-four courses of the priesthood established in the time of King David. The house of Aaron through Eleazar and Ithamar were divided up into twenty four courses as recorded in 1 Chronicles 24:1-19. As Edersheim notes, “According to Jewish tradition, half of each of the twenty-four ‘courses,’ into which the priesthood were divided, were permanently resident in Jerusalem; the rest scattered over the land. It is added, that about one half of the latter had settled in Jericho, and were in the habit of supplying the needful support to their brethren while officiating in Jerusalem.”^{iv} **Jedaiah** was one of the twenty-four courses and **Jeshua** was from that course. Each of the twenty four courses took the Temple responsibilities for two weeks out of the year. However, after the Babylonian captivity only four of the twenty-four returned for Temple duty; **Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur** and **Harim**. As Edersheim says, “The institution of David and of Solomon continued till the Babylonish captivity. Thence, however, only four out of the twenty-four ‘courses’ returned: those of Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur, and Harim, the course of ‘Jedaiah’ being placed first because it was of the high-priest’s family, ‘of the house of Jeshua,’ ‘the son of Jozadak.’³ To restore the original number, each of these four families was directed to draw five lots for those which had not returned, so as to form once more twenty-four courses, which were to bear the ancient names. Thus, for example, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, did not really belong to the family of Abijah, which had not returned from Babylon, but to the ‘course of Abia,’ which had been formed out of some other family, and only bore the ancient name.⁵ Like the priests, the Levites had at the time of King David been arranged into twenty-four ‘courses,’ which were to act as ‘priests’ assistants,’ as ‘singers and musicians,’⁷ as ‘gate-keepers and guards,’ and as ‘officers and judges.’ Of these various classes, that of the ‘priests’ assistants’ was by far the most numerous,⁹ and to them the charge of the Temple had been committed in subordination to the priests. It had been their duty to look after the sacred vestments and vessels; the store-houses and their contents; and the preparation of the shewbread, of the meat-offerings, of the spices, etc. They were also generally to assist the priests in their work, to see to the cleaning of the sanctuary, and to take charge of the treasuries.”^v That covers Zerubbabel and Jeshua at the head of the list in verse 2 and these two men are critical,

Zerubbabel relates to the Messianic line, **Jeshua** relates to the priestly line, they are key men in Ezra 1-6.

Eighth observation, we have nine other leaders listed, **Nehemiah** but not the Nehemiah who wrote the book of Nehemiah more than 100 years later, an earlier **Nehemiah. Seraiah** who is called Azariah in the Nehemiah 7 list, **Reelaiah** who is called Raamiah in Nehemiah 7, **Mordecai** but not the Mordeciah who was Esther's uncle, an earlier **Mordecai, Bishan, Mispar** who is called Mispereth in Nehemiah 7, **Bigvai, Rehum** who is called Nehum in Nehemiah 7 **and Baanah**. Those are the eleven leaders in Ezra's list, they are top men.

Ninth observation, beginning in verse 3 we have the people of Israel listed. Actually you will see that sometimes it says "the sons of" as in vv 3-20 and other times it says "the men of" as in vv 21-23. When it says "the sons of" it's referring to family genealogy; when it says "the men of" it's referring to town of residence before the captivity. Now it may not seem that significant to you to see this list of family names and towns of residence but think if you visited Ellis Island in New York and saw your family name among the immigrants. That would be a very powerful and inspiring moment. And for the original readers who saw their own families and towns represented it would have been a very powerful source of encouragement.^{vi} This sheds some light on the purpose of this chapter.

Tenth, verse 16, we mention in particular this deviation from the pattern, **the sons of Ater of Hezekiah**, highlight is made of the fact that **the sons of Ater** were descendants of King **Hezekiah**. **Hezekiah** was also a good king in the house of Judah and by the way; who's genealogy is King Hezekiah in? He's also listed in Matthew 1 as being in the genealogy of Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Matt 1:10). So again, an emphasis on the Davidic line in the genealogy that leads to the Messiah. And so clearly the genealogy is pointing up the pre-eminence of the Davidic line and God's covenant to David.

So we have so far, in verse 2 the leadership, this would be the political leadership, in verses 3-35 the people and in vv 36-58 the Levitical priests, these would be the religious leadership. So the twelfth observation begins in verse 36 where we find the Levitical priests; there were three basic orders or

ranks; the high priest, the priests and the Levites who are broken down into singers, gatekeepers, temple servants and Solomon's servants. All three classes of Levitical priests served in some capacity in the Temple worship.

Now all priests were the descendant of Aaron, Moses' brother and Aaron had four sons; Nadab and Abihu who died before they had any sons and Eleazar and Ithamar who did have sons. So all the priests descend from Eleazar and Ithamar. In David's day their descendants were divided up and appointed for various offices of ministry. Since the descendants of Eleazar were more than the descendants of Ithamar then they took sixteen courses of the priesthood from Eleazar and eight courses from Ithamar, together constituting twenty-four courses. Each course was assigned two weeks of the year by lot and so the year was divided accordingly and every two weeks a different course of these twenty-four courses administered the Temple services. Within each course various priests were assigned various responsibilities. One was the high priest, he was the spiritual leader of all Israel and he had the very important function of entering the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement each year. The priests looked after the Temple vessels and performed sacrifices while wearing their special, symbolic vestments. They were also responsible to teach the nation the word of God. Other Levites helped the priests by serving as singers, musicians, gatekeepers and other servants. Its people who held these positions that Ezra is reporting returned in vv 36-58 to fulfill their responsibility.

Starting in verse 36 with the high **priest**, the spiritual leader of all Israel we find **Jeshua**, the same Jeshua as the one from verse 2 listed after Zerubbabel. He was of the course of priests descended from **Jedaiah** as listed in 1 Chron 24:7 that was established in the time of King David. He had the most important spiritual position and would be responsible to enter the Most Holy Place annually on the Day of Atonement.

Ranking after him we find priests who would wear the priestly vestments and offer sacrifices and attend to the Temple vessels, **Immer, Pashur and Harim**, these are the only three of the remaining twenty-three courses that returned. The remaining twenty remained in captivity in disobedience to the Lord. But jumping ahead a bit turn to Ezra 10:18. 80 years later we find the descendants of these four courses who originally came back to serve as Levitical priests in as much spiritual trouble as the rest of them. What had

they done? “Among the sons of the priests who had married foreign wives were found of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib and Gedaliah. ¹⁹They pledged to put away their wives, and being guilty, *they offered* a ram of the flock for their offense. ²⁰Of the sons of Immer *there were* Hanani and Zebadiah; ²¹and of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel and Uziah; ²²and of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad and Elasa.” All of them intermarried with foreign wives. Talk about rapid spiritual defection. It had only been 80 years and these fine priestly families that originally came back in obedience to God’s word are assimilating with foreign women. Were they supposed to do that? Was that biblical? What does Moses have to say about that? Deut 7:3, “...you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. ⁴For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.” It was a very serious thing to intermarry with foreigners because what happens is you start to accommodate to foreign religion and once you do that you’re in violation of the first commandment, thou shalt have no other gods before Me. God and God alone is to be worshiped as Creator and Redeemer. And when you intermarry with pagans, and these are the priests doing this for goodness sake, the priests who are supposed to be administering the sacrifice, teaching the word of God and they’re married to pagan girls? What’s happened to them? They’ve defected from YHWH. And once you’ve defected from YHWH you start coming under divine discipline. That’s why Ezra was raised up to return and when he got back and learned that these four fine priestly families have defected he instructs them to put away these wives so they can come out from divine discipline. There are a lot of lessons we can learn from this. I’ll just point out two. First, observe how rapidly a godly family can defect from the faith. It only took 80 years! That’s two generations and so the lesson is you really have to stay on top of things spiritually in your family. You’ve got to instill in your family a love for the word of God, just a joy for getting in the text. You can’t beat people over the head with the Bible. You have to develop a strategy to instill a love for the word of God in your family members and it starts with the head of the house. It starts right at the top of the chain, with the man and if the man doesn’t stand up and say, “I’m going to live the word of God, I’m going to lead by example” then you can forget this ever happening. And if it doesn’t happen think about the next generation, think about the generation

after that. They're going to be so apostate you wouldn't even recognize them as your family. That's what happened here to these four priestly families and that's what can happen to your family. So stay on top of things spiritually. Second lesson, this happened among the leadership. What happens if the leadership defects spiritually? What happens to the people who follow the spiritually defective leadership? They defect spiritually. As goes the leadership so goes the people. This is what has happened in church after church in America. When you've got pastors who don't believe the word of God for a second, they don't believe God when He says I created in six twenty-four hour days, they don't believe God when He says all are dead in Adam, they don't believe God when He says He judged by a mountain-covering waters of a Flood, they don't believe God's word to Abraham in the covenant, they don't believe Jesus Christ is the only way, they don't believe any of these things and so we have pastors out the wazoo who have defected spiritually in America. Where do you think the people in those congregations are? They're defecting spiritually. My advice to them is to leave, don't stay and try to save the sinking ship, leave because bailing water out of a ship whose hull has collapsed is a futile effort. I assure you the ship is going down and you are going to go down with it. God didn't call you to save that ship; God called you to separate from false teachers and find a true Bible teacher who loves the word of God. So these four priestly families that we are meeting in 2:36 defected spiritually went up to Jerusalem as fine priestly families but in 80 years they had defected spiritually and were leading the nation into apostasy. And because of it they were facing divine discipline and so God raised up Ezra to return and confront the spiritual defection with the word of God.

Alright, so we have the high priest and the priests who offered sacrifice, after this you have in Ezra 2:40 the various **Levites** that helped the priests by preparing the sacrifices and so forth, various helping roles in the Temple. And here we find **the sons of Jeshua**, these were the sons of the high priest and were in training for the high priesthood, **and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah, 74.**^{vii}

Then we come to those who ranked after the priests who helped with the sacrifices, in verse 41, **the singers: the sons of Asaph, 128.** Now **the sons of Asaph** were a school of music that traced their skill back to Asaph. Who was Asaph? Asaph was the leader of David's choir and he is known to be

highly skilled in music. He wrote 12 Psalms including Ps 50 and Ps 73-83. So the school of Asaph began in the time of David and came all the way down to the time of the captivity and of those who went into captivity these 128 returned to fulfill this important task of being in the Temple choir. Now these men would have been professional, highly trained singers with excellent voices the quality of Juilliard or Towson. It would have been remarkable to hear them. Each day the Temple services would begin with the blessing from Numbers 6:24-26, then the musicians would blast the silver trumpets and the choir would begin by singing a Psalm. Each Psalm was to be sung in three sections and at the close of each section the priests would blow the silver trumpets and the people would bow down and worship. Accompanying the Psalm would be an instrumental orchestra along with professional musicians but the human voice was the primary instrument. The finishing of the Psalm signaled the end of the morning service. The priests then began to offer sacrifices and offerings throughout the day for Israelites who might bring them. This took place until the time of the evening service when another Psalm was played to conclude the evening service. So the **singers of Asaph** were essential to the Levitical worship at the Temple both in the morning and the evening.

Ranking after the singers in verse 42 we find **the gatekeepers**, another group of Levites essential to proper Temple worship; **the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, in all 139**. There were several gates that guarded restricted areas; the city itself, the king's palace and the temple and its many courts. Each gate had to be guarded in order to keep out those unqualified and admit those qualified. During each priestly courses two-week duty, personnel were assigned to these gates by the casting of lots. Most listed here guarded the gates entered by the Levites for their service in the Temple (cf 1 Chron 9:17-18).

Ranking after the gatekeepers in verse 43 we find **the temple servants** or "slaves." These servants or slaves were also necessary for the proper administration of the Temple service. In the Hebrew this controversial group are known as the *Nethinim*. They are controversial because Josephus refers to them as slaves and thereby some have concluded that they were not Levites but foreign captives used by the Levites. This is probably correct since Numbers 31:47 indicates that Moses took captives and gave some of

them to the Levites to help in menial tasks like chopping wood and carrying water. Further, Joshua appointed some of the Gibeonites to help in these laborious tasks. So **the temple servants** are foreign slaves used for menial tasks. In addition to the **temple servants** that date from the time of Moses in verse 55 we find **Solomon's servants**. Solomon added more workers when he completed the temple because the enlarged temple service required more workers. This new group became known as **Solomon's servants**. In all verse 58 records that of **the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants** there **were 392** that returned. These men would be instrumental in rebuilding the Temple in the coming chapters.

In verses 59-60 we have some who returned but could not give evidence that they were Jewish and this verse casts light on the criteria for determining Jewishness. **Now these are those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan and Immer, but they were not able to give evidence of their father's households and their descendants, whether they were of Israel; 60the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 652.** This is a strange phenomenon because most of these people could recite their genealogy way back. I recount a story of the late Dr Nelson Glueck who reported on an amazing phenomenon experienced by Mr A. S. Kirkbride who was serving with Lawrence of Arabia in 1917. He says Lawrence 'told me that on one occasion, while he was in an Arab encampment, an Arab got up and related the history of his forbearers back to forty generations, and that there were others in the assembly who obviously could have done the same, telling who married and who begat whom, and where they lived, and frequently what they had done, and where they wandered. Kirkbride said it sounded exactly like a chapter of genealogy out of the Bible' (Newsletter of Nelson Glueck, Aug. 22, 1942).^{viii} So it's interesting that some who returned in vv 59-60 could not establish that they were Israeli's but the criteria is quite clear; you had to be descended of a father who was a Jew, who reached back to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Your mother could be anything, but your father had to be a Jew. I point that out because many Jews define Jews on the basis of the mother, modern Judaism bases it on your mother, and others base it on whether you practice the religion of Judaism. People are all over the board on the criteria for Jewishness. But the Scriptures are clear; you must be a descendant of a father who is of the twelve tribes, Ezra 2:59.

In verses 61-63 we have some who could not establish their priestly origin and therefore were put on standby until it could be established. **Of the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and he was called by their name.** ⁶²**These searched *among* their ancestral registration, but they could not be located; therefore they were considered unclean *and excluded* from the priesthood.** ⁶³**The governor said to them that they should not eat from the most holy things until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim.** The **Urim and the Thummim** were stones placed in a pouch behind the breastpiece of the ephod, the special garment worn by the high priest. The word Urim means “lights” and the word Thummim means “perfections” so sometimes they are referred to as “lights and perfections”. Virtually everyone agrees that whatever the Urim and Thummim were they were used to discover the will of God. Just how they did that is a matter of debate. The bottom line is that they were used by God to reveal His will to the people and in the case of these who claimed to be of priestly origin but not established they would have to wait until the high priest could be inducted into office and utilize the **Urim and Thummim** for this purpose.

In verse 64 we have the number of the Jews whom God stirred up to return, **42,360**, in verse 65 **their male and female servants 7,337** as well as **200 singing men and women**, showing how wealthy they were, they could have stayed and lived a relaxing, luxurious life, they had male and female entertainers, they had it all, but they decided to give it all up to follow the will of God for their lives and suffer hardship, face difficulty. Verse 66 and 67 their domestic animals, **their horses were 736, their mules, 245; their camels, 435; their donkeys, 6,720** these numbers clearly reveal wealth. Verse 68, **Some of the heads of fathers' households, when they arrived at the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to restore it on its foundation.** They must have been devastated, the Temple was in ruins and so they gave, verse 69, **According to their ability they gave to the treasury for the work 61,000 gold drachmas and 5,000 silver minas and 100 priestly garments.** And again, this reveals great wealth of those who returned. They had been prosperous in Babylon and much of that prosperity went to the **treasury for the work** of rebuilding the Temple **on its foundation** because that was the more important than living luxuriously. It was the will of God and so they

put funds in for rebuilding the Temple on its original foundation, the foundation that Solomon's temple had stood on. At the time it was a square foundation, not rectangular as you're accustomed to seeing in Herod's temple at the time of Christ. So the temple foundations were a perfect square and that is where they intended to build it and that same principle exists among Jews who want to rebuild the Temple today, they want to build it on the same foundations it was built on before.

Finally, verse 70, and here we have everyone listed in the spiritual leadership starting with the highest rank and working to the lowest as we've described. **Now the priests and the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants lived in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.** They had returned to their homeland in obedience to the Lord and now it was time to rebuild. Now having made these many observations there are at least two purposes of this chapter and we'll try to put these two together so you can see why this big list of names is important. The only way to get to these two purposes is to carefully analyze these people, carefully study this, otherwise you can't pick up on these two purposes and that's what most people miss but I've taken you through this step by step so you can see how to do Bible study and so we can detect these two very important purposes. First, the emphasis on the Davidic line is key. In verse 1 the leader of the return is Zerubbabel who is a descendant of David. The mention in verse 16 of Hezekiah who is also a descendant of David highlighting Ezra's interest and emphasis on the Davidic line. God was still at work to preserve the Davidic line in order to one day send the Messiah. Second, the emphasis on the Temple priests is key. For the Messiah to come and fulfill all righteousness under the Mosaic Law the Temple had to be rebuilt. If the Temple was not rebuilt then the Messiah could not fulfill the Law which centered on the Temple and all righteousness would not be fulfilled and our Father in heaven would not be satisfied by Jesus' high priestly offering of Himself to God for our sins as a sacrifice. Therefore Ezra 2 shows that God was at work stirring up the hearts of the Davidic line and priests in order to rebuild the Temple and proper worship in the Temple in preparation for the Messiah.

ⁱ Just as we have no natural inclination to believe the gospel. God has to do a work in our heart to incline us to believe the gospel (1 Cor 1:21-31).

ⁱⁱ Constable, T. (2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Ezr 2:64). Galaxie Software.

iii Andy Woods, *Ezra Argument*.

iv Edersheim, A. (2003). *The Temple, its ministry and services as they were at the time of Jesus Christ*. (83). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

v Edersheim, A. (2003). *The Temple, its ministry and services as they were at the time of Jesus Christ*. (87–88). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

vi Martin, J. A. (1985). Ezra. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Ezr 2:1–63).

Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

vii Judah in 3:9.

viii Constable, T. (2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Ezr 2:59). Galaxie Software.

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