

## A MAN TO EMULATE

[jkroberts\\_us@yahoo.com](mailto:jkroberts_us@yahoo.com)

[www.pacolethillsbaptist.com](http://www.pacolethillsbaptist.com)

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Ezra 7:1-10

1. The nation of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC.
2. The conquest of Judah took place at a later date and over a period of several years.
  - a. In 605 BC the Babylonians, under King Nebuchadnezzar, subjugated the Jewish people and exiled Daniel and other young men of note to Babylon.
  - b. In 597 BC the Babylonians returned to reestablish their control over a rebellious nation and exiled Ezekiel and 10,000 more people.
  - c. Finally, in 586 BC the Babylonians got fed up, returned to Jerusalem, slaughtered many, exiled others, left the poorest behind, and destroyed the city, its walls, and the Temple.
3. Starting in 605 BC the Jewish people endured 70 years of exile in Babylon.
3. In 539 BC the Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Medes and the Persians.
4. In 536 BC, God, in order to fulfill His word by the mouth of Jeremiah, stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia to allow 42,360 Jews, under the leadership of a man named Zerubbabel, to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple.
5. The temple, after a period of delay due to opposition from the locals, was completed in 516 BC.
6. Then, in 458 BC, Ezra the scribe, along with some priests and Levites, traveled to Jerusalem to rebuild the religious life of the nation.
7. The last phase of the rebuilding process took place in 445 BC when Nehemiah returned as governor and rebuilt the city's walls.
8. Ezra was an exceptional man, and one whom we would do well to emulate.
9. Note the following facts.
  - a. King Artaxerxes granted Ezra permission to return to Jerusalem, and the king also gave him the authority to requisition anything he needed from the royal treasury.  
NOTE: All should read 7:11-28 to see Artaxerxes remarkable letter and the extent of Ezra's authority.
  - b. Also Ezra, and his party, carried with them great wealth (see chapter 8) which had been donated by the king, his counselors, and the Jewish people to be used as needed to underwrite the needs of the house of Ezra's God.
  - c. These things happened because the good hand of God was upon Ezra. See 7:6, 9
10. The question we want to answer is why was the good hand of God upon Ezra?

### **I. Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord.**

- A. In verse 6 we read that Ezra was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given.
- B. In last week's message we focused on the condition of our hearts in relationship to God and the things of God. 2 Chron 16:9  
"For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."

C. God strongly supported Ezra, and He will strongly support any man or woman whose heart is completely His.

NOTE: Ask yourself and answer honestly, "Is my heart a cluttered heart, or is my heart completely God's?"

D. Ezra had set his heart to study the word of God and so should we.

E. We are not going to make much progress in the area of Bible study if our hearts are not in it.

F. Those who have set their hearts to study the word of God will identify with the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 119.

1. "How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their **heart**." 2

2. "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your Word. With all my **heart** I have sought you; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my **heart**, that I may not sin against You." 9-11

3. "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." 18

4. "Give me understanding that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my **heart**." 34

5. "The word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." 105

G. They will also embrace Paul's command to Timothy. 2 Tim 2:15-16

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."

NOTE: Our ability to handle the word of truth accurately is directly related to whether or not we have set our hearts to study it.

## II. Ezra had set his heart to practice the law of the Lord.

A. The word practice suggests active, ongoing obedience.

B. A sad fact is that many professing Christians neither study nor practice the word of God even though they would say that they believe the Bible to be accurate and authoritative.

C. Jesus asked a pointed question in Luke 6:46.

"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

D. Note the connection the Lord made between love and obedience in John 14:21-24.

21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and **I will love him and will**

**disclose Myself to him.**" 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "**Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?**" 23

**Jesus answered and said to him,** "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

NOTE: There is no intimacy with God apart from love and obedience.

### III. Ezra had set his heart to teach God's statutes and ordinances in Israel.

- A. Ezra was an Old Testament believer.
- B. He loved God, God's word, and God's people.
- C. His heart's desire was to know the word of God, to obey the word of God, and to teach the word of God to others.
- D. He succeeded in all three areas because God had his heart, and all he did he did with his whole heart.

#### APPLICATION

1. We are not all called to positions of prominence like Ezra was, but we are all called to be like him.
2. By the grace of God and our own heartfelt commitment we should be able to say to others what Paul wrote to the Philippians. Phil 4:9  
"The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, **practice these things**, and the God of peace will be with you."
3. What does your attention to the word of God, your intention related to the word of God, and your desire to share the word of God say about where your heart is?
4. Something is seriously wrong in the lives of those who claim to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet their hearts are not in it.