

I. Introduction:

- A. We are now introduced to **Ezra the scribe** – at least as far as our study in Nehemiah is concerned.
 - 1. Of course, he has a ten chapter book of his own, which immediately precedes Nehemiah.
 - 2. I've referred to him in passing several times, but here in chapter 8 he stands front and center.
 - 3. I am of the opinion that the last few chapters of both books overlap as both men deal with some of the social corruption of their day.
- B. Tonight it's time to review Ezra's biography, with the hopes of making a practical application or two.
 - 1. In order to do that, let's use him as a illustration of ourselves.
 - 2. There are ways in which he might be a picture of the preacher – setting a high example for me.
 - 3. But then there are other aspects of his life which could be used as pictures of any Christian.

II. And that can begin with his family heritage.

- A. I've already called him "*Ezra, the scribe,*" but in addition to that he was a priest of the most high God.
 - 1. Either of those offices could be used to speak about us.
 - 2. I'll come back to this, but as *Ezra, the scribe,*" he had a special relationship to the Word of God.
 - 3. But before that let's remember **1 Peter 2:9** which speaks about all of us – "*YE are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*"
 - 4. Every saint is a part of Christ's "*royal priesthood*" of which the Lord Jesus is our "*great High Priest.*"
 - 5. So there are aspects of Israel's priesthood – Ezra's priesthood – which ought to teach us a few things.
- B. Let's read **Ezra 7:1-5**.
 - 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 Hilkiyah, the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, The son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest; This Ezra went up from Babylon.*"
 - 2. We saw in **Nehemiah 7** that some men who thought they were priests could not prove their lineage and as a result were dismissed from office.
 - 3. That was not a problem with Ezra – his lineage was pure.
 - 4. But there are some dark shadows nevertheless. Some of these men were not the greatest.
 - 5. And then there is **II Kings 25:18-21**.
 - a. "*And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:*
 - b. *And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land that were found in the city:*
 - c. *And Nebuzaradan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah:*
 - d. *And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.*"
 - 6. Ezra's father, "*Seraiah the CHIEF priest*" was executed under orders from Nebuchadnezzar.
- C. From these things, couldn't we develop a lesson about our lineage as children of God?
 - 1. We are special priests of God – not because it was something we desired and studied towards.
 - 2. We are priests of the Lord through family blood – the blood of the Lord Jesus.
 - 3. Couldn't we make an application, linking together the death of Christ and our priesthood through Him?
 - 4. Like Ezra we are children of a holy nation, making us unique in God's sight.
 - 5. Like Ezra we are members of a royal priesthood, called to "*show forth the praises of him who hath called (us) out of darkness into his marvellous light.*"

III. Now let's tie Ezra's lineage to his personal history.

- A. In 536 BC Cyrus, King of Persia, permitted the first return of Jewish captives under Zerubbabel.
1. By the way, in **Ezra 2**, Zerubbabel was called the "*Tirshatha*" – the governor.
 2. **Ezra 6** tells us that the new king of the Persians, Darius, authorized the rebuilding of the rebuilding of God's temple and perhaps more importantly, the reestablishment of God's worship.
 3. A little more than 80 years after Zerubbabel, Ezra led a second group of returnees to the Promised Land.
 4. You might liken him to an evangelist, leading people to the worship of the Lord and to Heaven itself.
 5. Again, this is a part of our priestly ministry under the Lord Jesus.
- B. We don't have a lot of details, so some of my next suggestions may be slightly askew.
1. But I wonder why Nehemiah has been in Jerusalem for 6 months or so, without mentioning Ezra?
 - a. Why isn't his name mentioned among the builders, or repeated in the genealogies of the last chapter?
 - b. Yes, Ezra was never declared to be the Tirshatha, so when Nehemiah arrived he had more political and practical authority than Ezra.
 - c. But since both were good, godly men, I find it difficult to understand why Nehemiah hasn't had some sort of public contact and mention of Ezra – if he was in the city.
 2. My guess, with the agreement of some commentators, was that Ezra was permitted to serve in Jerusalem for only a matter of months, and then he was recalled to Babylon.
 3. For somewhere around 13 years he has been away from Judah.
 4. Some think that he returned with Nehemiah, but I'm of the opinion that he arrived a few months later, and that explains his absence until this chapter.
 5. Upon his arrival he was instantly recognized by the older residents, and his honored position was restored, now under Nehemiah.
- C. Just as Nehemiah was convicted and burdened about the state of Jerusalem, Ezra had been as well.
1. Nehemiah was burdened about the protection and beautification of the city.
 2. Ezra was concerned about the temple and the spiritual condition of the city and its inhabitants.
 3. Back in **verse 10** of **Ezra 7** we read, "*Ezra had prepared his heart to SEEK the law of the LORD, and to DO it, and to TEACH in Israel statutes and judgments.*"
 4. There is a text which is easy to preach – a convenient three point message – seeking, doing and teaching the Word of God.
- D. Is this saying that at some point, Ezra made a life-change and prepared to "*seek the law of the Lord?*"
1. Is it possible that in his youth, taken from his home and possibly his family, Ezra grew upset with God?
 2. Perhaps spiritually immature, he didn't like the way God in His sovereign will had permitted the fall of Jerusalem and the deaths of his parents and friends.
 3. But after a few years of personal and spiritual loneliness, he began to return to the only thing he had left – the Word of the Lord.
 4. With the Holy Spirit constraining his heart, he began to relax and submit himself to Jehovah.
 5. He repented of his anger and peevishness; he repented of his lack of faith and his distrust of God.
 6. And over time he chose to prepare his heart to "*seek the law of the LORD, and to do it.*"
 7. Later he pulled some political strings and received a commission to make a trip to his old home town in order to restore the true worship of the Lord.
 8. He was there for a while, helping to rebuild and set things in order, but like Nehemiah – on a certain date, he sadly began a return to Babylon and Shushan the palace.
- E. Now, here in **Nehemiah 8** we see Ezra back in his element.
1. No matter what he had been able to accomplish in his first trip to the Holy City, the events of this chapter make him more joyful than he has ever been before.
 2. This is a return to one of the great celebrations of ancient Israel – the Feast of Trumpets.

3. But, more importantly this wasn't something that he or the Tirshatha had mandated.
4. His ministry had been blessed by God to the point where it is the people who demand of Ezra that he teach them God's Word.
5. *"And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel."*
6. As the Apostle John said in his third epistle, *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."*

IV. As to Ezra's service, we can break it down into two parts.

A. Notice how Ezra is described in the first four verses of **Nehemiah 8**.

1. *"And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto **Ezra the SCRIBE** to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.*
 - a. *And **Ezra the PRIEST** brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.*
 - b. *And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.*
 - c. *And **Ezra the SCRIBE** stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose..."*
2. We have the same multiplication of positions mentioned in **Ezra 7:11** –
 - a. *"Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto **Ezra the PRIEST, the SCRIBE, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel.***
 - b. *Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto **Ezra the PRIEST, a SCRIBE of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time.***
 - c. *I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee."*
3. Ezra was a priest, the son of a former high priest; but he may have preferred to be known as a scribe.
4. **Ezra 7:6** – *"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."*
5. The word **"ready"** as in **"a ready scribe"** is also translated **"diligent."**

B. What does it mean that Ezra was a **"scribe"** – a diligent scribe?

1. It means that he took the Word of God very seriously.
2. It means that **he loved** the law of God and was a **student** of the Word.
 - a. In the New Testament the word **"scribe"** was often followed by **"lawyer"** – a man of the law.
 - b. There was no one better in Jerusalem than Ezra to read and expound God's word that day.
3. Making application, shouldn't every child of God be a student of God's word?
 - a. Shouldn't we make Ezra our example when it comes to the Bible?
 - b. Ezra was like the Psalmist who professed before God to love His Word.
 - c. Ezra might have confessed with David, *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."*
4. But as a scribe, he was most likely just what the word means in English – he **transcribed** God's Word.
 - a. He was a **copyist**, enabling others to have the Word of God as well as he.
 - b. When the people of the city wanted to have, or to hear God's Word, they knew to whom to turn – Ezra.
5. Shouldn't this be true of **us as well?**
 - a. Perhaps it's not in anyone's best interest to have me write out the Bible for you to read.
 - b. But people should know that I have copies of God's Word in the Authorized version.
 - c. If someone really wants to possess a Bible, we should all be quick to give them one.

6. And then third, Ezra the scribe was a **teacher** of God's word.
 - a. He knew the Word well enough to share not only the printed version, but a verbal explanation.
 - b. He could mount the pulpit & share the message of the Lord, *"causing the people to understand the law."*

C. And of course, Ezra was also a priest.

1. If the sins of Judah, and the army of the Chaldeans, hadn't brought about an interruption in the services of Solomon's temple, Ezra would have been either High Priest or at least in the rotation of ordinary priests.
2. Like ourselves, he would have been presenting to the Lord the offerings of the godly people in the land.
3. Like ourselves, he would have been offering his prayers and the prayers of Israel to the Lord.
4. When he went to Jerusalem to reestablish or strengthen the temple services, it was a part of his responsibility as a priest of the Lord.
5. He went to Jerusalem to build a church there for the Lord – I mean to rebuild the temple.
6. The priests tended the candles on golden lamp-stands, and they regularly sprinkled incense on the golden altar.
7. The priests put the shewbread out for the Lord and replaced them as the law proscribed.
8. The priests also feasted regularly on shewbread which was being replaced.
9. Ezra was a priest of the most high God.

V. Conclusion:

- A. Ezra was a committed servant of the Lord.
 1. His whole heart was given to his Saviour.
 2. He is an example to us, and he deserves a lot more study than what I have given to him tonight.