

# Through the Bible - 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon highlights the importance of recognizing God's interest in individuals, seeking spiritual vision, and following the example of David's leadership and preparation.*

**Duration:** 53:29

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:1, 2 Chronicles 14:15, Ezra 8:25, Ezra 9:1

**Topics:** "Through The Bible"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the book of Chronicles, specifically the first nine chapters. The speaker mentions that these chapters provide a list of people who were taken into exile and highlights the repetition of incidents mentioned in the Kings and Chronicles to teach spiritual lessons. One verse in chapter four is highlighted, emphasizing the importance of trusting in the Lord. The speaker also mentions the division of the kingdom and the different kings mentioned in the remaining chapters, including the warning given to King Asa.

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## Transcript

We want to turn now to the first book of Chronicles. First and second Chronicles was written after, as far as we know, after the children of Israel came back from the captivity in Babylon after 70 years. We don't know, perhaps Ezra wrote it, but it's different from the two books of Kings in this way.

You know, there were two kingdoms after Solomon's death. Rehoboam headed up one, Jeroboam headed up the other, and there were two streams of kings. The northern kingdom of ten tribes was Israel.

The southern kingdom of two tribes was Judah. And the kings of Israel were generally wicked. The kings of Judah were, some were good, some were bad.

The books of Kings deal with both nations. The two books of Chronicles deal only with the kings of Judah, starting with Saul and David and on through the kings of, only with the southern kingdom. And it brings forth certain spiritual truths.

There's a certain amount of repetition, like the Gospels, quite a bit of repetition of the incidents mentioned in the Kings are again mentioned in Chronicles to teach us lessons, just like incidents mentioned twice in the Gospels. And these two books of Chronicles we want to look at together. Since most of that history of it, and many of the lessons in these, we already covered when we studied one and two kings.

We are not going to recover that area. But just a few things. First of all, in the first nine chapters of one Chronicles, we have the whole family tree of David.

Starting with Adam. In one Chronicles one verse one. It's a whole genealogy of David that goes all the way up to Adam.

And one reason why God has given this long list of the different lines and the genealogy of Reuben and Simeon and the priestly line and all the tribes of Israel mentioned in chapter six and chapter seven and chapter eight, up to chapter eight anyway, is to show us one thing, that God is interested in individuals. He doesn't say just so many people. Each of us, if you're born again, your name is in the book of life.

God doesn't just say, well, so many people from Kerala and so many people from Tamil Nadu and so many people from Punjab were born again. No, each person's name is written specifically to show us that each one of us, God is personally interested and he knows all about your family tree all the way back to Adam. He knows all the history of your life and the way you were brought up and everything.

And he's got a plan for your life. To me, that's a great encouragement that I'm not just a person floating around the world, one of the millions whom God looks at. God knows my name.

He knows all about me, my parents, my grandparents, my great grandparents and everything. I also don't know, but he knows it all. He knows every hair on my head.

He knows every detail of my life. That's a great encouragement. That's what the message we get from the first nine chapters of Chronicles.

From chapter nine, it's actually giving us the list of people who were taken away into exile and different people there are mentioned. It says the first who lived in their possessions and so on. And some of the sons of Judah and various names are given there of people who are gatekeepers and etc, etc.

I just want to point out one little verse in chapter four about one of these men. His name was Jabez, verse nine, chapter four, verse nine, one Chronicles four, nine. Jabez was more honorable than his brothers.

You know, when God makes a list of our names, he emphasizes some who are more honorable than others. Just like if you read Romans chapter 16, where Paul makes a list of his co-workers, he mentions that some were like this and some were like this. There are some who are more wholehearted and God takes a note of that.

Even though we are all individuals, he makes a note of those who are more honorable than their brothers. And so all are not the same. They may be all brothers in the church, but God notices that some are more honorable.

And his mother named him Jabez because I bore him in pain. So we find that being more honorable has got some connection with pain and suffering. That here is a brother who has gone through suffering and pain and come through it triumphantly.

And he turns out to be a better brother. So don't despise pain. And not only that, it says here that Jabez called on the God of Israel, verse 10.

He was a man of prayer. And he prayed and said, Lord bless me. Enlarge my border.

That your hand will be with me. That you keep me from harm. That that may not pain me.

I mean people may trouble me that I don't get spiritually hurt. And God granted him what he requested. We can apply that prayer to ourselves spiritually.

Oh God, bless me and enlarge my spiritual borders. I'm not satisfied with what I've experienced. I want more.

Let your hand be with me. That means your power. Keep me from evil.

That evil will not harm me. Wonderful prayer. And God granted him what he requested and God will grant you what you request.

So we move on to chapter 10 where we read about the defeat and death of Saul. Chapter 11, David is made king over Israel. We have covered all this ground.

David's supporters. In chapter 12. Just one thing I want you to notice among David's people who supported David and came to him.

In the time when he was being persecuted. You know it's one thing to join David after he's become king. But these people joined David when he was being persecuted.

It's one thing to join a church after it has become famous and popular. But it's quite another thing to join it when it is despised because you see the anointing there. It's wonderful to join up with a man of God after he has become very popular and accepted and people know that he's a prophet.

But it's quite another thing to join up with him at a time when he's despised and rejected by everybody. And nobody wants him. But you recognize the anointing of God is with that brother.

And I join up with him. These were the men who became David's mighty men. The same thing happens even today.

Here and there God raises up a man to do a work for him. And a few people have eyes to see that that man is an upright man. He's a godly man.

His ministry has blessed my life. And I don't care what Saul says about him. I don't care what anybody says about him.

I see the anointing of God upon his life and I'm going to align myself with that man. That's how these people joined David. And later on when David became king, of course, they got positions of authority.

They were leaders. But the great thing about them is that they could discern the anointing of God on David when he was rejected and despised. It's like, you know, when you go to heaven, everybody will want to worship Jesus.

The thing is how many people want to follow him today when he's despised and rejected in the world. It's the same principle with a true servant of God is never going to be popular. Jesus said, woe unto you when all men speak well of you.

Because they spoke like that about the false prophets. And he said, blessed are you when all men tell false stories about you and speak evil of you. Because that's how it was with the true prophets in the Old

Testament.

Now very few people understand that. A true prophet is never fully valued or recognized in his lifetime almost. David was recognized in his lifetime.

But the history of the church proves that even the great apostles, they were rejected and despised even by others. Paul was rejected by the believers in Corinth. He says in 2 Timothy 4, all those who are in Asia have forsaken me.

Because he was true to God till the end. Jesus was true and most people left him. So, it's wonderful to recognize the anointing of God.

And that's what we see here in chapter 12 about one man. Some of the sons of Benjamin came to this cave, verse 16, 12-16, where David was. And David went out to meet them.

And he said, if you come peacefully to help me, my heart will be united with you. But if you have come here to betray me to my adversaries, my conscience is clear. May God look upon you and punish you.

See, there are people who can come to us pretending to be friends in order to betray us. I've seen people like that many times in my ministry. But I say God deals with them.

And I've seen through these last 25 years how God has dealt with such people. And then it says, verse 18, look at this man, Amasai. Wonderful example, you probably never heard of this man in your life.

Verse 18, the spirit of God came upon Amasai, who was the chief of the 30 valiant men. And he said, we are yours, O David. And we are with you, O son of Jesse.

Peace, peace to you. And peace to him who helps you. Indeed, your God helps you.

Then David received them and made them captains of the band. So we see, there were some people like Amasai, on whom the Holy Spirit came. And he could recognize the anointing on David, even though David was in ragged clothes and living inside a cave, being hunted by Saul.

You see, if you read the history of the church, you find the truly godly men, who stood against the established religious system in Christendom, were always persecuted. You read about the story of the Anabaptists in Europe. It's an amazing story.

Most of you may never have read of it. You may have read of Martin Luther and John Calvin and Zwingli. But there was another group at that time called the Anabaptists, who were persecuted not only by the Roman Catholics, but who were persecuted even by the followers of Luther and Calvin.

And they were godly people who preached the whole counsel of God, total separation from the world. And they were persecuted. Their leaders were killed.

But they were godly men. They met in forests and caves. And it's been a tremendous challenge to me to read of these godly men through these years.

Church history will record them as heretics. Or they preach some strange doctrine, false doctrine. That's how they record.

In fact, one day when Jesus comes again, you may discover that some of these people whom church history called heretics, were actually the true men of God. Because that's what we see in our day too. So we need to be careful.

Don't be fooled by all these people who talk about false doctrine and heresies. See whether the anointing of God is on a man. That is the test.

If God approves of a man, you might as well approve of him. And Amasai recognized that. And then I want to show you another thing about the characteristic of David, which we see in chapter 13, verse 1. It says here, David consulted with the captains of thousands and the hundreds and even with every leader.

See, a true godly man will not do things single-handedly. Okay, I've decided this, all you fellows go and do it. No.

The reason why David got such tremendous support from people was because he discussed things. He says, I'm a weak man brothers, I want your opinion. What do you think about this? And sat down and discussed with people who were junior to him.

And together came to a decision with every leader. And then, verse 4, then all the assembly said that they would do so for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. There was a consultation.

And so on. And number of the other things here, we've already covered about the Ark being brought to Jerusalem. Worship before the Ark and God's covenant with David in chapter 17.

And I want you to now come to chapter 22. In chapter 22, we read of David preparing for the building of the temple. Solomon was going to build the temple, but David prepared for it.

And he said, this is the house of the Lord God. David gave orders to the foreigners. And he set stone cutters to hew out stones.

God had told him, you're not going to build the house. So see what he did. He made all the preparation for it, so that it would be easy for his son Solomon.

Later on in chapter 29, you see, he gave such a lot of gold and silver and bronze and all types of things. He never got the privilege of building the temple, but he did everything possible. See, if God does not give you a ministry, be willing to do everything possible to support another person to whom God has given that ministry.

That's what we see. We saw it in Kings. We see it again in Chronicles that he prepared large quantities of iron to make nails, verse 3, and timber.

And he thought, he was very thoughtful. And he was thinking, verse 5, my son Solomon is young, inexperienced, and the house has to be a magnificent house. So I will make preparation for it.

And David made, verse 5, ample preparations, 22 verse 5, before he died. It's a wonderful heritage that we can give to our children. If we have made ample preparation for them to follow the Lord in their generation.

In that way, David did a wonderful job for Solomon. And then he calls Solomon and charges him and says in verse 14, with great pains, 22 verse 14, I have prepared for the house of the Lord a hundred thousand

talents of gold, one million talents of silver, bronze and iron beyond weight, great quantity, timber, stone. I have prepared workmen for you, verse 15, stone cutters, masons, gold, silver, there is no limit.

Arise and work, verse 16, and may the Lord be with you. How easy it was for Solomon, because David had done so much. Godly men are like that.

And he told them all, set your heart and soul, verse 19, a word I would give to all of you. Set your heart and soul to seek the Lord. Arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord God, 22 verse 19, so that you may bring His holy vessels that can be a house built for the name of the Lord.

Then we move on. There is a list of various names of Levites and the various sons of Levi and their descendants. The division of musicians in chapter 25.

And the gatekeepers, chapter 26. The commanders of the army, chapter 27. A big list of names.

David was interested in each one of them. And then David talks to the people about the temple in chapter 28. He says, the Lord chose me, 28.4, to be king.

And He chose my son Solomon, verse 5. And He told me that I cannot build a house. And so I have prepared all these things. He lists again all the golden utensils, verse 14 and so on, for the temple.

And He told Solomon, be strong and courageous, verse 20, 28.20. Don't be dismayed, for the Lord will be with you. If Solomon had gone on the strength of that exhortation from his father, his life would have been very different. In chapter 29 again, He says these words in verse 3. Moreover, 29.3. In my delight in the house of my God, I have given over and above all that I have already provided.

He says, I already gave so much. So much. And then after a while he felt, hey, I feel I haven't given the Lord enough.

You know, we are sometimes so different. We give something to the Lord and sometimes we think, hey, did I give too much? But David was so different. He said, I haven't given enough.

Hey, let me give some more. Over and above what I have already given. That was the man after God's own heart.

And then David prayed in verse 10 onwards. And a song of praise to the Lord. Lord, you try the hearts, verse 17.

And give my son Solomon a perfect heart. And said to the assembly, bless the Lord. And all the assembly praised the Lord and worshiped the Lord, verse 20.

And they offered sacrifices. And then we read, Solomon was made king and David died. I just want to say one word about in 1 Chronicles 29, verse 29.

It speaks there about Samuel the seer. And Gad the seer. See, the prophets were called seers.

Why were they called seers? Because they could see way ahead into the future what other people couldn't see. And what is the need in the church today? People who got spiritual vision to see, if I allow this in the church today, what is going to be the condition of this church 10 years from now? Can you see that? That's a prophet. This church will go way off the track.

Today it's only a small deviation. You know in geometry, you have 360 degrees in a circle. And if you go one degree off, say true north, one degree off.

In the beginning, the distance from the straight line is not much. Millimeters, centimeters, after sometime it becomes meters. And after a few years it will become miles.

Just one degree off from the straight. That's a seer. A seer can see.

He doesn't see immediately. Oh, this doesn't matter. It's just a slight deviation.

Who's bothered about 2 millimeters? It's not a question of 2 millimeters. Where is this going to be 10 years from now? A seer can see that. He says if we stick to the word of God, it's important.

I'm not going to compromise. That's a seer. And I believe that people, we need seers in the church.

We go to 2 Chronicles now. And 2 Chronicles deals in the first nine chapters with the rule of Solomon. And we've already seen that.

So we don't want to cover that again. But it's good to read it again when you get time. It says in chapter 7, verse 1, When Solomon finished praying, the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices.

And then we read in the remaining chapters from chapter 10 to chapter 36. We read again about the division of the kingdom in Rehoboam's time. And the different kings.

The death of Jeroboam and king Asa. Succeeding Abijah in chapter 14. A prophet, verse 15, warning Asa.

Saying if you forsake me, I'll forsake you. And we come to this wonderful verse in 2 Chronicles 16. It's a good verse to remember.

You know, Asa, in the beginning, trusted in the Lord. It says in chapter 15, verse 4, Asa trusted in the Lord. In their distress, they turned to the Lord and they sought Him and He let them find Him.

And they really trusted in the Lord and God did amazing miracles for them. But, when another king came to fight against Asa in chapter 16, he didn't trust the Lord. He compromised.

When it says in verse 2, he took out silver and gold from the treasuries of the Lord and gave it to this heathen king. The application for us today is where people compromise the truths of God's word for the sake of peace. With other people who don't believe the whole counsel of God.

And then he made a treaty with them. And then a seer, verse 7, 2 Chronicles 16, 7. Hanani the seer came to Asa and said, Because you relied on the king of Aram and not relied on the Lord, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. You remember earlier, Asa, the Ethiopians and the Lubin, they were a huge army that came against you.

But because you trusted in the Lord, He delivered you. And listen to this. This is the verse I was talking about.

It's a wonderful verse. Verse 9. All of you must remember this verse. 2 Chronicles 16, 9. The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the whole earth.

What for? Not looking for those who are wholehearted. He already knows those who are wholehearted. He's seeing how He can support those who are wholehearted.

Don't misread that verse. God doesn't have to search to find the wholehearted. He already knows it.

But His eyes are moving. Now all these few wholehearted people I've got, how can I support them across the face of the earth? It's an amazing verse, which teaches me that if I'm a wholehearted disciple of Jesus, the Lord will move on my behalf all over the earth to support me. One of the prayers I have prayed for many years now is, Lord, please lead me to people who are seeking for a godly life.

I started praying in my city, Lord, lead me to people in my city who are seeking for a godly life that I can bless them and they can bless me. Lead me to people in my surrounding states. Lead me to people in India.

And now I pray, Lord, lead me to people in the world, here and there, who are seeking a godly life, who want to overcome sin, who want to build the church of Jesus Christ as the body of Christ in these days. Lord, bring me in touch with them. Help me to bless them and help them to bless me, that together we can be a testimony for you in these last days.

And what does God do? It's not only me, if you pray such a prayer sincerely. If your heart is completely His, this is not for everybody, if you have no ambition in your heart other than God's glory, God's will, no desire to make money or honor a position, you only want one thing. Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth.

The church of Jesus Christ must be built. God will search all over the earth and bring people who need your ministry to you and bless them through you and bless you through them. That's been my experience through many, many, many years.

The ones He picks out, you know, just like God brought the animals into the ark. Noah, can you imagine four, Noah and his three sons going hunting for all the animals? No, God brought them in. The eyes of the Lord moved to and fro throughout all the earth and Noah's time to bring into the ark those who should come.

And that's been my experience through the years. It's a wonderful way to serve God. When the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the whole earth to work on your behalf because God sees that your heart is completely His.

That means you have no ambition. Don't think that verse is for everybody. A lot of people understand the doctrine, but their hearts are not completely the Lord's.

They've got other ambitions. They become Christians, they become full-time workers, but they've got private ambitions. They want some honor, some title, some money, to be head of some organization, something.

Don't seek for those things. Seek that the Lord will have all of your heart, that you'll fulfill God's purpose for your life and He will work on your behalf. You want to get married? From the other end of the world, God can find somebody for you because His eyes will move all across the earth to find someone for you if He sees that you're wholehearted.

It doesn't matter what your need is. It's a wonderful verse. Now I want to show you another verse in chapter 18 where we consider that when Jehoshaphat joined up with Ahab to fight against the enemy and they got a prophet, and that prophet is Micaiah.

And Micaiah was a true prophet of God who spoke in chapter 18 and verse 12. Somebody told Micaiah in verse 12, Please make your message just like the message of all the other prophets who have already prophesied. The other prophets are all false prophets.

You know, many times people have come to me and told me what to speak and what not to speak. It's exactly like this. It happens today.

And Micaiah said, What the Lord tells me, I'll speak. That's it. We can't do it perfectly because we make mistakes.

But when we get light, we cleanse ourselves. But otherwise, we're not influenced by what people say. I've been to churches where for some meetings and the people say, Well, you know, these are the problems here.

And as soon as they speak the first sentence, I say, Listen, I don't want to hear it. Let me finish my ministry here. Then you tell me the problems.

And you'll find that the ministry itself takes care of the problems. Because God knows. And if you listen to God, He'll tell you what to speak.

So, Micaiah said, I'm sorry. I'm not going to say what other people are saying. I'm not just going to repeat what everybody else is saying.

A lot of Indian preachers today, They read books, magazines that come from the West. And they just repeat what they read there. And I often think, does God speak only to people in America? Doesn't He speak to people in India also? Where are the people in India who don't have to read what those people have written to just repeat the same thing like an echo? You know, you go into these hilly areas and you shout something, there's an echo.

This is what's happening. Somebody in the West shouts something and in the East there's an echo. This is what's happening.

Be a man of God. Be one who listens to God. Not just one who repeats what you read in some book or magazine or heard on a tape.

Be one who listens to God. And Micaiah said, I'll only speak what God tells me. And they persecuted him.

It says here, they arrested him. Somebody slapped him, verse 23, when he didn't speak what the others spoke. And they said, put him in a prison, the king said, verse 26.

True prophets have been persecuted always, throughout history. Now we move on to chapter 26. There are different stories of different kings.

I don't want to go into all of that. About Uzziah. Uzziah was one of those kings.

Isaiah was a prophet and Isaiah got a vision in the year that king Uzziah died. How did king Uzziah die? See, king Uzziah succeeded in war. It says in verse 5 of 26, he continued to seek God.

The last part of verse 5 says, as long as he sought the Lord, he prospered. But then, verse 16, a very interesting verse for all of us. 26-16.

When he became strong, his heart became proud. And he acted corruptly. The same story that has been repeated during the last 2000 years in Christendom.

When God blesses, a man gets puffed up. It's very difficult to remain humble when God has blessed you and used you. And he was unfaithful to the Lord.

And he decided to become a priest. He had not learned from the folly of Saul. He said, I'll go into the temple.

God has blessed me as a king. I'm going to be a priest too. And Azariah, a fearless priest, along with 80 other priests, entered and opposed Uzziah.

He said, Uzziah, you've got no right to burn incense. This is only for the priests. Thank God for such men who are not afraid of kings.

But Uzziah was angry. And he said, they told him, can you imagine? They told him to get out of the sanctuary. Told the king to get out.

We really need some priests like that today. But Uzziah was angry. And while he was angry, verse 19, the leprosy began to break out on his forehead.

And he covered himself. He covered him with leprosy and he ran out. And he was a leper, verse 21, to the day of his death.

And he had to live in a separate house. And he was cut off. He could never enter the house of God again.

It's a very dangerous thing when you try to move into a ministry which God has not given you. That's for somebody else. Just praise the Lord and do the ministry God has given you.

Then one more verse I want to show before I move on. Chapter 32, we read about Hezekiah. Hezekiah was healed in an amazing way.

Verse 24 of chapter 32, it says, The Lord gave him a sign. And the sign was that the sun went backwards in the sky. In Joshua's time, the sun stood still for 24 hours.

But in Hezekiah's time, the sun went backwards 10 degrees. You read about that in Isaiah 2. And this made Hezekiah so proud that such a fantastic miracle had taken place. And people from Babylon, verse 31, came to Israel to find out how did the sun go backwards.

People said some king in Israel was praying and this happened. They came and Hezekiah felt very proud. Yahya, were you the one? He said, Yahya, I am the one who prayed.

And he was quite proud of the whole thing. And Isaiah told him that all that you showed these ambassadors from Babylon will all be taken away one day. But the verse I want to show you here is verse 31 of chapter 32.

Last part of verse 31. When these rulers came to ask about this wonder, God left Hezekiah alone to test him to see whether he was a humble man in his heart for the miracle he had experienced or whether he would become proud and take the glory for what God had done. Many times, after God has used you, maybe done a miracle for you or through you, immediately after that, God will leave you alone to see, to test you, to see when you meet other people whether you will take the glory for that yourself or whether you will be humble and give the glory to God.

Maybe God has used you to build a wonderful church or bring a number of people to the Lord or even pray for somebody who is sick and he has been healed. God did it. But you testify about it in such a way that you take the glory to yourself like Hezekiah.

What a sad way to end his life. One final thing I want to say is chapter 33 and verse 13. We read about Manasseh, something that's not written in the book of Kings and that is towards the end of Manasseh's life, he repented.

He was taken captive. The Lord brought the commanders of the king of Assyria, chapter 33 verse 11. They captured king Manasseh with hooks and took him to Babylon.

And when he was in distress, verse 12, he pleaded with the Lord, this man who for nearly 50 years had done such evil in Jerusalem, led people astray, killed his own children, put them in the fire. Finally, when he repents, God listens to it. And it says, when he prayed, verse 13, God was moved and heard his prayer and brought him back to Jerusalem and then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.

Then, verse 15, he removed the foreign gods and the idols and he threw them outside the city and he set up the altar of the Lord, verse 16, and made peace offerings and ordered Judah to serve the Lord. If Solomon had done that, it would have been recorded in scripture. It's not recorded in scripture.

That's why I believe that Solomon went to hell. Manasseh did it and it's recorded in scripture. One last verse in 2 Chronicles, chapter 36, verse 21.

Why were the children of Israel sent to Babylon for 70 years? Reason is in chapter 36, verse 21. Because they did not allow the land to have its Sabbaths. That means every seventh year, they were supposed to give a Sabbath to the land.

They didn't give it. They were covetous. They wanted more and more and more and more.

And the result was, God said, Okay, 490 years, you did not give the land their Sabbath. So, you're going to go to 70 years to captivity. So, we have skimmed through.

Now, we're going to go to Ezra. The book of Ezra refers to the time when they came back from the 70 years of captivity. See, there are two journeys recorded in the Old Testament of Israel.

One is the journey from Egypt to Canaan, which speaks about salvation for the individual, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, baptized in the Red Sea, baptized in the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the cloud, conquering the giants in the land. That speaks about our personal life. There is another movement of God's people mentioned in the Old Testament.

That's the movement of people from Babylon to Jerusalem after the captivity. And that speaks about the building of the church. One is personal and the other is corporate.

Corporate means along with God's people. So, one movement speaks about our personal journey with God into Canaan's land, overcoming the lust of the flesh. The other movement speaks about coming out of dead religious systems and building the true body of Jesus Christ called Jerusalem.

Babylon to Jerusalem. These are the two great movements of God's people recorded in detail in the Old Testament. Many prophets spoke about this movement from Babylon to Jerusalem.

And Babylon, we know from Revelation 17, is a corrupt system which professes to follow the Lord but does not actually follow the Lord. And Jerusalem is the true church. And Ezra is one of those men whom God used.

Zerubbabel was one of their leaders. And in chapter 1, we read, first of all, that this movement began with the sovereignty of God influencing King Cyrus to tell, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, Ezra 1.1 and he said, the Lord God has given me the kingdoms of the earth and He's appointed me to build a house for Him in Jerusalem. Can you imagine a heathen king supporting the building of God's temple in Jerusalem? And whoever is among you, may God be with him.

There's freedom, there's no compulsion. Let him go up to Jerusalem and rebuild the house of God. Who is giving this order? An ungodly heathen king.

The first thing that we need to learn in order to build a church as the body of Christ is that God is sovereign over all people. Number one lesson. You can never build it otherwise.

He's sovereign over the heathen. And there is no compulsion. Whoever wants to go, let them go.

And if some of you don't want to go, verse 4, you want to stay back, you can support with money. That is second best. To go yourself and build the body of Christ in some place where it needs to be built is best.

Second best, verse 4, is to support with money. If you can't go yourself that place to bring people to the Lord and build the church there, support it with money. One of the two.

And it says here that some people went. And here we read of a list of those people who went in chapter 2. These are the people who came up from Babylon to Jerusalem. The leader was Zerubbabel.

God always needs a man to lead people out of Babylon to build a true church. The Anabaptists I spoke about, they had their leaders, godly men, who stood for the building of the true church. Come out of corrupt systems.

Come out of church and state joining together. And here is a big list in chapter 2 all the way down. The whole chapter is almost full of people who the list of their names of the people who went.

What I want to say is God makes a note of the names of every person who has left a corrupt religious system and come into the true church of the living God. God's got their names. There's no compulsion.

Babylon is more comfortable. It's difficult to go to Jerusalem. It's dangerous to go to Jerusalem.

It's expensive to go to Jerusalem. Why should we move? We are comfortable here in Babylon and that's what a lot of people say. Believers who are sitting in ungodly systems today.

Believers who should not be sitting in those ungodly systems but it's more comfortable there. You can get married with greater honor there. You can get buried with greater honor there.

Babylon is a better place to be in. And so a lot of people stay. But some people realize that God's house is being built in Jerusalem.

I must be there. I must be where the anointing is. Not where I'm comfortable.

And thereby the sifting takes place. And so they move. And we read here in chapter 2 in verse 40.

Only 74 Levites went. Why was that? See the Levites did not have any land. They knew even if we go back to that place we won't get any land and I don't know whether all the people of Israel will give us their tithes because all of them are so poor.

So we better stay in Babylon. We are more comfortable here. They did not have faith to trust God for their needs.

In chapter 2 verse 59 it says about certain people who could not give evidence of their father's households whether they belong to Israel or not. People were not very clear about their salvation. There was a check-up made.

Are you really belonging to Israel? Are you really born again? Sometimes people come along into our churches and they can't even give a proper testimony about their salvation. See all this is written down there in great detail. And then verse 62 some people said their ancestry but when they searched among their ancestral registration they could not be located.

So they were considered unclean and excluded from the priesthood. And the governor said that they should not eat from the most holy things till a priest can come and discern whether you really belong to God or not. See they were very exact.

They were very strict about these people who were coming to be built together in Jerusalem. Not any Tom, Dick and Harry. We want to see that you are really converted.

We are not interested in numbers. That's the first thing we see there. If we are not really radical if you don't belong to Israel, sorry.

If you can't prove that you belong to Israel. If there's no proof that you are turned from sin. If there's no evidence of repentance John the Baptist told the Pharisees I will not baptize you.

So that's the lesson we learned there. And as we move on to chapter 3 to 6. We read about the construction of the temple. There's a lot of unity there.

It says in verse 1 The sons of Israel were came as one man to Jerusalem. Wonderful verse. The people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem.

Just like those 120 who waited as one man in the upper room for the Holy Spirit. And it says here in Yeshua verse 2 There's a body ministry here. It's not just one man show.

In the body of Christ there's a body ministry. Not one man show. Yeshua and his brothers the priests and all these people arose and together built the altar.

And the first thing they did was set up the altar. The message of the cross. Calvary.

Very important. That's the first thing they did. And they offered burnt offerings.

We got to always proclaim Calvary first when we want to build the body of Christ. And then they celebrated the feast of booths according to the ordinance. They honored God's word.

And there was a continual burnt offering we read. And then there was a time of praise when the builders verse 10 laid the foundation of the temple. The priest stood and with trumpets and cymbals began to praise the Lord.

That's another thing that must be found in this house of God being built in Jerusalem. The true church. A spirit of praise and worship saying the Lord is good.

And the next thing that happens is opposition. It is so true to today. Chapter 4 verse 1 when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard they were building a temple they got together and first of all they said we will also join you and build with you.

Because we also are seeking your God. But Zerubbabel and Joshua said verse 3 you have nothing in common with us. We don't cooperate with unbelievers even if they say they are nominal Christians.

They say we also serve your God. We are also Christians. Thank God for men like Zerubbabel and Joshua put their foot down and said nothing doing.

You got to be born again brother. You want to work with us. You got to be saved.

You got to come to the cross. You got to repent. We need more people like John the Baptist and Zerubbabel and Joshua.

And then these people got upset. So they joined up with the people of the land and it says here in verse 4 the people of the land tried to frighten them. There was religious opposition.

There was fear, harassment. They hired counselors verse 5 to frustrate their counsel. All the opposition to these simple people who just want to build a temple.

Frightened them verse 4 exactly the same as today. When you try to build the house of God as the body of Christ and not some dead denominational system you are going to face opposition. If you are just interested in coming out from Egypt to Canaan and living an individual holy life it's not much of a problem.

You just overcome the lust in your flesh. But you go further than that and move into that second movement from Babylon to Jerusalem you are going to run into real problems. I'll tell you that.

Opposition. But God is sovereign and we read here God permits this opposition and He allows He overcomes it. Kings send decrees.

There was there was a we read here in verse 17 to 23 that 17 to 22 there was a decree that came from the king and they had sent a request to the king and they went with that order of the king and went in haste verse 23 to Jerusalem and stopped them and the work in the house of God verse 24 was stopped. Because one king got influenced by all these people who gave false reports against them. There'll be a lot of false reports when we try to serve the Lord.

And there'll be people religious, secular authorities who are influenced by them the police and so many people will be turned against us. And the work stops. And what does God do? He kills that king.

And another king called Darius comes up in verse 24. And then Darius took over that's 16 years later and then when the prophets now two prophets came up chapter 5 Haggai and Zechariah and they began to encourage and you know what Haggai was telling the people there you fellows are worried about these enemies and you read in the book of Haggai you say the time has not yet come the time has not yet come you're building your own houses and the house of the Lord is not being built and he stirred up the people and Zerubbabel and Joshua arose again and they were not afraid and they began to build the house of God and the prophets of God were supporting them.

And verse 3 again the enemies were stirred up who told you to build this temple? And here's this wonderful verse in verse 5 the eye of God was upon them and they could not stop them until the report came to this new king Darius and they sent the report to Darius and Darius chapter 6 issued another decree and he found the decree which Cyrus had made see the sovereignty of God here and then he sent a message saying verse 7 leave this work chapter 6 verse 7 leave this work on the house of God alone I issue a decree that you must do whatever you can to help build this house verse 8 and the full cost is to be paid from the royal treasury out of the taxes and whatever is needed bulls, rams, anything for the God of heaven it must be given do you know who was Darius' counselor?

Daniel God is God his people I tell you it's wonderful to see the sovereignty of God Darius comes up and supports the work the role is found the opposition works for good because ultimately we get more Darius says you can get all these things from the treasury itself and the government pays the cost and day by day every day verse 9 whatever they need must be given to them and chapter 6 verse 14 we read the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zachariah and they finished building it and the temple was completed verse 15 in the third day of the month the sixth year it was a body ministry all joining together it started with a very small thing but it became not as big a temple as Solomon's time a small thing but still they completed

the house of God now after chapter 6 verse 21 you find there is a big gap of about 60 years and in this gap between chapter 6 and chapter 7 the story of Esther comes in Esther you know who married the king and then we come to chapter 7 of the return and reformation under Ezra now Ezra is in another group the first group was Haggai, Zachariah, Zerubbabel and Joshua and now Ezra comes in with another group and one servant of God passes away another generation God raises up another praise God for that that generation after generation God raises up at least one man to be the leader of his people and Ezra was a teacher it says in verse 6 he was a scribe who was killed in the law of Moses a man who had studied deeply the word of God God will not use a man who has not spent time seriously

studying the word of God so please remember that be student of God's word if you want God to use you and we read that Ezra there he leads the people out of up to Jerusalem and the king at that time was a descendant of Esther by the way because Esther was the queen of the previous king and we read here further in chapter 8 verse 1 another list of the people who went out verse 15 to 20 and this time we read there are no Levites only 38 of them I think in verse 18 to 19 38 Levites the number decreases there are less and less people who can trust God to live by faith and there are number of things we see here about the carefulness with which Ezra weighed out verse 8 to 25 the silver and the gold and weighed it out to them very careful with God's money and said to them this is a sacred deposit

be careful you must when you come to Jerusalem you must deliver this carefully teaching us that we must be very faithful with the use of money you find the word the hand of God upon us in verse 18 the hand of God upon us in verse 22 and so on they trusted in God now in chapter 9 verse 1 we read a problem of mixed marriages when they had the problem with the mixed marriages they brought it to the elders and the elders we read deal with that and in chapter 10 verse 1 we read about Ezra praying making confession, weeping prostrating himself what a man I'm a scholar in God's word but one who weeps and prays there must be the sound of praise in the house of the Lord and there must be the sound of weeping also look at his concern for the glory of God throughout this prayer as he reads it, as he

prays this prayer and it says Ezra rose in verse 5 and made the leading priests take an oath and they took an oath and they rose and went to the house of God and he did not eat bread or drink water for he was mourning verse 6 over the unfaithfulness of the exiles and thus we find he teaches them to make restitution, set things right make confession, verse 11 and then again there's a list in verse 18 onwards to 44 of the offenders, God has kept a list of the compromisers too that's how the book of Ezra ends now basically what we see here in Ezra is the beginning of a movement to Babylon from Babylon to Jerusalem which we will see more of as we study other books of the Old Testament, let's pray Heavenly Father as we seek you give us wisdom to follow in the footsteps of these godly men who

led movements of God's people away from compromise, away from religiosity to building your house, help us to do it in our day and age also we pray in Jesus name

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