

Walk Through The Bible

St. Barnabas Parish Church

Wulff and Baillou Hill Roads

Nassau, New Providence,

The Bahamas

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The Book of I Esdras

1. I Esdras 3:1-24 The Contest

- a. 1-17a The King may have suffered from insomnia and was awake while these three young men passed the hours with a contest on what is the strongest thing in the world. Three answers are given, with the last young guard giving a fourth - wine, the king, women and truth.
- b. 17b-24 The council is summoned and the first answer that wine is the strongest thing in the world is explained. Alcohol affects the thinking and emotions across social classes; it also makes people boast uncontrollably. Drunken friends turn violent, but when they sober up they forget everything. Since wine makes people irrational, it must be the strongest thing!!!

2. I Esdras 4:1-63 Finding Favour Because of God

- a. 1-12 This portrays the king as an absolute monarch who determines the fate of his subjects. People fight and lose their lives for the king. They turn all of the spoils of war over to him. Farmers pay their taxes to him.

- b. 13-32 Women are strongest!!! Zerubbabel, the only young guard named, according to the Old Testament, was a renowned leader among his people (Ezra 3:2). Women rule men because they give them birth and the men in turn give them their money, or leave their home and country to be with them. Men will engage themselves in illegal activity just to turn a profit to please the wife. Even the mighty king yields to his favourite concubine who treats him like a favourite toy!!!!
- c. 33-44 Truth is stronger!!! Just when it looks like Zerubbabel has won the argument he goes on to talk about truth. Truth is the opposite of unrighteousness and mortality. Truth is everlasting; truth defines virtue, integrity, and steadfastness. Truth has kingship, power and majesty, which belong ultimately to God.
- d. 45-57 Darius rewards Zerubbabel; yet Zerubbabel uses the opportunity to remind Darius of the promise that he had made concerning Jerusalem. Darius has a change of heart and mind. He expels the Idumeans (Edomites) out of the land and allows the Jews to return to their activity.
- e. 58-63 The passage ends on a note of prayer and praise. God's favour on Zerubbabel has allowed him to help his people get on with the work of restoration.

3. | Esdras 5:1-73 Victories and more Struggles

- a. 1-6 The leaders of the returning exiles are named. We should note that everybody has their role to play in the political sphere and the religious sphere of life. The gentile king sends them off with the instruments of war and the instruments of celebration.
- b. 7-40 This is a list of those returning from the exile in Babylon. Verses 9-23 deal with the names of the lay persons who are returning to the Promised Land; Verses 24-25 give us the names of the priests; 26-35 list the names of the Levites and other temple personnel; 36-40 give the list of those whose genealogy could not be proven, particularly those who wanted to be priests but whose ancestry was questionable.

- c. 41-43 The Israelites brought back a large number of slaves and other resources. Again the note is made of those who are to carry the instruments of war and those who carry the instruments of music.
- d. 44-46 The returning exiles, on arriving at Jerusalem vow to work first of all on the temple of the Lord. They pour their resources into the work being done at the temple.
- e. 47-65a With the altar restored, the people resume worship while they work on rebuilding the temple of God. They employed the services of others to help in the construction of the temple and, when the temple is completed, even some of those left in the land joined in the celebrations. But the enemies of God's people are still present.
- f. 65b-73 The sound of rejoicing that takes place in Jerusalem is also heard by the enemies of God's people. They try to offer their help after the fact probably out of jealousy and envy. But the Jewish leaders did not accept the help offered from the enemies of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who were still resident in the land. The enemies make it their duty to hinder and stop the work being done in Jerusalem.

4. | Esdras 6:1-34 Attempts to Hinder the Work are Foiled

- a. 1-22 Sisinnus and Sathrabuzanes write a letter to King Darius questioning whether or not the Jews should be doing the work in Jerusalem or should it be stopped. They give an accurate account of what has happened to God's people, but they may have been motivated by the enemies to try and cause trouble of those who were just settling into the Land.
- b. 23-34. A search is again made and the work must proceed as planned. The king authorizes financial and material support for the work being done.

5. I Esdras 7:1-15 The Temple is Completed and the Passover Celebrated!!!

- a. 1-9 The Persian officials, with great care, helped to complete the work on the temple. The prophetic ministry of Haggai and Zachariah also influence those who are working on the temple. Three factors have allowed them to get this far: the encouragement of the prophetic figures, the command of the Lord, and the consent of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes. The temple is rededicated and the Passover kept.

- b. 10-15 The Passover is kept despite the fact that some of the returning exiles have not purified themselves. They bless the Lord not only for His promise of delivery, but that He changed the mind of the gentile king.