

# 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 8:1-96 The Mission: To Restore What has Been Destroyed!!!**

- a. 1-7 Like so many of the Jews whose ordered and disciplined lives led them to high positions in their captives' society, Ezra is one of those who finds favour in the eyes of the gentile King Artaxerxes. Ezra's heritage shows that he is not only a priest, but he is also well known as a scribe or lawyer. He is versed in the Laws of Moses and the author links that fact with him finding favour in the eyes of the gentile King. In God's favour he gains permission to go back to Jerusalem along with some of the Jewish people. But it is verse 7 that the author wants to leave on our minds; not only was Ezra knowledgeable, but he made sure he taught the people!!!
  
- b. 8-24 The King's letter of authorization contains many important details: The king gives the Jewish people permission to journey back to Jerusalem; his counsellors have advised him of what he ought to do according to the Law of the Lord - could it be that the Jewish influence has reached this far??? The King and his seven counsellors vow to take up a collection to support the journey back. The King encourages them to do what is needed according to the will of their God. The King puts at their disposal the riches of his kingdom. The King instructs them to order their life by the laws of their God. The King gives them permission to appoint judges

and justices to administer and teach the law. All who break the law are to be punished.

- c. 25-40 Ezra does not take the credit for what has happened; he gives all the glory to God. The rest of this section contains the names of those who were willing to return from exile.
- d. 41-49 After gathering the people, Ezra discovers that there are no priests and Levites among those returning. Was life so good in Babylon that they did not want to return??? Or was their faith so shattered that they saw no real reason why they should return to a temple that was out of commission??? In any event the laity saw the vision and started down the road of restoration. Ezra has to personally invite the Levites and the Priests to come and join the ranks of those returning. Even the temple servants did better than the Priests and the Levites (49).
- e. 50-53 Ezra proclaimed a fast to seek for the Lord's favour for their journey. He had spoken about the awesomeness of His God that he thought that it would be a lack of faith on his part to ask the King for soldiers to guard them along the way. He asked God to spare them along the way.
- f. 54-60 He shared the responsibility of keeping the resources with other trusted persons. He reminded them of their identity - you are holy. He reminded them of the identity of what was entrusted to them - these things are holy; and he reminded them that it all belonged to God.
- g. 61-67 God delivered them along the way. When they got to Jerusalem, they accounted for what was entrusted to them. They recorded what was counted. Then they made their sacrifices to the Lord. The numbers of the sacrifices are all multiples of 12 symbolizing the 12 tribes of Israel. They delivered the King's orders to the governors who did what they were supposed to do.
- h. 68-70 No sooner had they entered the land, problems developed with mixed marriages between those who were left in the land and the "pure breed" that came out of Babylon. It would appear that the leaders and the nobles of the community were the main offenders. The law applied to some but not to all!!!
- i. 71-90 Ezra begins to grieve and pray over the sinful state of his people. Have they not learnt their lesson??? His reaction sets a pace that one should follow. Firstly he grieved over what was happening. Secondly, he felt ashamed before God for what his people were doing. Thirdly, He knew what sin had done to them in the past. Fourthly, he knew the mercy of God but he also knew what happened when people

acted presumptuously in the face of His mercy and what He was capable of doing. Finally, he told them that it was an awful day when they had not learnt from their past mistakes about what the Lord required of them.

- j. 91-96 Ezra's prayer and confession inspired the others to join him. A young layman by the name of Shecaniah leads them into a general confession of what has transpired. The leaders of the community needed to rise up, take action, and deal with this sin radically. Ezra must make the priests, leaders and the Levites take an oath to do what they are supposed to do.

**2. *! Esdras 9:1-55 Do not let Sin Rob you Blind!!!***

- a. 1-17 The divorce of the foreign wives takes place. Because of the bad weather, and the large numbers of people involved, the people delegate the solution to a special investigative commission.
- b. 18-36 These verses contain a list of the Priests, Levites, and the lay leaders who have intermarried.
- c. 37-55 Ezra makes it clear what the Law of God demands of His people. By their "Amen" the people assent to the Law of God. While they wept over their spiritual condition, Ezra made it clear that they ought to rejoice, because now they knew what the Lord required of His people -walk in His ways.