

## City of God Part 9 - "The good hand of God" (6-21-26)

**Introduction:** Reminder of Key Themes, Review Series so far, then introduce today's topic

### Key Themes

- **Temple** (Where God meets with us) - embracing what God is building and doing now, let go of expectations
- **People** (Who we are as God's people) - coming out from another culture that we are too intertwined with
- **City** (How we live as the people of God) - set apart, invite the people around us, but oppose the culture

### Timeline: Return from Exile and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem came in 3 waves (approx. 100yrs)

- **Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-6):** 1st wave of exiles return, rebuild the altar, lay foundation, and rebuild temple
- **Ezra (Ezra 7-10):** 2nd wave of exiles, Ezra brings reforms, fasting, repenting, and re-dedicating the people
- **Nehemiah (with Ezra):** 3rd wave of exiles, rebuilding of the Wall, the reading of the Law, further reforms

### Today's Text: Ezra chapter 7

- Ezra called to Go (2nd wave of exiles) - God's Grace, & our commitment to Him, His Word, & His Ways

### **Ezra 7:1-5 - Some historical anchoring . . .**

- Ezra's genealogy and his place in history during the reign of Artaxerxes
- This is now 57 years after the completion of the Temple
- As we will see - this is a season of peace, provision, no real external enemies
- The primary questions facing Ezra: How is God's House and How are His people?

### **Ezra 7:6 (ESV)**

this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the LORD, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.

**Note:** 3 key things about Ezra . . .

- "Skilled Scribe" in the Law of Moses
- Favor with the Foreign Persian King
- Hand of God was on (upon) him

#### **1) Ezra - The Skilled Scribe**

- "**Skilled Scribe**" - quick, prompt, ready, well-versed. It refers to extraordinary expertise in some area.

### **Ezra 7:10 (ESV)**

For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

**Note:** Study, Do, Teach - This was his heart posture towards the Lord and His Word

### **Proverbs 22:29 (ESV)**

Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.

## 2) Ezra - Favor with the Foreign King

### Ezra 7:6 (ESV)

this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the LORD, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.

**Note:** Persian King granted him all that he asked for! (says more than a bunch of adjectives to describe him)

### Ezra 7:12-16, 18 (ESV)

[12] "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven. Peace. And now [13] I make a decree that anyone of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom, who freely offers to go to Jerusalem, may go with you. [14] For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God, which is in your hand, [15] and also to carry the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, [16] with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, vowed willingly for the house of their God that is in Jerusalem . . . [18] Whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do, according to the will of your God.

**Note:** This favor extended to the people of God

### Ezra 7:21, 24 (ESV)

[21] And I, Artaxerxes the king, make a decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence . . . [24] We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on anyone of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.

**Note:** Those who had historically opposed this resettling, are instructed to fund and assist. Also, the ministry at the temple and the priests are given tax-exempt status!

### Ezra 7:25 (ESV)

And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God. And those who do not know them, you shall teach.

**Note:** Ezra given authority over the whole region & the power to execute judgment on any who resist (vs. 26)

How could Ezra experience this level of favor? Yes, he is a respected man, but something more is happening!

## 3) Ezra - The Hand of God upon him

### Ezra 7:6 (ESV)

this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the LORD, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.

#### • Upon him . . .

**Upon** - The pictograph is of the **eye** representing knowledge and experience, combined with a shepherd staff or **yoke**. Combined these mean "experience the staff". The yoke, a staff is lifted over the shoulder, is attached to the oxen for performing work. **Ezra had learned to yield and work under the Hand of God.**

### Ezra 7:9-10 (ESV)

[9] For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. [10] For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

**Proverbs 21:2 (ESV)**

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.

**Note:** Ezra's heart was set to submit under the yoke of the Lord, and God had weighed his heart and knew he could trust him to lead out in this moment!

So the hand of God is working on Ezra's behalf . . .

- **Hand of God . . .**

Lot's of OT verses are about God's judgement due to the stubbornness and sin of people. An unwillingness to have God's hand "upon" themselves. But those who receive and submit to this yoke, through direct knowledge and experience see this same hand of God upon them working good!

The results in Ezra's Life . . .

**Proverbs 21:1 (ESV)**

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

**Ezra 7:27-28 (ESV)**

[27] Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, [28] and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers. I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

**Conclusion:** All that Ezra would experience and accomplish, came through God's good hand upon him, and his own heart posture to submit to the good yoke, through His "skilled" Study, Application, and Teaching!