

Ezra 2 – Thursday, July 13th, 2017

- For those of you who read ahead to stay ahead, you know that chapter two is riddled with a list of the names of the Israelites.
- Lest one think this is just a nebulous place in the Word of God, let me say that it does have personal application to our lives.
- I'm hoping that as we get into our study, it will become abundantly clear that there's a reason for every word in God's Word.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NKJV) — 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Ezra 2 - 1 Now these are the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, everyone to his own city.

- Here in verse one and all the way through to verse 35 we have the list of the families who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon.
- Then, in verses 36-39 we have the list of the priests, then in verse 41, we have the singers, and then verse 42, the Nethinim.
- The reason that I mention this outline of sorts is because speaks to the paramount importance of the family, first and foremost.

- I would suggest the family is so important, it actually becomes a litmus test, as it were, when it comes to leadership positions.
- Specifically, as it relates to the qualifications of an elder, who we're told must have his house in order if he's to be in leadership.

Titus 1:6–9 -- 6 An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. 8 Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. 9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

1 Timothy 3:1–7 -- 1 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

2 Those who came with Zerubbabel were Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: 3 the people of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two; 4 the people of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two; 5 the people of Arah, seven hundred and seventy-five; 6 the people of Pahath-Moab, of the people of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve; 7 the people of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; 8 the people of Zattu, nine hundred and forty-five; 9 the people of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty; 10 the people of Bani, six hundred and forty-two; 11 the people of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-three; 12 the people of Azgad, one thousand two hundred and twenty-two; 13 the people of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-six; 14 the people of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty-six; 15 the people of Adin, four hundred and fifty-four; 16 the people of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; 17 the people of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-three; 18 the people of Jorah, one hundred and twelve; 19 the people of Hashum, two hundred and twenty-three; 20 the people of Gibbar, ninety-five; 21 the people of Bethlehem, one hundred and twenty-three; 22 the men of Netophah, fifty-six; 23 the men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight; 24 the people of Azmaveth, forty-two; 25 the people of Kirjath Arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three; 26 the people of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one; 27 the men of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two; 28 the men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred and twenty-three; 29 the people of Nebo, fifty-two; 30 the people of Magbish, one hundred and fifty-six; 31 the people of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; 32 the people of Harim, three hundred and twenty; 33 the people of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-five; 34 the people of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five; 35 the people of Senaah, three thousand six hundred and thirty. 36 The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-three; 37 the sons of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two; 38 the sons of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven; 39 the sons of Harim, one thousand and seventeen. 40 The Levites: the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah, seventy-four. 41 The singers: the sons of Asaph, one hundred and twenty-eight. 42 The sons of the gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, and the sons of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-nine in all.

- Before we move on I just want to point something out here that may not be easily seen at first read having to do with the "why."
- Why did God deem it necessary to include all of this detail in the pages of scripture? I believe the reason is that God notices.
- Not only does God notice them He remembers them, so much so, that there's actually a book of remembrance for them and us.

Malachi 3:16 (NKJV) — 16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.

- There's something else here that I would like to mention and it has to do with the nature of the names that we're given to them.
- Namely, that of their Babylonian or Persian names, which was the practice of the day when the Jews were taken into captivity.
- We know this because of the Persian name of Esther, given to her, and also the Babylonian names given to the Jews in Daniel.

Interestingly, one commentator noted the meaning of some of the names we just read, which are as follows:

- Parosh means flea.
- Shephatiah means Yahweh has judged.
- Arah means wild ox.
- Zaccai means either pure or is a shortened form of Zechariah.
- Bani is a shortened form of Benaiah, meaning Yahweh has built.
- Bebai means pupil of the eye.
- Azgad means Gad is strong.
- Adonikam means my Lord has arisen.
- Adin means voluptuous.
- Ater means lefty.
- Bezai is a shortened form of Bezaleel and means in the shadow of God.
- Jorah means autumn rain.
- Hashum means broad nose.
- Gibbar means strong man.

43 The Nethinim: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth, 44 the sons of Keros, the sons of Siaha, the sons of Padon, 45 the sons of Lebanah, the sons of Hagabah, the sons of Akkub, 46 the sons of Hagab, the sons of Shalmi, the sons of Hanan, 47 the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, the sons of Reaiah, 48 the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, the sons of Gazzam, 49 the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, the sons of Besai, 50 the sons of Asnah, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephusim, 51 the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur, 52 the sons of Bazluth, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha, 53 the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Tamah, 54 the sons of Neziah, and the sons of Hatipha.

- Here we have listed the Nethinim, who some believe were a diverse people group including the descendants of the Gibeonites.

- These were the people who disguised themselves as travelers from a far country to make peace with Joshua and be saved.

- As such, Joshua honored his treaty though they deceived him, making them servants as hewers of wood and drawers of water.

- What's so interesting about this isn't so much that Joshua was deceived as much as it is why Joshua, which we find in Joshua.

Joshua 9:9–14 (NKJV) — 9 So they said to him: "From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt, 10 and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan—to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. 11 Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, "We are your servants; now therefore, make a covenant with us."' 12 This bread of ours we took hot for our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But now look, it is dry and moldy. 13 And these wineskins which we filled were new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey." 14 Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD.

- It's what we're told here in verse 14 about them not inquiring of the Lord that should send chills up and down all of our spines.

- The question is why didn't they inquire of the Lord, and the answer is in the first part of the verse; they sampled their provisions.

- In other words, they made this decision, solely on the basis of how they felt, instead of seeking the Lord's word on the matter.

- We have a similar account in Genesis where Isaac, like Joshua, makes a decision based on feelings and not the word of God.

- It's recorded in Genesis 27, and I'd like to first give you the back-story of sorts to refresh your memory with how this goes down.

- Isaac is blind and near death and is about to give his blessing to Esau before he dies, but Rebekah hears of it, and tells Jacob.

- In order to deceive Isaac and give the blessing to Jacob instead she makes venison like Esau and dresses Jacob up like Esau.

Genesis 27:18–27 18 So he went to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" 19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." 20 But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the LORD your God brought it to me." 21 Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." 22 So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." 23 And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. 24 Then he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He said, "I am." 25 He said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son." 27 And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field Which the LORD has blessed.

- I suppose the lesson here becomes quite clear, such that, Isaac, like Joshua after him made his decision based on his feelings.
- Even though the words he heard sounded like Jacob, the feelings he felt, and the provisions he had sampled were like Esau.
- In other words, Isaac went against the word he heard, Jacob's voice, and made his decision based on what he felt and smelt.

55 The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth, the sons of Peruda, 56 the sons of Jaala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel, 57 the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth of Zebaim, and the sons of Ami. 58 All the Nethinim and the children of Solomon's servants were three hundred and ninety-two. 59 And these were the ones who came up from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer; but they could not identify their father's house or their genealogy, whether they were of Israel: 60 the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, and the sons of Nekoda, six hundred and fifty-two; 61 and of the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Koz, and the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name. 62 These sought their listing among those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled. 63 And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not chief of which is that to their credit they consulted with the Urim and Thummim.
- This because, there were those among them that were claiming to priestly lineage, but were unable to prove their genealogy.
- It's for this reason they rightly turn to the Urim and Thummim, which was how the High Priest would determine the will of God.

64 The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, 65 besides their male and female servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two hundred men and women singers. 66 Their horses were seven hundred and thirty-six, their mules two hundred and forty-five, 67 their camels four hundred and thirty-five, and their donkeys six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

- This is another one of those places that has an interesting detail that could be easily missed when you first read the passage.
- Specifically, having to do with the detail of the numbers, which are an indication of how the Israelites had increased in captivity.
- The point being is that we grow during times of trials and difficulty more than we do during times of relative ease and comfort.

68 Some of the heads of the fathers' houses, when they came to the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God, to erect it in its place: 69 According to their ability, they gave to the treasury for the work sixty-one thousand gold drachmas, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly garments. 70 So the priests and the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

- The chapter ends by telling us when they saw the condition of the house of the Lord, they gave generously of their own volition.
- Again, I can't think of a better way to end a chapter and a Bible study than with an account of God's people giving to the work.