

### Introduction

- Naming the boys - Staci and I agreed on Luke's name pretty quickly, but had a hard time deciding on Hudson's name. I was convinced before she was. We agreed on his name while she was in labor on the way to the hospital.
- Names are significant, they carry meaning, identify you, connect you to past relatives.
- Big question: Do you know who you are? You might know your given name, but maybe you feel insignificant, disconnected, or uncertain.
- Good news for you: God knows you. If you are a follower of Jesus, He has given you a new name. He has given you significance, purpose. He has connected you to His family. You matter to God.
- If you are not a follower of Jesus, you can find meaning and significance in a relationship with Jesus Christ. God wants you to know that your name matters to Him.
- [Ezra 2](#) is a list of names, but these names matter because they tell us the story of God's work through His people as He sends His people back to Jerusalem after 70 years of exile.
- These names matter because they remind us that we matter. As we look at this list of names, this text helps us to understand who we are as the people of God.
- If you've ever wondered, "Who am I?" This passage will help you to know who you are. This passage helps us to know who we are as the people of God. Three truths about the people of God from this passage.

## We bear the name of Christ.

- Names of people who returned from exile. After 70 years in captivity, the Jewish population undoubtedly grew in exile. It's likely that there were hundreds of thousands of Jews living in Babylon, but [Ezra 2](#) says 42,360 returned.
- Sounds like a large number, but in comparison to what the Kingdom of Israel had been under the reign of King David, this was a small number of people.
- But, God was going to take this small number of people and rebuild Israel so He could ultimately fulfill His promise to send the Messiah.
- Vs. 2 - 11 names mentioned. [Nehemiah 7:7](#) = the same list but mentions 12 names. Not sure why Ezra has one less - maybe assumed that Sheshbazzar included in this list. If so, 12 names symbolic 12 tribes of Israel. Reminder that God was restoring His people.
- vs. 3-35 - names are listed by families, clans (3-19), or their hometown (20-35). Important for future generations to look back at this list and to see their family names. They belonged. Important for future to see their family name to be reminded that they had all the rights and privileges of the Jewish people.
- Some people tied to hometowns instead of a family name. Maybe some records lost during exile but they could be connected to the land they came from. Reminder that land was being reclaimed - returning to the land that was promised to them. It was still theirs.
- [Ezra 2](#) shows us that Babylon changed the Jews location. Babylon tried to reshape their identity, but but Babylon did not erase their identity or the promises of God.

- Our names not recorded in the Book of Ezra, but our names are recorded in the Lamb's book of life ([Revelation 13:8](#)). We bear the name of Jesus...
- **Culture tries to give you a name.** We tend to let people around us define us: rich, poor, wanted, unwanted, conservative, progressive... Or, not enough, washed up, bad parent, divorcee, failure, unlovable...
- Or, your'e not accepted unless you're... liberal, conservative, affirming, etc.
- For some, those names stick. You feel the weight of the identity others have projected on you.
- **You try to give yourself a name.** You fight for approval in the eyes of others, so you try to give yourself a name; successful, athletic, attractive, intellectual, model spouse, model parent, etc.
- it's exhausting to try to prove that you matter.
- **God has given you a better name.** What God thinks of you is far more significant than what others think of you. Your true identity as a follower of Jesus: loved, accepted, adopted, redeemed, forgiven.
- Your true identity is not what happened to you or what others think or say about you. Your identity is rooted in Christ.
- **What name are you living under right now?** Where are you finding your identity? Don't let Babylon name you. Jesus has given you a better name.

## **We bear the responsibility to worship.**

- vs. 36-58 - Names of people involved in the worship of God at the temple: priests, levites, temple servants, singers, and gatekeepers.

- Over 4000 priests returned. That's ten percent of the returning population plus the Levites and other temple servants. In comparison to the number of others who returned, that's a large number of priests.
- The people weren't simply returning to rebuild a city so they could once again have comfortable lives in Jerusalem. They were returning to rebuild the temple.
- In the OT, the temple represented presence of God among His people. It was THE place of worship for the Jewish people. It was THE only place where you could make sacrifices. The temple was a central part of life to the people.
- The people were returning to worship. Ezra is not about building a city. Ezra is about spiritual restoration - people coming back to God, back to His house, back to worship Him in His holy city.
- 4000 priest but only 74 Levites (vs. 40). While the priests came from the tribe of Levi, not every Levite was a priest. But, the Levites served at the temple. They assisted the priests. Why did so few return with the priests? Maybe they grew comfortable in Babylon or didn't think it was possible for the temple to be rebuilt.
- Singers mattered. Gatekeepers mattered. They protected access to sacred space. Temple servants mattered. They performed the mundane temple duties.
- This whole section is a reminder that the return to the land was centered around worship.
- The worship of God was what Israel was to live for, and it's what we're to live for as well ([Romans 12:1-2](#)). A great reminder that worship is not what you consume on Sunday morning, it's what you live for.
- As NT believers, we have a great High Priest, who went to the cross as our once and for all sacrifice to make a way for us to be right with God.

Now, we are a priesthood of believers - we have access to God. We are His temple. The presence of God is with us in Jesus Christ. Since true:

- **I need to lead myself to worship.** I need to take responsibility to worship the Lord for what He has done for me. Worship doesn't happen accidentally. It's an intentional, daily decision. Daily decision to:
  - Open your Bible even when you feel spiritually dry.
  - Obey the Lord even when obedience doesn't make sense.
  - Confessing sin instead of excusing sin.
  - Turning off distractions to give time to prayer.
  - Serving the Lord with gladness and gratitude rather than begrudgingly.
  - Giving of my resources instead of holding back (vs. 68-69).
- **I need to lead others to worship.** (Priestly role) Someone is following your example - your spouse, your children, your friends, etc. What kind of example of worship are you setting? Others see whether worship is a priority to you, whether Scripture matters to you, whether prayer matters, etc.
  - In your home - are you leading your children to worship? Praying together? Read Scripture together? How many fathers are spiritually leading their homes? Real simple - 10-15 minutes at dinner in the Word and praying.
  - Or, how do people see you serving the Lord? Would the people who are closest to you say your life revolves around the glory of God?
  - Or, corporate worship. What does your engagement on a Sunday morning say about your desire to honor the Lord?

## We bear the marks of distinction.

- vs. 59-63 - Interesting verses - some returned who were descendants of Aaron (the first priest) and who were qualified to serve in the temple, but they couldn't prove it.
- Over 70 years in exile, genealogical records had been lost. They couldn't simply say, "I feel called to be a priest." Or, "My grandfather was a priest." They needed records to prove it, and they didn't have any. Since they couldn't prove it, they were disqualified from the priesthood.
- Likely classified as foreigners until they were accepted into the community.
- vs. 63 - could not eat of the most holy things - likely a reference to portions of sacrifices made by the people that were preserved for the priests.
- Urim and Thummim - Sacred objects worn in the breastpiece of the priests that were used to discern the will of God. They were used in key decisions. Bible never explains exactly how they were used step-by-step, just that they were.
- The status of the priests with no records would be determined by God as the rightful priests consulted the Urim and Thummim. (We don't need Urim and Thummim because we have God's completed Word and the Spirit of God living inside of us.)
- Reminder that God's holiness the holiness of His people was serious. If you were going to serve as a priest in the Lord's House, you had to bear the marks of distinction. You had to give evidence that you belonged to the priesthood in order to serve as a priest.
- Leads to two very important questions:
- **How do you know you belong to Jesus?** You've repented of your sins, placed your faith in Him by believing that He died and rose again

for you, and you see evidence of salvation in your life. Growing in knowledge of Christ, fruit of the Spirit, desire to serve Him, etc. Do you know that you belong to Jesus?

- **How do people know you belong to Jesus?** Believers in Jesus are distinct.
  - Do they hear you talk about your faith?
  - Do they see you living with joy?
  - Do they see you practicing forgiveness?
  - Do they see you as generous?
  - Do they see you as compassionate or hopeful?
  - Do they see you owning up to your sins and confessing them?
- Is it evident that you belong to Jesus? The Christian life should not look like Babylon. It should look different because we are different. We have a new identity. Our priorities are not the world's priorities. Our values are not the world's values. Our speech is not the world's speech.
- Identify anything in your life that is shaping you to be more like Babylon than Jesus and ask God to help you remove it.
- Jesus did not save us so we could blend in to Babylon. He saved us to come out of Babylon and live for His glory.
- [Ezra 2](#) is ultimately about a people being brought home and given an identity by grace. The only way you can be brought home to be with the Lord is to believe in the One who left His home for you. Jesus left the splendors of heaven to enter this broken world. He lived as an exile - in a broken world. Yet, in this broken world, He never sinned, and ultimately, Jesus went to the cross where He was treated as an exile. He was rejected. He was cast out. He was punished. He suffered what we deserved. He died in our place only to rise from the dead three days later so that our sins could be forgiven and we could be given new life.

He ascended back to His home, and He will return again some day to bring all those who believe in Him to be home with Him. Why? Because He has redeemed us. He has brought us out of exile.

- Your name isn't merely written in an earthly genealogy. If you are a follower of Jesus, your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and it can never be erased.
- If you are not a follower of Jesus, turn from your sins and believe in Jesus Christ. Find life in Him.