

DETERMINED
SERMON NOTES for EZRA 7
Preached June 14, 2026, Trey Rhodes

OPEN - Overcoming insurmountable odds and not giving up. Mountain climbing story. Climbing El Capitan with no ropes. Attempted and accomplished in 2017. Name of the man is Alex Honnold. SLIDE HERE. NO ROPES. You heard that right.

Things we struggle to accomplish:

To be a better father/mother

To get that job and the raise you want

To finish that degree

To overcome that sin that pulls you down

You want to but there's too much stuff, too many people have all kinds of plans for you that get in your way.

Stand with me as we read the Word of God, the Bible together. If you don't have one, there is one I. the seat in front of you that you can have if you don't have one to use.

Please take it home and find out about a God who loves you and has purpose and plan for your life.

READ Ezra 7:1-10

Explanation and background of what the people of God who have determined to go back to their homeland:

Nearly sixty years pass between Ezra 6 and Ezra 7. The temple was completed in 516 BC under Zerubbabel, but Ezra does not arrive in Jerusalem until approximately 458 BC during the reign of Persian King Artaxerxes I Longimanus (465–424 BC) (Breneman, p. 126).

Now, out of this, of all the Jews in Israel, God had prepared a man to restore the people of God to their God and His ways (the law and the Word).

Note the gap. It is enormously important.

So here's what's happening, the temple existed, sacrifices had resumed, and worship structures were functioning. Yet the spiritual condition of the people remained fragile.

External restoration had occurred before internal restoration. That was a problem.

Kidner notes that “**the restored temple had not automatically produced a restored community**” (Kidner, p. 62).

There are 3 principles we can use live a life of determination

BACKGROUND - We have a parenthesis to get a feel for what was about to happen with Ezra and why he had to go back to Israel. In his mind, he had no choice. He had determined to return 60 years later after Zerubbabel had gone the first time under Cyrus's reign.

There are 3 principles we can live a determined life for God and His will:

1st PRINCIPLE

1. Be Determined to Accomplish God's Purpose (Ezra 7:1-10)

You can restore ritual without restoring covenant faithfulness.

Ezra enters at precisely this point to move the people of God back to faithfulness. Yes, the task may have been accomplished, but God's purpose was so much greater than the task of rebuilding a building, albeit an important building, the temple in Jerusalem. By completing the task, they had gotten lazy and weren't even thinking of the actual purpose of God, that Yahweh would bring His people back to the Promised Land so the Messiah could be born there. They missed the entire reason for the covenant:

Genesis 22:17–18

Abraham was promised:

“And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...”

Isaiah 9:6–7

Isaiah Combined kingship and the Messiah:

He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever. ¹

Jeremiah 23:5–6

Jeremiah foretold:

“I will raise up for David a righteous Branch...”

You see, they truly believed they had fulfilled the immediate plan of God but forgot the eternal purpose of God. The Messiah would come. He would change everything. VV. 8-10 But Ezra was determined.

One of the central theological tensions of this post-exilic books:

Rebuilding structures in our lives without rebuilding our hearts. We often do the same thing. What does that look like in our lives.

What **structures in your life have you tried to re-build without the Spirit of God at work in you?**

- Family Structure
- Workday Structure
- Entertainment/Amusement Structure
- Lifestyle structure
- Relationship structure
- Others

We have all restored ritual without restoring covenant faithfulness.

Let's look back to the Israelites. They truly believed they had fulfilled the immediate plan of God but forgot the eternal purpose of God. The Messiah would come. He would change everything.

RE-READ VV. 8-10 But Ezra was determined.

¹ [Christian Standard Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020), Is 9:7.

Haven't we done the same thing? We miss the actual purpose of God By thinking that we have completed a temporary project when all the while there is something so much greater than just finishing a project or completing a checklist. Life has to be more than that. God has a plan He was always working out.

The question is: Are you a part of God's plan? How can God best use you? Is there a place in His purposes and His kingdom for you? Of course there is.

So, let's look at

How can you determine if it's God's purpose?

Ask:

- Is this what God made me to do?

You are not one out of a million; you are one out of 6 billion. God designed you just like he wanted you. In your mother's womb, He knit you together (Ps. 139). Ephesians 2 tells us we were created to do good works. That is you. So, He has made you for a purpose. This is about using your gifts, your talents, your abilities, and your resources to accomplish the purpose and plan of God. It's time to place yourself in the center of His plan.

- Does this build God's kingdom?

We are so stressed about our finances, or jobs, our education, our health, and nearly everything else. But the critical question we need to ask is about God's kingdom. With our TESTS, God takes the most difficult times of our lives and makes them a testimony. Why? It is about the watching world that has its eyes on you and wants to know how you handle it.

Are you really who you say you are? It is then that Gospel opportunities open up.

Wherever God has placed you, it is for His purpose. There are people who need to hear and will respond. That's building God's kingdom in our everyday life.

- Does it bring God glory?

Whatever you do, even eating and drinking, do all to the glory of God. Is what I am doing bring God glory? Think of it this way, is what I am thinking about doing make God glorious in the eyes of those who watch me serve and love and encourage and share and and and... whatever it is. Make God glorious in the watching world's eyes.

- Have I heard from God?

We need a word from God. Why would that matter? He is the sovereign, omnipotent God. He who knows all things and what is best for His glory and our good. You see. God has plan for you, our purpose was found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Slain before the foundations of the world. He lived the perfect life, died the death we deserved, rose again the third day that we might have life eternal and abundant. He is where you start knowing your purpose. Without Christ, you flounder and wander without a relationship with him.

2nd PRINCIPLE

2. Be Determined to Build a Godly Reputation (Ezra 7:11-26)

This decree is one of the longest preserved Persian documents in Scripture.

Scholars note its format strongly resembles authentic Persian administrative correspondence (Williamson, p. 104).

It contains:

- formal titles
- official greetings
- administrative directives
- treasury provisions

This supports the historical reliability of Ezra.

Why Would Artaxerxes Support Ezra?

Several likely reasons:

Political Stability

Persia preferred loyal buffer provinces near Egypt.

Judah sat near strategically important trade and military routes.

A stable Jerusalem benefited Persian interests.

I'm sure that was a part of it.

Religious Diplomacy

Persians commonly patronized local religions.

Artaxerxes likely believed honoring Judah's God would help preserve imperial blessing.

Notice verse 23:

"Why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?"

The king feared divine displeasure.

That too was a good reason...

But isn't there more? Couldn't Artaxerxes have picked anyone? Surely, anyone would have done, right? That leads us to the final reason for Ezra's choice. It was because of

Ezra's Reputation

Ezra was recognized as a respected Jewish scholar within Babylonian-Persian society. Some suggest that Ezra may have served in an official advisory role concerning Jewish legal matters (Breneman, p. 134). The King of Persia knew He had to have a man that was committed to the task, who knew the God that Artaxerxes was moved by, and extremely knowledgeable about who it was the Israelites were worshiping and how they were to worship Him, the "God of Heaven."

ILLUSTRATION: Reputations matter. Impact of reputation - Story of installing an underground auto lift. Backhoe operator said, "I've never been around men that don't cuss." He knew something was different. Choose to make it a part of your life to build your reputation.

How can you build a godly reputation?

- **Seek holiness** (v. 11 "the priest")

Ezra was a priest. That in and of itself demanded holiness. Holiness is being like God who is holy. He's not only perfect, but also different and set apart. God has always called His people to be a holy nation, but Jesus went further, He knew holiness because He was holy. In every way. Now our Savior and our Lord calls each of us to be holy as

He is holy. Impossible you say. Without the Holy Spirit at work in us, we cannot be holy. We need to quit making excuses and learn that while we may be in the world, we are not of the world. People notice when you're different. Live for Jesus and you will have people asking your questions and wanting to know more with opportunities to share Christ.

- **Know the Bible well** (v. 11 “an expert in the matters of the Lord’s commands and statutes”)

When people know you are a follower of Christ, there are assumptions. One of the big ones is that you know the Bible. They are thinking, you read the Bible, right? You know what it says, right? The Bible helps you make decisions and helps you make it through tough times. Just like Ezra, the watching world wants to speak to someone who reads, knows, and depends on the Word of God. We've got to ask, is that you?

- **Be Trustworthy** (v. 18, “do whatever seems best to you and your brothers with the rest of the silver and gold, according to the will of your God”)

People in our world will tolerate a lot, but they will not allow someone into their lives whom they cannot trust. They are willing to do what they said they would do no matter the personal cost.

- **Choose your support wisely**

These people were chosen carefully by Ezra. He knew that the people he placed around him would be the doing or the undoing of this nation they were rebuilding. Ezra's wanted people who were sold out to the covenant,

That would mean to them:

The ways of God that brought order,

Lived as people who respected the law

Then would have to ability to teach and instruct others to live that God's way.

Ezra was determined, down to the people he surrounded himself with. You will become like those who are around you

ANALOGY: Multiple METRENOMES all sync up when placed side by side.

How do you choose your friends. You know, those people that are real friends, those who support you when you need it whether it's tough times or encouragement to live godly. People you trust with your life. Choose wisely whom you place in your life. It matters. And later, it will matter even more. **LCGs and D Groups!!**

3rd PRINCIPLE

3. Worship God (Ezra 7:27-28)

Ezra erupted into praise immediately after the decree. This is spiritually revealing. He interprets political events theologically.

It is always mature believers who **learn to see providence behind human decisions** (Brown, p. 92).

Ezra recognized that:

- God moved the king's heart
- God granted favor
- God strengthened leadership

Ezra's courage came after recognizing God's hand.

"I took courage..." His leadership found courage not as something that was personality-driven but determined by what Ezra believed about God. His faith was built on the God of the heavens that was going to do what He promised was the driving force of his life. What a reason to worship! When He is the One who drives you to be centered and focused on your life, don't you have to worship Him?

We worship the One we know best and always has His glory and our good in mind. The One to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why should we worship?

- We worship because God's faithfulness did not begin with us and will not end with us.

We are not the end of the story, Jesus is! when our life ends, Jesus goes on. That's why it matters if we pour our life into the work of God. Your jobs aren't going to matter in eternity. Your hobbies aren't going to matter in eternity. Your Sports team isn't going to matter in eternity. Your education isn't going to matter in eternity. So, make all those earthly, temporary activities can and should be leveraged for His kingdom and making Jesus famous!

Only one life twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.

- We worship because God is always working behind the scenes.

God is always at work and often, we don't even see what He's doing. We are so focused on that one thing that we don't recognize that He is at work in a million different that we will never see.

- We worship because God is worthy of glory.

When He returns, we will cry out, "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb who was slain." What He has done for us on the Cross for us should drive us to our knees.

- We worship because God shows favor in His grace

Noah found grace, not because He was perfect, but because of God's pleasure to seek out a man who would save humanity from complete annihilation.

- We worship because God strengthens the weak.

God saw His people and knew that in their weakest time, He knew they needed an infusion of the life of God to strengthen their spiritual weakness. He knows we need that too! WE are promised "His grace is sufficient for us" that is why Paul wrote, "So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong."² (2 Corinthian 12:9 & 10)

- We worship because God's work is bigger than one person.

It's not about you. It's about God, His kingdom, and His church. Choose to make it about others and not yourself, then not only will your happier and more fulfilling, but it will matter for eternity.

² [*Christian Standard Bible*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020), 2 Co 12:10.

What about eternity? Have you come to a place in your life where you know for sure and for certain that you will be in heaven when you die?

I need to ask you, have you bowed your knee to Christ as your Lord and Savior? If you have not, the whole reason for this book was to remind us that there would be One who was coming to offer for us what we could do ourselves. He was determined to give His life for you. That's why the Messiah had to come to this earth as that baby in the manger, live the life we could not, die the death we deserved that we could have our sins forgiven, and then the temple, Jesus, God Himself, the One in whom "*the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ*"³, rose from the dead that we might have life eternal and life abundant.

As a follower of Christ, there is reason to be determined. Your life can count for something, not for history, but for all of eternity. The Lord God Almighty wants His purpose to be found in you. As you seek and accomplish His purpose, as you build a godly reputation, and worship at the feet of Jesus. We fall down, we lay our crowns at the feet of Jesus!

I want to close with song written and sung by an old CCM artist names Tim Shepherd.

Tim Shepherd, *I Am Determined*

I am determined to be invincible

'Til He has finished His purpose in me.

And nothing shall shake me

For He'll never forsake me

And I am determined to live for the King.

Hell's gates are trembling from our prayers ascending

Darkness is crumbling from praises we sing.

Our Sovereign, victorious is marching before us,

And we are determined to live for the King.

Your determination matters now.

³ [Christian Standard Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020), Col 2:9.