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EZRA 7: 1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,

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In the seventh year of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Ezra goes up to Jerusalem; and with him certain of the priests, Levites, porters, and Nethinim: his character, Ezr 7:1-10. The letter and decree of Artaxerxes in behalf of the Jews, vv. 11-26. Ezra's thanksgiving to God for these mercies, Ezr 7:27, Ezr 7:28.

Verse 1

In the reign of Artaxerxes - This was Artaxerxes Longimanus, the seventh of whose reign chronologers place A.M. 3547, sixty-eight years after Cyrus had sent back Zerubbabel. - Calmet. See the introduction.

Son of Seraiah - Either this could not have been Seraiah the high priest, who had been put to death by Nebuchadnezzar one hundred and twenty-one years before this time, or the term son here must signify only his descendants, or one of his descendants. Were it otherwise, Ezra must now be at least one hundred and twenty-two years of age, supposing him to have been born in the year of his father's death; if, indeed Seraiah the high priest was his father; but this is evidently impossible. In this place there are only sixteen generations reckoned between Ezra and Aaron, but in 1Chr 6:3, 1Chr 6:4, etc., there are not less than twenty-two. We must therefore supply the deficient generations from the above place, between Amariah son of Meraioth, 1Chr 6:7, and Azariah the son of Johanan, 1Chr 6:10. There are other discrepancies relative to genealogies in these historical books which it would be useless to investigate. On these differences much has been already said in different parts of this comment.

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EZRA 7: 2 the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,

EZRA 7: 3 the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,

EZRA 7: 4 the son of Zerachiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,

EZRA 7: 5 the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest;

EZRA 7: 6 this Ezra went up from Babylon: and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given; and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God on him.

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Verse 6

A ready scribe - סופר מִחִיר sopher machir does not merely signify a speedy writer or an excellent penman, but one who was eminently skillful in expounding the law. In this sense the word γραμματεὺς, scribe, is repeatedly used in the New Testament, and we find that both in the Old and New Testament it had the same signification. The Syriac gives the sense of the word by translating sophro chocimo, a wise scribe, or expounder.

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EZRA 7: 7 There went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.

EZRA 7: 8 He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.

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Verse 8

He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month - From the following verse we learn that Ezra and his company set off from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and thus we find they were upwards of four months on their journey. They could not travel fast, as they were a great company, composed in part of the aged and infirm, besides multitudes of women and children. They appear also to have taken a circuitous route. See on Ezr 8:24-32 (note).

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EZRA 7: 9 For on the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon; and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God on him.

EZRA 7: 10 For Ezra had set his heart to seek the LORD's law, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances.

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Verse 10

EZRA had prepared his heart - Here is a fine character of a minister of God: He prepares, הִכִּין hechin, he fixes, purposes, and determines, לִבְבוֹ lebabo, with his heart - with all his powers and affections, to seek the law of God, and to do it himself, that he may be properly qualified to teach its statutes and judgments to Israel.

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EZRA 7: 11 Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, even the scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel:

EZRA 7: 12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect and so forth.

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Verse 12

Artaxerxes, king of kings - This letter, from the beginning of this verse to the end of Ezr 7:26, is in the Aramitic or Chaldee language.

This title of the king would, in Persian, run thus: Ardsheer shahinshah, or padshah, "Ardsheer, king of kings;" "great or supreme king, or emperor."

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EZRA 7: 13 I make a decree, that all those of the people of Israel, and their priests and the Levites, in my realm, who are minded of their own free will to go to Jerusalem, go with you.

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Verse 13

Their own free-will - None shall be forced either to go or to stay. He who loves his God will avail himself of this favorable opportunity.

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EZRA 7: 14 Because you are sent of the king and his seven counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of your God which is in your hand,

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Verse 14

His seven counsellors - It is very likely that the privy counsel of the king consisted of seven persons simply. The names of these seven counsellors or chamberlains may be found in the book of Esther, Est 1:10.

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EZRA 7: 15 and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem,

EZRA 7: 16 and all the silver and gold that you shall find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem;

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Verse 16

And all the silver and gold - The king and his counsellors had already made a present to the house of the God of Israel; and Ezra is now empowered to receive any contribution which any of the inhabitants of the province of Babylon may think proper to give.

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EZRA 7: 17 therefore you shall with all diligence buy with this money bulls, rams, lambs, with their meal offerings and their drink offerings, and shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem.

EZRA 7: 18 Whatever shall seem good to you and to your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do that after the will of your God.

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Verse 18

After the will of your God - He gave them the fullest liberty to order every thing according to their own institutions, binding them to no form or mode of worship.

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EZRA 7: 19 The vessels that are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver before the God of Jerusalem.

EZRA 7: 20 Whatever more shall be needful for the house of your God, which you shall have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house.

EZRA 7: 21 I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers who are beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done with all diligence,

EZRA 7: 22 to one hundred talents of silver, and to one hundred measures of wheat, and to one hundred baths of wine, and to one hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much.

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#### Verse 22

A hundred talents of silver - The talent of silver was 450.

A hundred measures of wheat - A hundred cors; each cor was a little more than seventy-five gallons, one quart, and a pint, wine measure.

A hundred baths of wine - Each bath was seven gallons and five pints.

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EZRA 7: 23 Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven; for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?

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#### Verse 23

Why should there be wrath - As he believed he was appointed by the Almighty to do this work, he therefore wished to do it heartily, knowing that if he did not, God would be displeased, and that the kingdom would be cut off from him or his posterity.

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EZRA 7: 24 Also we inform you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, the singers, porters, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll, on them.

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#### Verse 24

It shall not be lawful to impose toll - As these persons had no private revenues, it would have been unreasonable to have laid them under taxation.

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EZRA 7: 25 You, Ezra, after the wisdom of your God who is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges, who may judge all the people who are beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God; and teach him who doesn't know them.

EZRA 7: 26 Whoever will not do the law of your God, and the law of the king, let judgement be executed on him with all diligence, whether it be to death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

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Verse 26

Whether it be unto death - These include almost every species of punishment which should be inflicted on culprits in any civilized state.

With this verse the Chaldee part of this chapter ends.

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EZRA 7: 27 Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the LORD's house which is in Jerusalem;

EZRA 7: 28 and has extended loving kindness to me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my God on me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

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Verse 28

And I was strengthened - In what the king decreed he saw the hand of God; he therefore gave him the praise, and took courage. There is a most amiable spirit of piety in these reflections. Ezra simply states the case; shows what the king had determined, and tells what he said; and then points out the grand agent in the whole business - it was the Lord God of his fathers. Thus God had put it into the king's heart to beautify the house of Jehovah; and, as that house was built for the salvation of the souls of men, he gives God praise for putting it into the king's heart to repair it: he who loves God and man will rejoice in the establishment of the Divine worship, because this is the readiest way to promote the best interests of man.