Ezra 7:10 (L. Douglas Nicolet) 167353

The Christian Shepherd: 1998, "Redeeming the Time, Because the Days Are Evil." (7:10)

Amazing scientific discoveries, extraordinary displays of human athletic ability, rapid advances in knowledge, spectacular architectural achievements, extraordinary technological advances the golden years of the sixth century before Christ had it all.

During one period of these years of exciting development and discovery, we have the account of a captive member of an outcast race, living in exile in a foreign land. However, it is obvious that he was not caught up in the “spirit” of that age of discovery. It seems very doubtful that the great social and moral philosophies of that day developed by Confucius, Zoroaster, Esop and Buddha were of the least interest to him. What we do know is that he diligently occupied himself with gaining a thorough knowledge of that which was despised by the world in which he lived the law of Jehovah given to Moses.

The world applauded Pythagoras when he introduced his system of mathematics, reverenced Nebuchadnezzar who built one of the “seven wonders of the world” (the hanging gardens of Babylon) and a half-mile tunnel under the river Euphrates, benefited from the system of banking and coinage existing in Babylon, and cheered athletes competing in the Olympic games in Athens. But it had no interest in the goals, interests or accomplishments of Ezra, the young man who was a direct descendent of Aaron, the high priest of Jehovah, the God of the nation of Israel.

There were no schools in Babylon where Ezra could learn the law of God. Nobody, except his own countrymen despised outcasts and exiles like himself had any interest in or appreciation of Scripture. Babylon, in all of its efforts at gaining knowledge and making advances in culture and technology, saw nothing of value in the “oracles of God” nothing which would help to achieve its goals.

What kept Ezra from giving up his faith in view of such obstacles? Why didn’t he, an obviously intelligent and gifted man, take the easy and popular path and join in the prevailing spirit of the world in which he lived? The answer is both beautiful and encouraging: “Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it” (Ezra 7:10).

When, by the Spirit, Ezra heard that lovely, divine entreaty from Proverbs 23:26 “My son, give Me thine heart” he obeyed. Faith gave him to see that the “present evil world” was not worthy of his heart’s affections. Ezra saw what Abraham, the father of the faithful, had seen a city “whose builder and maker is God.” This he embraced, happily confessing that he was but a “pilgrim and stranger” in the world of Babylon with its vast ocean of human intelligence.

Ezra’s purpose of heart caused the great Persian monarch, Artaxerxes, to confess that “the wisdom of... God” was in his hand (Ezra 7:25). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the great blessing to God’s people which resulted from his faithfulness to God and his purpose of heart in obedience to the Word of God.

Today, believers live in times that are strikingly similar to Ezra’s. Current advances made in science, technology, medicine, telecommunications, engineering and all other areas of the human life are almost beyond comprehension. Knowledge is increasing at such an explosive rate that much of what a student has learned during four years of college training is outdated by the time he or she graduates!

In view of this, how important that Christians lay hold of what is really lasting that which is of eternal value! Faith alone can give eyes to see and purpose of heart to follow a path which realizes that the present world with all its grandeur and glory is a quickly passing and divinely judged scene. It recognizes, values and lays hold of that which is eternal and unchanging the Word of our blessed, unchanging God (Mal. 3:6; Matt. 24:35). May God grant that each believer, with renewed purpose of heart, follow the wonderful example of Ezra! “Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Heb. 13:7).

Ed. (historical information supplied by N. Berry)