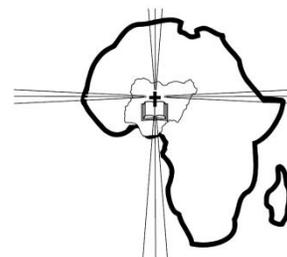


# DAILY LINK WITH GOD 2015

## A Daily Devotional Guide from the EYN (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria)



EYN leaders in Nigeria believe prayer is one of the most important ways to support the Nigerian people and the Church. These daily devotions were written by EYN members and published by the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria. Reading them daily is a powerful way we can be in solidarity and connect with our brothers and sisters caught in this crisis. EYN's daily devotional for 2015 will be posted a week at a time on the blog site [www.brethren.org/nigeriablog](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriablog), appearing mid-week for the following week. More information about the crisis can be found at [www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis).

### March

Text: Ezra 1-2

#### Brief Introduction

In this month, we are reading about the merciful God at work. We can see how He delivered his people from slavery in Babylon. God is merciful; He does not look at your ability. What God requires from us is faithfulness to Him.

#### March 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday 2015

**Text:** Ezra 2:64-67

**Topic:** The Totals

There is a discrepancy between the total number of exiles the writer gave here (49,897) and the sum of the various groups he just mentioned (29,818). Perhaps the women and children made up the difference, though if this was the case there were many more men than women and children. This may have been the case in view of the rigors that the people would have had to experience moving from Babylon to Jerusalem. Some of the Jews took their servants back to Judah with them (v. 65). The ratio was about one servant to every six Jews, which confirmed the wealth of the Jews then (cf. v. 69). Twenty years later most of them were poor (cf. Hag. 1:6, 9; 2:17). These singers (v. 65) may have been entertainers, since they are distinct from the temple singers (v. 41). If they were, their presence would illustrate further the returning exiles' prosperity. The [one-humped Arabian] camel [v. 67] can carry its rider and about four hundred pounds and can travel three or four days without drinking. The Lord is with us at all times, our part is to trust in Him.

**Lesson:** Wherever we go, the Lord is with us.

**Prayer:** Jesus Christ, You are our savior. Be with us. Amen.

**March 9<sup>th</sup> Monday 2015**

**Text: Ezra 2:68-70**

**Topic: Arrival in Jerusalem**

The Israelites contributed to the rebuilding of the temple as they had toward the construction of the Mosaic tabernacle (Exod. 25:3-7; 35:2-9). Probably the Greek gold, drachma, is in use and the Babylonian silver, mina (v. 69). If this is so, one Greek drachma was equivalent to one Roman denarius. In the ancient world, this was one day's wage for a working man (cf. Matt. 20:1-16). Obviously the exiles made a substantial contribution to the rebuilding of the temple that supplemented what Cyrus and the friends of the immigrants had previously donated (1:4, 6-11; cf. Exod. 25:4-7; 35:2-9; 2 Cor. 8:3; 9:7). When this group of Jews returned to the Promised Land in 537 B.C., they went first to Jerusalem (v. 68). Later they settled in the towns where their ancestors had lived and where some of them had property rights (v. 70; cf. vv. 21-35). The record that God preserved in this chapter of those who returned shows His faithfulness in bringing a remnant of His people back to Palestine as He had promised. One of the chief objectives of Ezra-Nehemiah was to show the Jews that they constituted the continuation of the pre-exilic Jewish community, the Israelite community that God had chosen. We are called to rebuild ourselves spiritually as Christians.

**Lesson:** Be ready to make yourself fit for God's service.

**Prayer:** Help us as you helped Israel our Lord. Amen.

**March 10<sup>th</sup> Tuesday 2015**

**Text: Ezra 3:1-6**

**Topic: The Erection of the Altar**

The text does not record exactly when the exiles arrived in Jerusalem, but it was probably sometime in 537 B.C. since Cyrus issued his decree in 538 B.C. The "seventh month" (v. 1) of the Jewish sacred calendar was Tishri (late September through early October). The people assembled in Jerusalem then to erect the altar of burnt offerings, the centerpiece of their worship (cf. Gen. 12:7). The seventh month was especially important for the Jewish with the Feast of Trumpets on Tishri 1, the Day of Atonement on Tishri 10, and the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) on Tishri 15-22 (Lev. 23:24-25; 27:27-32, 34-44). Tishri was the first month of the Jewish civil calendar, and the Feast of Trumpets was a kind of New Year celebration. It was on this day that the returned exiles began to offer sacrifices on their altar again (v. 6). In presenting burnt offerings to God even before the foundation of the temple was in place, the Jews showed their earnest desire to be living sacrifices to Him. That is what those sacrifices symbolized (Lev. 1; cf. Rom. 12:1). In re-establishing their ancient worship, these Jews, under the leadership of Jeshua and Zerubbabel, were careful to follow the Law of Moses (v. 2; cf. Exod. 27:1-8; 38:1-7; Deut. 12:4-14). Are you making yourself a living sacrifice for the Lord as the Jews did?

**Lesson:** Consecrate yourself unto the Lord.

**Prayer:** You are our fortress Jesus Christ. Help us. Amen.

**March 11<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 2015**

**Text: Ezra 3:7-9**

**Topic: The Reconstruction of the Temple Foundation**

As Solomon had done, these Jews contracted with the Phoenicians to the north to supply wood for the temple (cf. 2 Chron. 2:16). The people needed several months of preparations before actual construction began on the site in 536 B.C. It commenced about 70 years after the first group of exiles had departed for Babylon in 605 B.C. Extensive foundation repair work was necessary because the temple stood on a hilltop and because Babylonian destruction had been broad. Under the Mosaic Law, Levites began their service at age 25 (Num. 8:24). The Mosaic Law did not allow them to carry the tabernacle until they were 30 (Num. 4:3). David had allowed Levites to begin some service at age 20 (1 Chron. 23:24, 27). Zerubbabel and Jeshua also allowed them to begin working on the reconstruction project at age 20 (v. 8). The Lord allows us now to work for Him from our childhood. He only requires our commitment to Him as His children.

**Lesson:** You are not too young or old to serve the Lord.

**Prayer:** Help us Lord Jesus to meditate on Your word daily. Amen.

**March 12<sup>th</sup> Thursday 2015**

**Text: Ezra 3:10-13**

**Topic: The Completion of the Temple Foundation**

The people celebrated God's faithfulness when they had completed phase one of the temple reconstruction: its foundation. Principles of praise to be gleaned from these verses include the following: (1) Praise is the act of publicly exalting God's person and work. (2) Praise can be enhanced through the use of music and songs. (3) Praise is a participatory activity, not a spectator sport; it is worship people join in on, not a program people watch. Praise involves God's people in singing and playing, boasting and testifying to the greatness and goodness of the Lord! Compared with the "first temple" (v. 12), this second temple was much less impressive (cf. Zech. 4:10). Let us praise and worship the Lord continuously.

**Lesson:** Praise and worship are keys to serving the Lord.

**Prayer:** Jesus, you are the light to our feet. Help us to follow your steps. Amen.

**March 13<sup>th</sup> Friday 2015**

**Text: Ezra 4:1-5**

**Topic: Opposition during Cyrus' Reign**

The Assyrian government encouraged its residents to move to Israel and to settle there after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. This was official government policy during the reigns of the Assyrian kings Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.; 2 Kings 17:24) and Ashurbanipal (668-630 B.C.; 2 Kings 4:10). These immigrant people worshipped pagan idols (2 Kings 17:30-31), but also started worshipping Yahweh, whom they regarded as the god of the land in which they now lived (2 Kings 17:32-33). Eventually they intermarried with the Jews who had remained in the land. Their descendants became the Samaritans, a mixed breed racially and religiously. The exiles who returned from Babylon and their descendants despised them (cf. John 4:9). It was these people of the land who approached Zerubbabel and offered to help the Jews rebuild their temple (v. 2). Zerubbabel refused their offer because, even though they worshipped Yahweh, they did not worship Him exclusively, as the Mosaic Law specified (Exod. 20:3). Zerubbabel realized that if their commitment to God did not include a commitment to obey His revealed will, the Jewish remnant could only anticipate endless disagreement, conflict, and frustration with them. It is necessary to obey the will of God as his children.

**Lesson:** Obedience is better than sacrifice.

**Prayer:** Jesus, You are our helper at all times. We appreciate You Lord. Amen.

**March 14<sup>th</sup> Saturday 2015**

**Text: Ezra 4:7-23**

**Topic: Opposition during Artaxerxes' Reign**

Artaxerxes was the successor of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and ruled the Persian Empire from 464 to 424 B.C. Clearly the incident reported in these verses took place long after the temple was completed. It really involved the attempt by Israel's enemies to halt the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall in the days of Nehemiah. It evidently took place about 446 B.C. (cf. 4:21-23; Neh. 1:1-3). The antagonists enlisted the help of local Persian officials, including Rehum and Shimshai (v. 8), to appeal to Artaxerxes to issue an order stopping work on the walls. The letter was in Aramaic, the common language of the Persian Empire. This is the language in which it appears in the oldest Hebrew texts of Ezra. Aramaic was a language well known to all the Jews living in the empire, as well as Gentiles. The writer may have written this entire section of the book in Aramaic to avoid changing back and forth from Hebrew to Aramaic so many times. No one can stop God's work. Do the work of God with all commitment; you will see changes in your life.

**Lesson:** Know that the Lord is in control of every situation.

**Prayer:** Be merciful to us Son of David and help us serve you. Amen.