

## Heirs of the Promise

*A Story of Revival, Ezra 2:1-70*

### Introduction

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- *Knives Out* is a modern whodunit movie featuring the famous and fictitious detective, Benoit Blanc. In the first of the now 3-movie franchise, Blanc shows up to investigate the death of wealthy crime novelist, Harlan Thrombey. The story takes a surprising turn when the family learns that Harlan has left his entire estate to his kind and caring nurse, Marta Cabrera. Don't worry if I just spoiled it for you – it's only a minor part of the plot. But a surprise inheritance is a major part of the of line after the Exile in and around Jerusalem.
- As we talked about last week, God moved the king, Cyrus the Great, to send the back to Jerusalem & He motivated the people to rebuild the holy city.
  - Zerubbabel led the first group who rebuilt the temple around 540 B.C.
  - Ezra led the second group about 60 years later.
  - Nehemiah led a group a decade & half later group who rebuilt the city walls.
- God wrote this present book through Ezra the priest and scribe to encourage the God's people and correct their opponents.
  - 70 years had passed since the Jews were in control of the land and the group that returned was different and smaller.
  - The land had become part of the Medo-Persian empire, and their new neighbors weren't all friendly.
- The list names & responsibilities (here & in ch 8) is included to prove that these people were in fact, the proper heirs the promise.
  - For Ezra to reestablish the Jews under the authority of God's Word, they need know that **they were heirs of the promise**.
  - As we reflect on God's plan of redemption today, we also need to know that **we are heirs of the promise**.
    - The details of God's promise to the nation of Israel differs some from His promise to the believers today.
    - But there is also a lot of continuity between the promises.
- This passage of Scripture is all about continuity – between God's promises to Abraham and the ultimate fulfillment of those promises in Jesus Christ.
- The people in that time would sing and chat while they traveled, so if you're willing, say those words with me: **"We are – heirs of the promise."**
  - In Ezra's day and today, God's promise has 3 parts to it.
  - After we look at those 3 parts, we'll look at what that means for us today.

### Body

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#### I. A Promised Land (vv. 1, 70)

- A. The exiles came back to a specific place - Jerusalem & the surrounding cities.
- B. This was the land that God had promised to give to Abraham, that Moses had led the Israelites out of Egypt for, & Joshua had conquered.
- C. The fact that the Israelites had returned to the same land was amazing!

#### II. A Promised People (v. 2-58)

- A. The people had the same leadership structure. (v. 2a)
  - 1. Zerubbabel & Jeshua are listed 1<sup>st</sup> as they were the most prominent.
    - a. Zerubbabel was the civic leader & the governor of the province.
    - b. Jeshua was the high priest.
  - 2. The list of leaders is repeated in Neh 7:7 with the addition of a 12th name: Nahamani – a deliberate throwback to 12 Tribes of Israel.
- B. The people had the same family tree. (v. 2b-3, 25)
  - 1. The first half of the list included people by father.
  - 2. The second half of the list include people by hometown.
- C. The people had the same religious organization. (v. 36-39, 40, 58-59)
  - 1. They had priests and Levites.
    - a. The priests were descendants of Aaron, Moses' brother.
    - b. The Levites were all from the tribe of Levi.
  - 2. The priests offered the sacrifices in the temple and the Levites assisted in all areas of the temple from gatekeepers to singers.
  - 3. There was a relatively small number of Levites comparatively.

#### III. A Promised Blessing (v. 59-64)

- A. There were some Levites who couldn't prove they were qualified to serve.
- B. There were some priests who couldn't prove they were qualified to serve either because the documentation had been destroyed or misplaced.
  - 1. The priests were considered "unclean" until they could be vetted.
  - 2. This was about religious purity not ethic superiority.
  - 3. The priests were called to serve in a specific way so they could broadcast the blessing of God.
- C. The exiles were smaller in number, but strong in resources (v. 65, 69)

### Conclusion

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- From start to finish, this passage is about continuity, and we are meant share in that inheritance – **we are heirs of the promise!**
- Today, we are heirs to the promise of salvation by faith in Christ. ("If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise, Ga. 3:29).
  - We have a land to live in.
    - Our current state is only temporary - our true home is in heaven.
    - You can live according to the culture of this world or the culture heaven. (Rules, values, & beliefs – If you've ever traveled, you know.)
  - We have people to be part of.
    - We are a collectively a chosen race/royal priesthood/holy nation (1 Pt. 4:10)
    - You are saved as an individual but sanctified together as a group!
  - We have a blessing to share.
    - The Israel was meant to be "a light to the nations." (Is. 42:6, 49:6)
    - Christ said His followers are meant to be "the light of the world." (Mt. 5:14)
- This passage isn't a mystery movie – it's a summons **to live as an heir of the promise** – don't squander your inheritance!