

## EZRA (Student Edition)

### Part One: The Restoration of the Temple of God (1:1--6:22)

- I. \_\_\_\_\_ 1:1--2:70
  - A. Decree of Cyrus 1:1-4
  - B. Gifts from Israel and Cyrus 1:5-11
  - C. Census of the Returning People 2:1-63
    - 1. The People of Known Descent 2:1-58
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  - D. The Return Completed 2:64-70
    - 1. The People Who Returned 2:64-67
    - 2. The Gifts the People Gave 2:68-70
- II. \_\_\_\_\_ 3:1--6:22
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    - 1. Spiritual Preparation of the People 3:1-6
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    - 1. Present Opposition Under Darius 4:1-5
    - 2. Later Opposition Under Ahasuerus 4:6
    - 3. Later Opposition Under Artaxerxes 4:7-23
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  - C. Completion of the Temple 5:1--6:18
    - 1. Resumption of the Temple Construction 5:1-2
    - 2. Opposition to the Construction 5:3-17
    - 3. Confirmation of the Temple Construction 6:1-12
    - 4. Completion of the Temple 6:13-15
    - 5. Dedication of the Temple 6:16-18
  - D. Celebration of the Passover 6:19-22

### Part Two: The Reformation of the People of God (7:1--10:44)

- I. \_\_\_\_\_ 7:1--8:36
  - A. The Decree of Artaxerxes 7
    - 1. Ezra's Qualifications 7:1-10
    - 2. Artaxerxes' Letter 7:11-26
    - 3. Ezra's Response 7:27-28
  - B. Census of the Returning Israelites 8:1-14
  - C. Spiritual Preparation for the Return 8:15-23
    - 1. Acquisition of Temple Leadership 8:15-20
    - 2. Proclamation of a Fast 8:21-23
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II. _____	9:1--10:44
A. Israel Inter-marries	9:1-2
B. Ezra Intercedes with God	9:3-15
1. Lamentation of Ezra	9:3-4
2. Confession of Ezra	9:5-15
C. Reformation of Israel	10
1. Israel Laments	10:1-2
2. The Covenant Is Instituted	10:3-5
3. Solution for Inter-marriage	10:6-44

### **AUTHOR-**

The book of Ezra, whose name probably means “\_\_\_\_\_”, gets its title from the main character of chapters 7-10. No one is certain if Ezra himself or another compiler wrote the book. But Jewish tradition (the Talmud) attributes the book to Ezra and there are sections written in the \_\_\_\_\_ from his \_\_\_\_\_ (7:28-9:15). As we discussed before, Ezra is viewed by many as the author of 1 & 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah as well. In fact, Ezra and Nehemiah were recognized as \_\_\_\_\_ in the Hebrew Bible.

Ezra is one of my favorites (as a person) in the Bible. He was a scribe and priest and a descendant of Aaron through Eleazar, Phineas, and Zadok. He led the second of \_\_\_\_\_ returning to Jerusalem from Babylon and led the returned captives in Jerusalem to make a new commitment to God's Law. Ezra was trained in the knowledge of the Law while living in captivity in Babylon with other citizens of the nation of Judah. He gained favor during the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia. This king commissioned him to return to Jerusalem about \_\_\_\_\_ to bring order among the people of the new community. Artaxerxes even gave Ezra a royal letter (Ezra 7:11-16), granting him \_\_\_\_\_, along with the finances to furnish the Temple, which had been rebuilt by the returned captives.

Ezra must have been a competent scribe and priest, since he found favor with the ruling Persians. But he was also devoted to his God and the \_\_\_\_\_ that the Lord demanded of His people.

As he communicated God's requirements to the captives in Jerusalem, Ezra also proved he was a capable leader who could point out shortcomings while leading the people to a higher commitment to God's law at the same time. He gave great attention to the \_\_\_\_\_ and had several priests help him read it, \_\_\_\_\_ it for the people's clear understanding in their new language \_\_\_\_\_.

This reading process went on for \_\_\_\_\_ as the people focused on God's commands! (See \_\_\_\_\_)  
Through it all, Ezra worked with a keen sense of divine guidance, "according to the good hand of His God upon him" (Ezra 7:9).

### **WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-**

Just as the Israelites were taken into exile in three successive stages (605, 597, 586 B.C.) they returned in three stages. The first occurred under Zerubbabel around \_\_\_\_\_. After considerable delay, this return resulted in the rebuilding of the temple (c. \_\_\_\_\_), encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Ezra led the second return in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes 1 (\_\_\_\_\_). Nehemiah led the final return in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes 1 (\_\_\_\_\_). As you consider this history, you may have noticed that we are left with a chronological gap of \_\_\_\_\_ between the two major sections of the book of Ezra. He probably wrote about Zerubbabel's return many years after it happened, drawing from official court records or some other account of the event. To this he added his own personal memoirs, now contained in the second section of the book. That leads us to the thought that if Ezra really was the author, he probably wrote the book between \_\_\_\_\_ (the events of chs. 7-10) and \_\_\_\_\_ (Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem). By the way, during the time period covered by the book of Ezra, \_\_\_\_\_ (560-480 B.C.) was in India, \_\_\_\_\_ (551-479 B.C.) was in China, and \_\_\_\_\_ (470-399 B.C.) was in Greece.

### **ABOUT THE BOOK-**

The book opens with a brief introduction that explains how the first return from exile happened. Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a proclamation allowing the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their Temple and resettle their native land. About \_\_\_\_\_ returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a Jewish citizen appointed by Cyrus as governor of Jerusalem (2:64-65). After arriving, they set to work immediately on the rebuilding project. In spite of some shrewd political maneuvering by their enemies, the work moved forward until the Temple was completed in \_\_\_\_\_ (6:14-15). One note of interest is that many scholars believe the Jewish people in Babylon and Persia must have numbered at least \_\_\_\_\_. Yet only a small fraction chose to return to Jerusalem with the first group under Zerubbabel. This indicates that most of them probably had become comfortable with their lives in these foreign lands. Or perhaps the certainties of their present existence were more appealing than the

uncertainties of life in Jerusalem-a city which most of them \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

The second major section of the book reports on the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem with another group of exiles about \_\_\_\_\_ after the Temple had been completed. Just as Zerubbabel had led the people to rebuild God's house, Ezra's mission was to lead his countrymen to rebuild \_\_\_\_\_. His ministry as spiritual reformer probably lasted only \_\_\_\_\_, and in this year he had to deal with the Israelites' adoption of the pagan inhabitants' practices, including their marriages to foreign wives.

One thing issue that deserves some attention is Ezra's treatment of the pagan women whom the Jewish men had married (10:10-19). How could he be so cruel as to insist that these wives be "put away" (divorced) with no means of support? His actions must be understood in light of the drastic situation that faced the Jewish community in Jerusalem following the Exile. Only a small remnant of the Covenant People had returned, and it was important for them to keep themselves from \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ at all costs. Ezra must have realized, too, that this was one of the problems that had led to their downfall and captivity as a people in the first place. Yet even the horrors of defeat and exile by the Babylonians had failed to teach the people a lesson. He was determined to stamp out the problem this time before it became a widespread practice among God's Covenant People.

As you consider the content of this great book, you see the contrast between God's \_\_\_\_\_ and the people's \_\_\_\_\_. For example, when the people get discouraged because of the enemies' mockings, God faithfully raises up Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people to complete their task- and they do. Again, when the people stray from the Word, He faithfully sends a devout priest in Ezra who artfully instructs the people in the truth and calls them to repentance and confession. Indeed, the generation in the land is so unfaithful that their "iniquities have risen higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens" (9:6)- but God's \_\_\_\_\_ in the end!

### **A BASIC ASSESSMENT OF EZRA (BASIC THEMES)-**

There are so many great lessons in this book!

On one level, dealing with a people coming back from exile, we learn lessons on how to restore \_\_\_\_\_ in people or congregations who have fallen away from God and their first love. Let's face it: in view of the widespread erosion of vitality in church worship, the pathway to its

restoration is of utmost importance. Here are three principals that jump out on how worship was restored by Judah's returning exiles:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_ . They began offering sacrifices on the brazen altar- the altar where sin offerings were presented- even before the foundation of the temple was laid (3:6). The Lamb that was slain must have His death appreciated \_\_\_\_\_ ! True worship must be rooted in redemption's work and must focus on Christ's- not the generic "God's"- person. The most vibrant followers of Christ live in total \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus' death and resurrection- i.e. His saving them from their sins.
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ . When you read Ezra 4 & 5 you see the political struggles that arose when God's people tried to reinstate true worship in the center of the peoples. How true this is today! The rebuilding of the temple is a picture of any individual's or congregation's struggle to renew their first love and obedience to God. Resistance inevitably comes in some form, either human or spiritual, and in Ezra we see that it comes in the form of: 1) \_\_\_\_\_ (4:4), 2) \_\_\_\_\_ (4:12, 15); 3) \_\_\_\_\_ (3:12). I want to make this note: renewal does not always mean "new". Much of our "new" has nothing to do with the timeless truths of God. Renewal blends old and new together!
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_ . Jeremiah, Haggai, and Zechariah were used prophetically to stir up renewal. Whether it is the flow of the prophetic gifts, or anointed preaching that draws people ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) God's Spirit flowing through people ministering under the anointing plays a critical role in true worship recovery.

On another level, the messages of Ezra are a constant reminder of how \_\_\_\_\_ God's people can \_\_\_\_\_ and their \_\_\_\_\_ that are to characterize them as the royal, holy, called-out people they are. When this happens God's plans are delayed. But even though rebellious saints may \_\_\_\_\_ God's plans, they cannot ultimately \_\_\_\_\_ God's sovereign purposes. God is so much greater than we are and He has His ways of transcending our shortcomings! Also of note is the view we get of God's \_\_\_\_\_. His faithfulness is seen in the way He sovereignly protects His people in the midst of a powerful empire while they are in captivity. They \_\_\_\_\_ in their exile! And He raises up pagan kings who are sympathetic to their cause and encourage them to rebuild their homeland. Added to this is the fact

that God raises up zealous and capable leaders who direct the return and rebuilding!

**A POSSIBLE KEY WORD-**

My key word is: \_\_\_\_\_. I say this because the entire book centers on the restoration of it and the \_\_\_\_\_ restoration of the people of God.

**KEY VERSE(S) AND CHAPTER(S)-**

I had two verses I struggled between, but finally decided that for this study I wanted to have just one key verse. My verse is: \_\_\_\_\_. To me this verse speaks to the awesome thought that God \_\_\_\_\_ to Him to bring even entire nations back to Himself. I also thought that even though the temple was rebuilt, its rebuilding means \_\_\_\_\_, and God anoints people to bring about renewal. In relation to that, I chose as my key chapter: \_\_\_\_\_. This records something more important than just the rebuilding of the physical; the dedication of the temple stimulated \_\_\_\_\_ to separate themselves and keep the Passover.

**JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-**

- Jesus is typified in the temple
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Jesus is seen in the sacrifices

**THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALED IN THE BOOK-**

- The expression “the hand of the Lord” which occurs six times, speaks of the Holy Spirit’s influence
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## SOME TRUTHS AND APPLICATIONS-

Ezra 3:3

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Ezra 4:4,5

You will be opposed in following God fully. Don't be surprised and don't be deterred! Follow God radically and live to please Him- don't fear those around you.

Ezra 6:22

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Ezra 6:1-12; 7:11-28

Submit to all authority, knowing that it comes from God. Believe that God can work blessing to you even through civil authority that may be hostile. Our faith in a sovereign God tells us He can work beyond all authority to accomplish His will. Submission is not restriction it is protection.

Ezra 8:21-23

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Ezra 9:3-15

Choose to intercede for God's people rather than to get into fleshly anger. Identify with their sin and confess it as your own. Leaders need to lead the way in confession and model Godly repentance for those they lead.

Ezra 10:1

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