

EZRA

DATE	BOOK	KEY THOUGHT	CONTENT	KEY LESSONS	JESUS IN THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
	Old Testament				
	Israel's History				
457 - 444 BC	Ezra 10 Chapters	Israel is released from captivity. Some are able to return to the promised land to rebuild the Temple.	Israel returns to Canaan after 70 years of exile. The book of Ezra places emphasis on the spiritual and moral restoration of Jerusalem.	God is Faithful to His people.	Jesus is the Priest proclaiming freedom

EZRA

The rebuilding of the temple is the central theme. It shows the unity among returning tribes as they returned from the Babylonian Exile in three waves.

The first wave of refugees, led by Zerubbabel, completed the building of the Second Temple. The temple was rebuilt with a height of 90 ft. and a width of 90 ft.

Ezra arrives with another 2,000 refugees in the second wave. Ezra, a priest and scribe, dedicated the temple but was not happy with the priests marrying heathen wives, or intermarriage - mixed marriages of Jews and non-Jews.

His enthusiasm for the Lord sparked a spiritual revival.

By the end of the book of Ezra, Israel had renewed its relationship with God and was obedient.

Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem with the third wave of refugees.

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God's people were in captivity in Babylon for seventy years (Jer. 25: 11-12) .

The Persians defeated Babylon. King Cyrus of Persia, gave the Israelites freedom to return to their land and begin to rebuild if they desire (Ezra 1: 2).

Many were moved by God to go (Ezra 1: 5) and begin building the altar and establishing worship (Ezra 3: 1-12).

Those older men who had seen the first temple “wept with a loud voice” (Ezra 3: 12).

EZRA

In chapters 1-6, a relatively small number of Jews returned to the city of Jerusalem and immediately prepared to construct the new Temple.

They began the planning, the gathering of materials, and started the construction of the Temple.

The building of the Temple was hampered by the surrounding enemies who oppressed and frightened the workers.

Twenty years later, it was completed.

The encouraging messages of Haggai and Zechariah, who are introduced in this narrative (Ezra 5: 1), may be seen in the prophetic books that bear their names.

EZRA

Ezra 5: 1

1 When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them,

Ezra 6: 21-22

21 The sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land to *join* them, to seek the Lord God of Israel, ate *the Passover*.

22 And they observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the Lord had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

EZRA

In chapters 7-10, the second group of Jews returned to Israel.

Ezra, a priest and scribe, was included in this return.

He taught the Law, so disapproved the practice of intermarriage because the pagan women brought their religious practices with them.

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Ezra 7: 10

10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.

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Ezra 1: 5

5 Then the heads of fathers' *households* of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 3: 11

11 They sang, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, *saying*, "For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

EZRA

The Book of Ezra is a continuation of the biblical theme of the remnant.

Whenever disaster or judgment falls, God always saves a tiny remnant for Himself.

Noah and his family were saved from the destruction of the flood.

Lot's family was saved from Sodom and Gomorrah.

When the Israelites were taken into captivity in Egypt, God delivered His remnant and took them to the Promised Land.

The 7,000 prophets were reserved in Israel despite the persecution of Ahab and Jezebel.

Some fifty thousand people returned to the land of Judea in Ezra 2: 64-67, and yet, as they compared themselves with the numbers in Israel during its prosperous days under King David, their comment was, "We are left this day as a remnant."

EZRA

The remnant theme is carried into the New Testament where Paul tells us that “at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace”.

Rom. 11: 5

5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice.

EZRA

Although most people of Jesus' day rejected Him, there remained a set of people whom God had reserved and preserved in His Son, and in the covenant of His grace.

Throughout all generations since Christ, there has been the remnant of the faithful whose feet are on the narrow road that leads to eternal life.

EZRA

Matt. 7: 13-14

13 “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

14 “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

EZRA

The faithful remnant will be preserved through the power of the Holy Spirit who has sealed them and who will deliver them safely on the last day.

2 Cor. 1: 21-22

21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,

22 who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

Eph. 4: 30

30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

EZRA

The Book of Ezra is a picture of hope and restoration.

For the Christian, whose life is scarred by sin and rebellion against God, there is great hope that ours is a God of forgiveness, a God who will not turn His back on us when we seek Him in repentance and brokenness.

1 John 1: 9

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

EZRA

The return of the Israelites to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple are repeated in the life of every Christian who returns from the captivity of sin and rebellion against God and finds in Him a loving welcome home.

No matter how long we have been away, God is ready to forgive us and receive us back into His family. He is willing to show us how to rebuild our lives and resurrect our hearts.

EZRA

Ezra 4: 1-3

1 Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the Lord God of Israel,

2 they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' *households*, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here."

3 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' *households* of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us."

EZRA

In Ezra 4: 1-3 the Israelites recognized the deceptive speech of those who claimed to worship God but whose real intent was to tear down, not to build up.

Christians are to be on guard against such deceivers, respond to them as the Israelites did, and refuse to be fooled by their smooth words and false professions of faith.

EZRA

The opposition of the adversaries of God to the rebuilding of the temple displays a pattern that is typical of that of the enemy of our souls.

Satan uses those who would appear to be in sync with God's purposes to deceive us and attempt to thwart God's plans.

LESSONS FROM EZRA

A. God moves the hearts of rulers to accomplish His purpose.

In each of the three waves of Israelites coming back to the land, God moved the heart of an apparently unbelieving Persian king to grant them favor and even provide financial resources for their projects (Ezra 1: 1-11; Ezra 7: 11-28; Neh. 2: 1-8).

In each case, Scripture is clear that it was God who directly stirred the heart of the respective king (Ezra 1: 1; Ezra 7: 27; Neh. 2: 4-8).

LESSONS FROM EZRA

B. When you do something for God, expect opposition.

There is much opposition in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah! Enemies tried to stop the work on multiple occasions. They troubled the laborers and even hired people to frustrate them (Ezra 4: 4-5).

There were political disagreements (Ezra 5: 6 - 6: 12), criticism and mocking (Neh. 4: 2-3), even physical attacks from other nations (Neh. 4: 8).

LESSONS FROM EZRA

C. Repent frequently and sincerely.

Ezra, in response to a massive problem, dealt with it by “confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God” (Ezra 10: 1).

The people confessed their sin and change was effected (Ezra 10: 2). Ezra’s prayer in chapter nine is powerful (Ezra 9: 5-15).

LESSONS FROM EZRA

D. God moves in response to prayer.

Ezra called the people to fast and pray for a safe journey. God answered their prayers.

Ezra 8: 23

23 So we fasted and sought our God concerning this *matter*, and He listened to our entreaty.

LESSONS FROM EZRA

E. Give priority to God's Word.

The first thing that the Israelites did when they started building the temple was to construct the altar and begin worshipping. They were following the instructions in God's Word (Ezra 3: 1-6).

Ezra read the Word of God from morning to evening to the great multitude of people (Neh. 8: 1-5). He read it, interpreted it, and helped people to understand it (Neh. 8: 8).