



# Ezra



**THRU**the**BIBLE**

NOTES & OUTLINES WITH

*J. Vernon McGee*

HISTORY



# Ezra

## Post-Captivity Books

The post-captivity books record the return and restoration at Jerusalem after the 70-year Babylonian captivity as predicted by Jeremiah. Six books belong to this series. They are divided into two groups:

- Historical—Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther;
- Prophetical—Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Although Ezra is a continuation of the historical books begun with Joshua, the pre-captivity and captivity books could be profitably studied before beginning with Ezra. These books include all of the major and minor prophets, with the exception of the last three books of the Old Testament. However, we shall proceed according to the arrangement of the canon of Scripture.

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**WRITER:** Ezra. He is one character who has not received proper recognition. He was a descendant of Hilkiah (Ezra 7:1), the high priest who found a copy of the Law during the reign of Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:14). Ezra, as a priest, was unable to serve during the captivity, but he gave his time to a study of the Word of God—he was “a ready scribe in the law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6). Ezra was a great revivalist and reformer. The revival began with the reading of the

Word of God by Ezra (Nehemiah 8). Also, he probably was the writer of 1 and 2 Chronicles and of Psalm 119, which exalts the Word of God. He organized the synagogue, founded the order of scribes, helped settle the canon of Scripture and arranged the Psalms.

*Let us pay tribute to Ezra who was the first to begin a revival of Bible study. Is this not God's program for revival?*

**THEME:** The Word of the Lord. (There are 11 direct references—1:1; 3:2; 6:14, 18; 7:6, 10, 14, 26; 9:4; 10:3, 5.)

The place of the Word of God in the total life of His people—religious, social, business, and political.

**KEY PHRASE:** Trembled at the words of the God of Israel” (Ezra 9:4; also see 10:3).

*“We already have seen that the Babylonian captivity did not bring the Jews to national repentance, and so lead to national restoration. As the reading of Ezra will disclose, when Cyrus, king of Persia, gave permission to the captives to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple, scarcely 50,000 availed themselves of the privilege, a considerable portion of whom were priests and Levites of the humbler and poorer class.”*

—Dr. James M. Gray

## OUTLINE:

### **I. RETURN from BABYLON LED by ZERUBBABEL, Chapters 1–6** *(About 50,000 returned)*

- A. Restoration of temple by decree of Cyrus, Chapter 1
- B. Return under Zerubbabel, Chapter 2
- C. Rebuilding of temple, Chapter 3
- D. Retardation of rebuilding of temple by opposition, Chapter 4  
(Decree of Artaxerxes)
- E. Renewal of rebuilding of temple, Chapters 5, 6  
(Decree of Darius)

### **II. RETURN from BABYLON LED by EZRA, Chapters 7–10** *(About 2,000 returned)*

- A. Return under Ezra, Chapters 7, 8
- B. Reformation under Ezra, Chapters 9, 10
  - 1. Prayer of Ezra, Chapter 9
  - 2. Separation from heathen is demanded and maintained, Chapter 10

The books of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1) should be read and studied with the book of Ezra, for all three were written in the shadow of the rebuilt temple and were given to encourage the people in building.

## COMMENT:

### I. RETURN from BABYLON LED by ZERUBBABEL, Chapters 1–6

*(About 50,000 returned)*

#### A. Restoration of temple by decree of Cyrus, Chapter 1

V. 1—“Cyrus, king of Persia” was one of the most enlightened rulers of the ancient world. He was a subject of predictive prophecy. He was named before he was born—almost 200 years before he became king of Persia.

*That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. (Isaiah 44:28)*

*Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut. (Isaiah 45:1)*

He is a type of Christ.

Daniel was in the court of Cyrus and evidently led him to a knowledge of the living and true God. It was during the reign of Cyrus that Daniel gave some of his greatest prophecies, including the 70-weeks prophecy concerning Israel. The decree of Cyrus is not the point where the 70 weeks (which pertain to Israel) begin, as they were not yet returned to the land (see notes on Nehemiah).

W. 2-4—“The LORD God of heaven” is a designation of God that is peculiar to Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel. You see, after the fall and destruction of Jerusalem, God could no longer be identified with the temple as the One who dwelt between the cherubim. The glory had departed; “Ichabod” was written over the escutcheon of Israel. Ezekiel saw the vision of the departure of the Shekinah glory (see Ezekiel 9—11). He returned to heaven. For this reason, in the post-captivity books He is “the LORD God of heaven.”

#### CYRUS GAVE PERMISSION TO THE JEWS TO:

1 - return to the land

2 - rebuild the city of Jerusalem

3 - rebuild the temple

W. 5, 6—Very few avail themselves of this opportunity (see Ezra 2:64, 65). Most of the captives are now settled and satisfied in Babylon. They still their consciences by giving generously to those who do return.

W. 7-11—The generosity of Cyrus should be noted. He returns the vessels of gold taken from the temple by Nebuchadnezzar.

### B. Return under Zerubbabel, Chapter 2

W. 1-35—Particular attention is given to the leadership of those who return.

W. 36-39—These are the priests who return. The total is 4,289.

W. 40-54—These are the Levites who return. The total is 341. The contrast in number with the priests reveals that the Levites, for the most part, remain in Babylon.

W. 55-60—These are listed as the children of Solomon's servants. His servants were then from all of the 12 tribes (see 1 Samuel 8:11-16). Obviously, some from all 12 tribes return, but very few from any one tribe return.

W. 61-63—Some cannot give a clear declaration as to their genealogy. Failure to give a clear title excludes them from the priesthood. This section reveals the value and particular emphasis placed upon the genealogies. This lends importance to the accuracy of the genealogy that opens the New Testament in the Gospel of Matthew which was never challenged by the enemies of Christ at the beginning. They questioned His birth and His resurrection but never His genealogy. The New Testament stands or falls upon the accuracy of it and reveals that He is the only One to fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament in reference to David and his kingdom.

W. 64, 65—Total number who return at this time under Zerubbabel:

Total congregation	42,360
Servants and maids	7,337
Singers, both male and female	200
Grand total	49,897

W. 66-70—They bring the stock and chattels with them and give generously to rebuild the temple.

### C. Rebuilding of temple, Chapter 3

V. 2–They not only return to the land but also to “the law of Moses.”

W. 3-6–Sacrifices and feast days are restored.

W. 7-9–Preparation is made for rebuilding the temple.

W. 10-13–The foundation is laid with mingled songs of praise and tears of mourning (see notes on Haggai for the explanation of this seemingly contradictory reaction to the rebuilding of the temple).

### D. Retardation of rebuilding of temple by opposition, Chapter 4

W. 1, 2–The enemies’ first effort at disrupting the rebuilding of the temple is to offer to become allies.

V. 3–This is absolutely rejected.

W. 4, 5–In the second effort to hinder the work, the enemy seeks to disrupt the building by various means.

W. 6-10–The third effort to stop the rebuilding of the temple is a letter sent by the enemy to Artaxerxes with false accusations.

W. 11-16–The contents of the letter are given (note their estimation of Jerusalem [v. 12] in contrast to God’s in Psalm 87).

W. 17-24–The enemy succeeds in sending a letter to Artaxerxes, and he shoots back a reply that the work is to cease. The suspension of work continues until the time of Darius, king of Persia.

### E. Renewal of rebuilding of temple, Chapters 5, 6

#### CHAPTER 5

W. 1-6–Haggai and Zechariah encourage the people to resume rebuilding of the temple. When the leaders are challenged, they appeal to Darius.

W. 7-17–Darius grants permission to resume the rebuilding of the temple.

#### CHAPTER 6

W. 1-12–Darius issues a decree which confirms the original decree of Cyrus.

W. 13-15–The temple is rebuilt under the inspiration of Haggai and Zechariah. God is identified here as the God of Israel (not Judah). This means there were some from all tribes in Jerusalem at this time.

V. 16—Those who returned are likewise identified here as “the children of Israel.”

V. 17—The language here is more explicit: “all Israel.”

V. 18—The emphasis again is upon the Word of God (see also v. 14).

W. 19-22—The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are observed again.

## **I. RETURN from BABYLON LED by EZRA, Chapters 7–10** *(About 2,000 returned)*

### **A. Return under Ezra, Chapters 7, 8**

#### **CHAPTER 7**

V. 1—Artaxerxes is the same ruler mentioned in Nehemiah 2:1 (see notes on Nehemiah).

V. 2-5—Ezra is descended from the line of Aaron.

V. 6—Ezra is a student of the Mosaic Law.

V. 7—This is during the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes. Nehemiah comes later in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes.

V. 10—This is the sixth reference to the law of the Lord or Word of God. Ezra prepared himself to teach the Word of God.

V. 14—The seventh reference to law of God.

V. 26—The eighth reference to law of God.

W. 27, 28—Ezra expresses gratitude to God and to Artaxerxes for his gifts, generosity and goodness.

#### **CHAPTER 8**

W. 1-14—The roll call of those who return with Ezra: 1,496 males are listed.

V. 15-19—20 priests are added to the list.

V. 20—220 Nethinims, who served the Levites, return. A total of 1,736 go with Ezra.

V. 21—Ezra proclaims a fast and prayer meeting that they might ask God for journeying mercies.

V. 22—Ezra confesses he was ashamed to ask the king for a guard inasmuch as he had boasted to the king that God would lead them up to Jerusalem.



V. 23—God hears and grants their petition. Ezra the priest makes the journey without a guard. Later, Nehemiah has ample protection when he makes the trip to Jerusalem.

W. 24-30—The valuables are entrusted into the hands of priests.

W. 31-34—Ezra makes a safe journey to Jerusalem and the valuables are delivered.

V. 35—Burnt offerings and sin offerings are made by those who return.

V. 36—Ezra presents his credentials from the king to the king's officials.

## B. Reformation under Ezra, Chapters 9, 10

### 1. Prayer of Ezra, Chapter 9

One of the great prayers of the Bible. Compare it with Nehemiah 1:4-11 and Daniel 9.

W. 1, 2—The sad plight of the people is reported to Ezra. Intermarriage (with the surrounding heathen and enemies of God and Israel) leads to a practice of the abomination of the heathen. The lack of separation plunges them into immorality and idolatry. The returned remnant is in a sad, sordid and squalid condition.

V. 3—Ezra is emotionally involved—he fasts and even plucks the hair out of his head and beard.

V. 4—The ninth reference to the Word of God. Many who believe the Word of God join Ezra in mourning.

W. 5-15—Ezra confesses the sins of the people and identifies himself with his people. Note occurrences of the first personal pronoun plural “we” and “our.” He recognizes the grace of God and pleads with God.

### 2. Separation from heathen is demanded and maintained, Chapter 10

V. 3—The tenth reference to the Word of God. Ezra not only reads, studies, and reverences the Word of God, but he also practices it.

V. 5—The 11<sup>th</sup> reference to the Word of God.

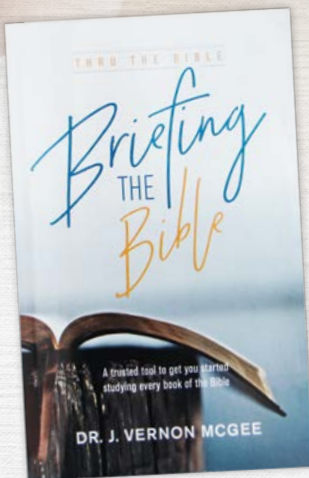
V. 6—Ezra continues to mourn for his people.

W. 7-19—The remnant that has returned assemble at Jerusalem and pledge to put away their foreign wives.

W. 20-43—This is the roll call of those who did.

V. 44—This works a great hardship upon many, for they have children by these women. This is an example of the high cost of sin.

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