

Ezra

“The Remnant Returns and Rebuilding Begins”

I. Introduction to Ezra

- A. The next three books (Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther) in our Bibles complete the historical section of the Old Testament.
 - 1. When completed 1600 years of Israel's history has been divinely recorded.
 - a. It all began with the call of Abraham and ends with the ministry of Nehemiah.
 - b. After the divinely inspired historical record, there is silence for 400 years as Israel awaits their Messiah.
- B. These three books are unique in that they deal with Israel after the captivity
 - 1. Genesis – Deuteronomy: The Law
 - 2. Joshua – Ruth: Theocratic Rule
 - 3. 1 Samuel – 2 Chronicles: Monarchy Rule
 - 4. Ezra – Esther: Post Exile
 - a. Most prophetic books were written during 1 & 2 Kings
 - b. Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi were written during Ezra through Nehemiah
- C. Not much is known about life for the Jews during their exile, except what we learn from Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther
 - 1. Psalm 137 also sheds light on life during the exile.
- D. A few thoughts on Israel's captivity
 - 1. Captivity happened in three stages
 - a. 605 B.C. – Daniel taken to Babylon
 - b. 597 B.C. – Ezekiel taken to Babylon
 - c. 587 B.C. – Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed
 - 2. Seventy years later, 536 B.C., Cyrus leads Persia to victory over Babylon.
 - a. Daniel 5 records Babylon's fall
 - b. Persian Empire will last 200 years.
 - 3. Cyrus gives the decree for captive Israel to return to Jerusalem
 - a. The purpose of their return was to rebuild the Temple.
- E. Ezra is the continuation of Chronicles and deals with the Remnant that returned to Jerusalem after Cyrus' decree.
 - 1. This happened in two stages
 - 2. It was in fulfillment of much prophesy
- F. Ezra begins in 536 B.C. with the decree of Cyrus, and ends in 457 B.C. during the reign of Artaxerxes.
 - 1. The book covers 80 years in the Post Exilic life of Israel.
- G. Ezra and Nehemiah were treated as one book in the Hebrew canon and the Septuagint
 - 1. First divided by Origen 3rd Century A.D.
 - 2. Treated as separate in Latin Vulgate
 - 3. Based on content, they were probably two separate books originally.

II. Outline of Ezra

- A. Chronologically, these three books divide into four parts.
 - 1. Ezra 1 – 6: Building the Temple, 536 – 515 B.C.
 - 2. Esther 1 – 10: “For such a time”, Israel is rescued – 483 B.C.
 - 3. Ezra 7 – 10: Reformation – 457 B.C.
 - 4. Nehemiah 1: Walls are built – 444 B.C.
- B. The book of Ezra has two distinct sections
 - 1. Section 1 Chapters 1 – 6 Repair
 - 2. Section 2 Chapters 7 – 10 Reform

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C. Section 1 Chapters 1 – 6

1. The first six chapters tell the story of those who returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple and covers 25 years.
 - a. Chapters 1 – 2 Jews to return to Jerusalem
 - i. When Cyrus conquered Babylon, he issued a decree allowing the Jews return to Jerusalem
 - ii. This return was foretold by the prophets:
 1. Jeremiah 25:8 – 13
 2. Jeremiah 29:10 – 14
 3. Isaiah 44: 28 – 45:5
 - iii. Set in motion by Cyrus
 - iv. The Cyrus calendar confirms the policy of Persia to re-patriot lands taken by Assyrians and Babylonians
 - v. Josephus declared Cyrus was shown prophecies by Daniel which compelled his decree
 - vi. In response to the prayers of Daniel and others.
 - vii. Worked out through the missionary endeavors of Zerubbabel and Joshua
 - viii. 50,000 people joined their ministry and became missionaries to Jerusalem.
 - ix. The purpose of their return was to rebuild the Temple
 - x. Chapter 2 records a list of those who made the journey
 - b. Chapter 3 – 4
 - i. After months of travel, the missionaries settle in Jerusalem and the work begins.
 - ii. First area of business was to build the altar and restore morning and evening sacrifice
 - iii. In the seventh month they celebrated the Feast of tabernacles
 - iv. It did not take long for the enemy to attack, the missionaries became discouraged and the work ceased.
 1. Once the work stopped 15 years transpired before the work resumed.
 - c. Chapters 5 – 6
 - i. 15 years later, during the second year of Darius, King of Persia, and the temple work was restored.
 1. Haggai and Zechariah play a key role in the work
 2. Five years later the Temple is completed
 - ii. A period of 60 years pass between the end of Chapter 6 and the events of Chapter 7
 1. It is during this time that the events in the book of Esther take place

D. Section 2 Chapters 7 – 10

1. The first six chapters of Ezra deal with dedication of temple
2. Chapters 7 -10 deal with the dedication of the people
3. These chapters all take place in one year
4. They tell the story of Ezra leading a second wave of people back to Jerusalem
5. Who is Ezra?
 - a. Like Zerubbabel, he was a missionary leading others into the work of God
 - b. Son of Chief Priest and a priest, himself
 - c. A scribe and expert in the Word
 - i. According to Rabbinical tradition dating to the 2nd century A.D. a council of scribes, prophets and teachers, led by Ezra as president, convened to collect all the sacred writings and form the Old Testament canon.

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- ii. In Nehemiah we find that Ezra was an Expository preacher.

- 6. Chapters 7 – 8
 - a. In response to his appeal to king Artaxerxes, Ezra is commissioned to lead the second team to Jerusalem to continue the work of the Lord
 - b. After elaborate preparations, the journey begins
 - c. After 3 ½ months and almost 1000 miles, they arrive in Jerusalem

- 7. Chapters 9 – 10
 - a. Upon arrival, Ezra is forced to address the actions of the people, correcting them from the Word of God.
 - i. Application: Even missionaries need correction
 - ii. After one year, the book of Ezra concludes
 - iii. His ministry will be picked up again in Nehemiah
 - 1. Nehemiah begins twelve years after Ezra concludes.

III. Why Study Ezra

- A. Ezra continues the story line where Kings and chronicles ended
- B. Ezra gives background for understanding for Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi
- C. Ezra is a book of fulfilled prophesy.
 - 1. A valuable message for the end-time believers.
- D. Ezra teaches the importance of being a student of Scripture.
 - 1. Its heroes, Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah were all men of the Word.
 - 2. Ezra teaches how to counter the attack of the enemy's opposition.
 - a. Chapter 4
 - i. Adversaries of Judah (4:1)
 - ii. Tried to discourage the people (4:4)
 - iii. Chief means of discouragement were accusations
 - iv. Application
 - 1. The accusations were before true
 - 2. The accusations stemmed from past failures
 - 3. The accusations discouraged the missionaries and ultimately halted the word of God
 - v. The work ceases for sixteen years (4:21)
 - vi. Ezra 5:2 records when the work resumed
 - vii. What led to the restoration?
 - 1. Ezra 5:1 Haggai and Zechariah
 - 3. The messages of Haggai and Zechariah
 - a. Zechariah 3 – His vision and Message to Joshua
 - i. Zechariah sees Joshua standing before God wearing filthy garments. He watches as the Devil rises to bring accusation against Joshua. When the Devil is silenced by the Lord, Joshua is then restored to ministry
 - 1. Application: Satan is the accuser of the brethren, but he is silenced by the work of the cross, where the handwriting against us is erased.
 - b. Zechariah 4 – Message to Zerubbabel
 - i. Zerubbabel had the responsibility of leading the people to rebuild the Temple.
 - 1. The people are few, discouraged, complaining and the task is great.

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- ii. Zechariah’s message to Zerubbabel who feels more like “zero-Abel” is “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.” (4:6)
- c. Haggai 1 – Message to the people
 - i. When the Temple work got difficult the people stopped and began to build their own houses.
 - ii. “Consider your ways”
 - iii. It’s time to get back to the Lord’s work.

IV. Types of Christ

- A. Ezra follows the kingly line of David after the captivity is ended.
- B. Zerubbabel was a descendent of Joiachin , of the lineage of David
- C. Christ is the Son of David and fulfilled the promise to David that he would have a king forever on the throne
 - 1. Christ sits enthroned in Heaven today at the right have of the Father
 - 2. Christ will one day return and set up His earthly Kingdom
- D. Ezra is a picture of the work of Christ in restoring the backslider
 - 1. Judah ignored the ways and warnings of God and was taken into bondage.
 - 2. Ezra is the story of their restoration.
- E. God made a way when all seemed lost
 - 1. The decree of Cyrus
 - 2. The Spirit moves the heart of men back to Jerusalem (1:5)
 - 3. God restores the backslider the same way today.
 - a. The story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15)