

The Book of Ezra

Author:	Ezra - scribe & priest
Date/Location:	457-444 B.C. – Israel
Genre:	Historical Narrative
Length:	10 chapters
Key Passages:	7:10

Contents:

How the Persians helped Israel to return from exile and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Ezra.

Theme and Purpose:

From an historical standpoint, Ezra continues the narrative where 2 Chronicles ends and traces the history of the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon and the rebuilding of the temple. From a spiritual and doctrinal standpoint, Ezra demonstrates how God fulfilled His promise to return His people to the land of promise after seventy years of exile as announced by the prophets. As in Chronicles, Ezra, as a priest, shows the centrality of the temple and its worship to the life of the nation as God's people. It begins with the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, which allowed a remnant of the people to return. The people enthusiastically began rebuilding the temple, but were delayed for 18 years by enemies from the north. Finally a decree from Darius let them finish (see Ezra 1 6). Chapters 7-10 tell about the return of the priest Ezra who taught the people the law and reformed the nation's spiritual life.

Key Words:

Fitting with the concepts to return to the land and the temple in Jerusalem, two key words are "Jerusalem," which occurs 48 times, and "temple," which occurs 25 times.

Outline:

Ezra divides into two sections:

- I. *The Restoration: Return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel (1-6)*
- II. *The Reformation of the People: the Return Under Ezra (7-10)*

Ezra 7:7-10 And there went up also to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king, some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants. 8 And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. 10 For *Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.*

Chronology of Ezra:

Event	Year	Reference
Cyrus king of Persia captures Babylon	539 b.c.	Dan. 5:30-31
First year of King Cyrus; issues proclamation freeing Jewish exiles to return	538-537	Ezra 1:1-4
Jewish exiles, led by Sheshbazzar, return from Babylon to Jerusalem	537?	Ezra 1:11
Altar rebuilt	537	Ezra 3:1-2
Temple rebuilding begins	536	Ezra 3:8
Adversaries oppose the rebuilding	536-530	Ezra 4:1-5
Temple rebuilding ceases	530-520	Ezra 4:24
Temple rebuilding resumes (2nd year of Darius)	520	Ezra 5:2; cf. Hag. 1:14
Temple construction completed (6th year of Darius)	516	Ezra 6:15
Ezra departs from Babylon to Jerusalem (arrives in 7th year of Artaxerxes)	458	Ezra 7:6-9
Men of Judah and Benjamin assemble at Jerusalem	458	Ezra 10:9
Officials conduct three-month investigation	458-457	Ezra 10:16-17

The Hand of God in Ezra and Nehemiah:

Ezra 7:6	The king granted Ezra all that he asked	for the hand of the Lord his God was on him
Ezra 7:9	Ezra began to go up from Babylon and came to Jerusalem	for the good hand of his God was on him
Ezra 7:28	Ezra took courage before the king and his men, and gathered leading men from Israel to go with him	for the hand of the Lord his God was on him
Ezra 8:18	Ezra is sent ministers for the house of God	by the good hand of their God on them
Ezra 8:22	On all who seek God	the hand of their God is for good
Ezra 8:31	God delivered them from the hand of the enemy and from ambushes by the way	[for] the hand of their God was on them
Neh. 2:8	King Artaxerxes granted what Nehemiah asked	for the good hand of his God was upon him