

Through the Bible Course

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Ezra

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Key Word: Restoration

Key Verse: Ezra 1:5

Jewish tradition says Ezra wrote Chronicles, using largely copies of public records and official documents; that he also wrote the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is also said that he arranged the Psalms in their present order as well as the Old Testament books as have them now.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah belong to this period.

Judah had been carried captive and Jerusalem destroyed by Babylonians in 588 BC. Persia had become dominant power in 538 BC. Many of Jews were very unhappy in captivity – Psalm 137.

I. From first return to dedication of temple – chapters 1-6

1. Cyrus' proclamation and preparation for return – chapter 1

a. Some things about this decree

1. Was fulfillment of prophecy – Jeremiah 25:11,12; Jeremiah 29:10; Jeremiah 33:6-13; Isaiah 44:28-45:4; Note: also Leviticus 26:32-35
2. Verse 2 recognizes supremacy of God
3. Verse 2 obeys His charge in Isaiah 44:28-45:4
4. Verse 3 permits all who wish to return
5. Verse 4 orders gifts be made

b. Preparation for return; vessels carried away by Nebuchadnezzar to be returned – verses 5-11

2. List of those who returned – chapter 2

a. 42,360 Jews; 7,337 servants; 200 singers; approximately 50,000 in all

3. Resumption of religious life – chapter 3

a. Altar set up and offerings made – verses 1-8

b. Foundation laid; 20 years before completed – verses 8-13

4. Adversaries hinder work – chapter 4

a. Offer compromise

b. Asked King Artaxerxes (same as Ahasuerus) to forbid continuation of work

5. Work starts again and is completed – chapters 5 and 6

a. Prophets Haggai and Zechariah – 5:1 (Note Haggai 1:4-9)

b. Correspondence with Darius

1. Decree of Cyrus found – 6:1-5

2. Darius issues another decree furthering the work (verse 8) – 6:6-12

c. Temple finished and Passover observed for first time in, at least, 70 years – 6:14-22

II. Ezra's work at Jerusalem – chapters 7-10

1. Ezra leads second expedition to Jerusalem – 7:1-10
2. Artaxerxes' decree which, among other things, invests Ezra with authority, verses 25,26; also included giving of offerings from king and his officers; order of treasurers in Palestine to assist and exemption of Levites from taxes – 7:11-28
 - a. Ezra thanks God – vs. 27,28
3. List of those returning and gathering of some priest and Nethinim – 8:1-20
4. Ezra seeks protection of God rather than ask King for guard – 8:21-23
5. Ezra inventories treasures, commits to designated priests, and delivers to authorities in Jerusalem – 8:24-36
6. The intermarriage of Jews with foreigners and steps taken to correct this evil of mixed marriages – chapters 9 and 10