



Ezra

Important Notes about the Book:

- **Its Name.** Ezra was a priest and scribe (Ezra 7.1-6) who travelled from Mesopotamia to teach the law of Moses to God’s people in Judea. Although he is not the main character of the book, it bears his name, which means “help” in the Hebrew. This is an appropriate title, since God’s people are frequently in need of help throughout this narrative!
- **Its Organization.** The book takes place in two movements. The first (chapters 1-6) tells us of the first wave of returning exiles from Babylon. The people were led by Zerubbabel, a descendant of King David. Through much opposition and discouragement, they succeeded in rebuilding Jerusalem’s temple. The book’s second movement (chapters 7-10) records the journey and work of Ezra, who led a second wave of exiles back to Judea to restore the knowledge and practice of the Jewish Scriptures.
- **Its Timeline.** Like many Bible narratives, the book of Ezra is not evenly paced. Chapters 1-6 occur within the years of 537-515 B.C., but chapters 7-10 all happen between 458-457 B.C. See also page 2 for more chronology.
- **Its Message:** God is faithful to help His people rebuild when they seek Him (5.5, 7.6, 9, 28; 8.18, 22. 31).

Our Study Plan

Subject	Date	Scripture
God Stirs Up Spirits	1/3/21	Chapter 1
The Exiles Who Returned	1/10/21	Chapter 2
Rebuilding Begins	1/17/21	Chapter 3
The Work Stops	1/24/21	Chapter 4
The Eye of God	1/31/21	Chapter 5
Let the Work Alone	2/7/21	Chapter 6
Ezra Went Up From Babylonia	2/14/21	Chapter 7
The Hand of Our God	2/21/21	Chapter 8
We Are Before You In Our Guilt	2/28/21	Chapter 9
Let Us Make A Covenant	3/7/21	Chapter 10

Outline of Ezra

(Taken from the ESV Study Bible)

- I. Cyrus's Decree and the Return of Exiles from Babylon (1:1–2:70)
 - A. The decree (1:1–4)
 - B. The exiles respond to the decree (1:5–11)
 - C. The exiles live again in their ancestral homes (2:1–70)
- II. The Returned Exiles Rebuild the Temple on Its Original Site (3:1–6:22)
 - A. The foundations of the temple are laid (3:1–13)
 - B. Enemies stall the project by conspiring against it (4:1–24)
 - C. The work is resumed, and local officials seek confirmation of Cyrus's decree (5:1–17)
 - D. King Darius discovers and reaffirms Cyrus's decree, and the work is completed (6:1–22)
- III. Ezra the Priest Comes to Jerusalem to Establish the Law of Moses (7:1–8:36)
 - A. King Artaxerxes gives Ezra authority to establish the Mosaic law (7:1–28)
 - B. Ezra journeys to Jerusalem with a new wave of returnees, bearing royal gifts for the temple (8:1–36)
- IV. Ezra Discovers and Confronts the Problem of Intermarriage (9:1–10:44)
 - A. Ezra discovers the problem of marriage to idolaters, and prays (9:1–15)
 - B. The people agree to dissolve the marriages (10:1–17)
 - C. List of those who were implicated (10:18–44)

Chronology of Ezra

(Taken from the ESV Study Bible)

Event	Year(s)	Scripture Reference
Cyrus king of Persia captures Babylon	539 B.C.	Daniel 5.30-31
First year of 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 yr. of Darius)	520	Ezra 5.2, cf. Haggai 1.14
Temple construction completed (6th yr. of Darius)	516	Ezra 6.15
Ezra departs from Babylon to Jerusalem (arrives 7th yr. 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

