

# EZRA

Author: possibly Ezra    Date: 538-458 B.C.

Ezra & Nehemiah were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible. Ezra continues the Old Testament narrative of 2 Chronicles by showing how God fulfills his promise to return his people to the Promised Land after 70 years of exile. Israel's "second exodus," this one from Babylon (now ruled by Persia), is less impressive because only a remnant choose to leave Babylon. Ezra relates the story of two returns from Babylon—the first led by Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple (chapters 1-6), and the second under the leadership of Ezra to rebuild the spiritual condition of the people (chapters 7-10).

Although this book is anonymous, it is most often attributed to Ezra who was a scribe, a priest, and a great leader. His name in Hebrew means "help," and his whole life was devoted to serving God and God's people. Ezra not only knew God's word, he believed and obeyed it.

The basic theme of Ezra is restoration—the restoration of the temple and the spiritual, moral and social restoration of the returned remnant in Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra. Both are great leaders despite opposition and difficulty.

## OUTLINE

### PART ONE: THE RESTORATION OF THE TEMPLE OF GOD (Chapters 1-6)

- I. The Return of Captives to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel (Chapters 1-2)
  - A. Decree of Cyrus (1:1-4)
  - B. Preparations and Provisions (1:5-11)
  - C. Census of the Returning People (2:1-70)
- II. The Construction of the Temple (Chapters 3-6)
  - A. Construction of the Altar and Temple Foundations (3:1-13)
  - B. Opposition to Rebuilding the Temple (4:1-24)
  - C. Completion of the Temple and Celebration of Passover (5:1 – 6:22)

### PART TWO: THE RESTORATION OF PEOPLE OF GOD (Chapters 7-10)

- I. The Return of Captives to Jerusalem under Ezra ((Chapters 7-8)
  - A. The Generous Decree of Artaxerxes (7:1-28)
  - B. Census of the Returning People (8:1-14)
  - C. Account of the Trip to Jerusalem (8:15-36)
- II. The Restoration of the People (Chapters 9-10)
  - A. Israel intermarries (9:1-2)
  - B. Ezra Intercedes with God (9:3-15)
  - C. Reformation of Israel (10:1-44)

**Application:** *God shows His mercy to every generation. He compassionately restores His people. No matter how difficult our present "captivity," we are never far from His love and mercy. He restores us when we return to Him. To grow spiritually, our commitment must be reviewed and renewed often. There will always be adversaries who oppose God's work. The life of faith is never easy. When we face opposition, we must not falter or withdraw, but keep active and patient. We must not waver in our commitment to hear and obey His Word. Faith led the Israelites to complete the temple and to remove sin from their society. We must have that same kind of faith. It is not enough to say we believe: we must make the changes God requires.*