

# Ezra

## outlines

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*Intro: Tonight we come to the 15th book of the bible called Ezra*

*A few things about the book:*

### **A. This book continues the history of Israel**

1. *Think about what we've covered so far:*
2. *We have the first 5 books of the bible - **Gen,Exo,Lev,Num,Duet** - The Law or the Pentateuch*
3. ***Joshua, Judges, and Ruth** - deals with the years when Israel was governed by God. And that section is referred to as the 'Theocracy' - God governing the people.*
4. ***Sam,Kings,Chron** - The Monarchy*
5. *These next 3 books are often referred to as the post exilic books - **Ezra - Nehemiah - Esther** - What happened after they came back from exile*

**B. Who wrote it?** - *Ezra is most widely regarded as the author of most of the book with the help some other skilled hands - it's actually believed that Ezra penned most The chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah*

### **C. The Main Roles in this book are taken by:**

1. *God*
2. *Zerubbable - He would become the Governor*
3. *Jeshua - He would be the priest*
4. *Ezra - The Book covers about 80 years - but Ezra's part covers about 1 year*

**D. The Main theme - of the Book is restoration**

*At the close of 2nd chronicles we see the kingdom of Judah get carried away to Babylon for 70 years - Though we don't know all that happened we get a little glimpse in the books of daniel, Ezekiel and Esther*

I. *And there is One psalm in particular where we get a sense of the brokenness and sorrow of the time...*

A. *Psalm 137:1–9 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. <sup>2</sup> On the willows there we hung up our lyres. <sup>3</sup> For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"*

B. *In other words this was a time of humiliation for God's people*

C. *<sup>4</sup> How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? <sup>5</sup> If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! <sup>6</sup> Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy! <sup>7</sup> Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, "Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!" <sup>8</sup> O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! <sup>9</sup> Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!*

D. *That is bitterness of soul and sorrow that no one understands...their sinful behavior has lead them to be captured...and now they have no song*

E. *But everything would change...with man by the name of Cyrus the great coming into Power...*

**EZRA 1 - The return home**

*Ezra 1:1–4 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, (Understand Jeremiah died a year before Judah went into captivity) the Lord stirred up the spirit of*

*Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: <sup>2</sup> “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. <sup>3</sup> Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.*

*So here’s this Pagan King who makes a decree among all of Israel and says your free to return home Jerusalem and return to the house of the Lord*

*<sup>4</sup> And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.*

*And then he goes on to say, for those of you who chose to not go you can help finance the restoration*

- A. **Here’s the picture:** *Cyrus is the king pos the most powerful people in the world at this time and he’s just giving an edict to the Jews to return Home...and this was given in 536 B.C*
- B. *This Proclamation is important for us in understanding a few things about God today:*
  - 1. **It shows us the certainty of God’s word** - *On two different occasion Jeremiah spoke of the Jerusalem release from captivity and even it’s duration (25:8-13, 29:10-14)*
    - a) *Now many of you might know God’s promise to His people in Jeremiah 29:11 - For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*
    - b) *God is saying “you have failed me, but i have a future for you”*

- c) *Isaiah made this promise It was made 100 plus years before Cyrus existed...when Isaiah wrote this promise Assyria was the nation in power and they would fall to Babylon and then Persia would conquer them who was ruled by King Cyrus...but before any of that every happened Isaiah would write this - **Isaiah 44:28 (ESV) <sup>28</sup> who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'** -The jewish historian Josephus that Cyrus was actually shown this promise writing in Isaiah and this is what turned Cyrus' heart*
- d) **Here's the point:** *This reminds us that God's word is sure, stedfast and trustable... You can trust him with your life*

*Ezra 1:5–6 (ESV) <sup>5</sup> Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered.*

*So some stayed, but God raised up about 50000 to go and reclaim their home and most of all restore the house of God, this wasn't just a geographical change...this was a spiritual restoration...but understand this would be incredibly difficult*

- A. *The journey itself was long, dangerous, and expensive.*
- B. *They returned to a city in ruins with no proper homes, roads, or city institutions.*
- C. *They didn't have all the material resources they needed.*
- D. *They didn't all return to Jerusalem but spread out over the province of Judea.*

E. *They had many enemies.*

F. *Their land was actually the possession of another empire*

1. **App** - *This makes me think about the how difficult and painful restoration can be. God calls us out of Babylon, but it's not without cost...there will be pain, suffering, sacrifice...but but what you get, will always be better then what you give up...you just have to stick around long enough to see it*

**EZRA 2** - *Is a list of names of people who went with Zerubbable...*

*Ezra 2:1–2 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town. <sup>2</sup> They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah...*

*This is where the book introduces us to Zerubbable...who would act as the governor of Jerusalem...which was fitting because he was a distant descendent of Jaoachin who was Judah's final King before the exile and also Jeshua would serve as the priest for the house of God once rebuilt*

*Just for clarity - Zerubbabel is the Political leader...and Jeshua is the Spiritual leader*

**EZRA 3** - *Speaks of the work*

*Ezra 3:1–2 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, **and they built the altar of the God of Israel**, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.*

*Notice their back in their towns, their ready to start rebuilding the house of God...and notice where they start, not with the walls, but with the alter of God*

A. *This made sense in a couple of ways:*

1. ***It made sense spiritually*** - *They understand that before all of the earthly things needed to get done, there had to be a way for sin to be felt with and offerings to be offered - in other words - before they could deal with the practical they had to first deal with the spiritual*
  - a) *Thats the same in our lives too - so often we'll search high and low for practical reasons things are the way they are...and there might be some things you can do...but understand the source of issues in life are always spiritual first*

B. ***But it did also make sense practically*** - *It was a daunting task rebuilding a temple...where do you start? with the the small things.*

**EZRA 4** - *Speaks about the opposition to God's work*

*Ezra 4:4 (ESV) <sup>4</sup> Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build*

*Whenever there is a work of God, you can expect opposition...and the mission of the opposition is always to "discourage"*

1. ***Their adversities would try and lead them into compromise*** - *The samaritans who were close to Jerusalem they wanted to form a partnership with the Jews saying (We God as you do) which wasn't true...they worshiped many Gods*
2. *That didn't work so they wrote a letter of accusation to King Artaxerxes which stopped the work for 15 years*

3. **Important:** what was true in this work of God is still true today, not only did Jesus come for us...but He sent us to bring others into the kingdom of the Son...And Satan is still trying to oppose us today

So no doubt Zerubbabel and Joshua would have been discouraged...so how is it combatted?

## **EZRA 5 - The Arrival of the Prophets**

*Ezra 5:1–3 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> Now the prophets, **Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them.** <sup>2</sup> Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.*

So what happened? God sent 2 prophets to these men who spoke God's word and it galvanizes the entire project and they get back to work

- A. If you write in your bible, write the names of these prophets write here...so you know the context of their books
- B. **Now, Zachariah would have a message for Joshua the priest and Zerubbable and Haggai would have a word for the people**
- C. Let's look at them really quickly:
  1. **Message to Joshua the priest - Zechariah 3:1–5 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord (Anytime you read about the angel of the Lord you can just picture Jesus himself) and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. <sup>2</sup> And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! (Anytime you read this you can almost read it as "shut up Satan)The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" <sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. <sup>4</sup> And the**

*angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." <sup>5</sup> And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord was standing by.*

a) **His message to Joshua**, No accusation shall stand against you, because the angel of the Lord stands with you and he tells the accuser to shut up

b) This may be the message you need to hear tonight

2. **Message to Zerubbable** - Zac 4:1-5 Zechariah 4:1–5 (ESV) <sup>1</sup>

*And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. <sup>2</sup> And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. <sup>3</sup> And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." (So the picture that the angel is describing is a menorah that is tapped in to the oil source of 2 olive trees) <sup>4</sup> And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" <sup>5</sup> Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord."*

a) **His message to Zerubbable** - To accomplish My plans, It's not by your might, it's not by your Power, It' by My spirit says the Lord of hosts

3. **Haggai's Message to the People** - Haggai 1: 2 Thus says the LORD of Hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD. 3 Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet. 4 Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins? 5 Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of Hosts, consider your ways."

- a) **Here's the message** - The people were saying, "Well, now's just not the right time to rebuild the temple. We're busy building our own houses. There's all this opposition. It's against the law to do any building now anyway. This is just not a good time." And God's response is – "Really? It's not a good time to work on my house, but it's a great time to work on your house?" God simply says to that, "Consider your ways. Sit down and consider your ways in light of eternity." And that's the message. Are you involved in the things of eternity, or are you only involved in your own temporal comforts.
4. **Here's the picture:** The word of God was preached, the people were encouraged and convicted...
5. All that happened in v.1-2 of chapter 5

*EZRA 6 - God moves upon the new king Darius who finds King Cyrus' first decree And essentially says "leave them alone and provide them with whatever resources are needed all of it took about 17 years*

- A. *The house of God is built - Now in chapter 3 as the foundation of the temple was finished some cheered but some who remembered the beauty and grander of the old temple begin to wept and mourn over it. because they knew that this temple was going to pale in comparison - but little did they know that this temple humble in brick and mortar would be far more glorious then the last...Haggai would prophecy that...*
- B. *How? 500 years later those temple courts would the walking place of Jesus the messiah*
- C. *Here's the point: when it comes to value, contents always trumps appearance...now think about the fact that Paul calls you "Temple of God the holy spirit" (1 Cor 19:6) WHAT DOES THAT SAY ABOUT YOUR VALUE*

**EZRA 7 - A couple things of significance here:**

- A. *There is a 57 year gap between the end of chapter 6 and the beginning of Chapter 7...and this is where the story of Esther Plays our...so Now you have the time stamp for Haggai/Zach/Esther*
  
- B. *This is also the where we're introduced to Ezra himself - **He was a scrub skilled in the law of Moses (v.6)** and **His heart was to study God's word (v.10)** This chapter speaks about Ezra coming from Babylon, and taking the 900 mile trip with like 1200 people, so that they might be a part of the restoration project*
  - 1. *Ezra and Zerubbable were like missionaries....willing to go to a far place, dealing with desolate conditions, with a heart to bring about God's restoration...*
  
  - 2. *Perhaps God has called some of you to do this?*
  
  - 3. *We also see Him in the next book teaching the scriptures*

**EZRA 8** - *We see God provide support for Ezra's endeavor*

**EZRA 9 and 10** *Ezra addresses and deals with the problems existing in Jerusalem...and brings about a spiritual awakening of sorts...now there still a long way to go in Jerusalem's restoration...but their heading in the right direction*

*And so there we close the basic outline of the book. And we're going to close tonight by emphasizing some more things why Ezra's so important, why we should spend time reading, studying and applying this great book of the Bible.*

## **Conclusion**

**One** – *As we said, Ezra continues the story where Kings and Chronicles left off. We need to finish the story.*

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**Two** - *It speaks to us about restoration - It's difficult, but it's possible..and it's worth it*

**Third** - *Ezra gives the context for the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Esther. We need to be familiar with the Book of Ezra if we want to understand those three prophetic ministries.*

**Forth** - *and we've already alluded to this - Ezra is a book about fulfilled prophecy. The whole book is a fulfillment of prophecy, incredibly detailed, specific prophecy. A guy's talked about by name over 150 years before he's alive. The same guy ends the captivity of the Jews in fulfillment of another detailed prophecy that they would be in captivity for 70 years.*

**Fifth** - *perhaps most importantly, the Book of Ezra informs us, it instructs us how to counteract the opposition of the enemy. The promises of God's word...that tell us Jesus has made us righteous and by his power we can accomplish anything*