

Old Testament Survey

Ezra

Author: Ezra (Talmud tradition & first person narrative in 7:28-9:15) (Rebuilding Temple)

Date: 458+ B.C. Covers the period from Cyrus' decree in 538 B.C. to Ezra's return in 458 B.C.

Theme: "The reconstruction of the Theocracy on spiritual foundations"

Outline:

- I. First return under Zerubbabel & Re-establishment of Temple worship. (1-6)
- II. Second return under Ezra & Re-establishment of life under the law. (7-10)

Key People: Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Artaxerxes, Darius, Ezra

Key Chapters & Verses (Bold is required for Elders)

- 1** - Cyrus' decree (538) allowing Jews to return to Jerusalem (536) & rebuild Temple.
- 3** - Sacrifices resumed & foundations of Temple laid
- 4:3** - Zerubbabel & Jeshua exclude the Samaritans from helping to rebuild the temple
- 7-9** - Return under Ezra (458), including his prayer
- 10:9-15** - Foreign wives put away according to the judgment of Elders & Judges of each city.

Ezra & Nehemiah were bound together in the Hebrew and considered as a continuation of the history of Chronicles. The Septuagint titled Ezra-Nehemiah as *Esdras Deuteron* (Second Esdras) because of the apocryphal Book of Esdras. The Latin Bible entitled it as *Liber Primus Esdrae*, First Book of Ezra, and Nehemiah as the Second Book of Ezra.

The Book of Ezra begins where the book of 2 Chronicles concludes with the decree of Cyrus, King of Persia, in 538 B.C. to send Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. The first six chapters cover the events from this decree until the completion of the Temple and the celebration of Passover by those who made the first return under Zerubbabel. Chapters 7-10 record the events that occurred with the return under Ezra in 458 B.C. and the restoration of the spiritual health of the people. These are in fulfillment of God's promise in Jeremiah 29:14 to bring them back from exile. In between the two returns is a sixty year period in which the events recorded in the book of Esther occur.

The prophets Zechariah and Haggai are active during the time of Zerubbabel in encouraging him and the people to complete the work of rebuilding the temple that God had set before them. Zechariah's prophecies include the reasons for the exile, God's favor in bringing them back and visions of what would occur in the future in Messiah's two advents.

Detailed Outline of Ezra

- I. The First return under Zerubbabel (1-2)
 - A. Decree of Cyrus (1:1-4)
 - B. Gifts from Israel & Cyrus (1:5-11)
 - C. Census of Returning People (2:1-63)
 - 1. People of Known Descent (2:1-58)
 - 2. People of Unknown Descent (2:59-63)
 - D. The Return Completed (2:64-70)
 - 1. The People Who Returned (2:64-67)
 - 2. The Gifts the People Gave (2:68-70)
- II. The Reconstruction of the Temple (3-6)
 - A The Temple's Foundation
 - 1. Spiritual Preparation (3:1-6)
 - 2. Physical Preparation (3:7-13)
 - B. Interruption of the Construction (4)
 - 1. Present Opposition under Darius (4:1-5)
 - 2. Later Opposition under Ahasuerus (4:6)
 - 3. Later Opposition under Aratxerxes (4:7-23)
 - 4. Present Interruption under Darius (4:24)
 - C. Completion of the Temple (5-6)
 - 1. Resumption of Construction (5:1,2)
 - 2. Opposition to Construction (5:3-17)
 - a. Opposition by Tattenai (5:3-5)
 - b. The Letter to Darius (5:6-17)
 - 3. Confirmation of Cyrus' Decree (6:1-12)

4. Completion of the Temple (6:13-15)

5. Dedication of the Temple (6:16-18)

D. Celebration of the Passover (6:19-22)

III. The Second Return under Ezra (7-8)

A. The Decree of Artaxerxes (7:1-28)

1. Ezra's Qualifications (7:1-10)

2. Artaxerxes Letter (7:11-26)

3. Ezra's Response (7:27-28)

B. Census of those Returning (8:1-14)

C. Spiritual Preparation (8:15-23)

1. Preparing the Levites (8:15-20)

2. Preparing the People (8:21-23)

D. The Return is Completed (8:24-36)

IV. Re-establishment of life under the law (9-10)

A. The Problem of Mixed Marriages (9:1,2)

B. Ezra's Intercession (9:3-15)

C. Reformation of Israel (10)

1. Mourning Over Sin (10:1,2)

2. Covenant of Righteousness (10:3-5)

3. Solution for Intermarriage (10:6-44)

a. Separation Proposed (10:6-17)

b. Separation of Priests (10:18-22)

c. Separation of Levites (10:23-24)

d. Separation of People (10:25-44)

Chronology of the Persian Period

Persian King	Dates B.C.	Biblical Correlation	Greek Correlation
CYRUS	539-530	Return of Zerubbabel & Jeshua (Ezra 1-3)	
CAMBYSES	530-522	Rebuilding at Jerusalem Stopped (Ezra 4)	
DARIUS I	522-486	Haggai & Zechariah Prophecy (520). Temple completed (516) (Ezra 5 & 6)	Greeks defeat Persians at Marathon (490)
XERXES (AHASUERUS)	486-464	Story of Esther	Greeks defeat Persians at Thermopolaie (480) and Salamis (479) Herodotus (485-425)
ARTAXERXES I	464-423	Return of Ezra (458) (Ezra 7-10) Return of Nehemiah (445) Nehemiah 1,2. Prophecy of Malachi (433)	Golden Age (461-431) Pericles (460-429) Athens rules.
DARIUS II	423-404	No Biblical Material During These Years. No prophet again until John the Baptist	Peloponnesian Wars 431-404 Athens falls 404 Sparta Rules
ARTAXERXES II	404-359		Socrates 470-399 Plato 428-348 Aristotle 384-322
Artaxerxes III	359-338		Phillip II of Macedon defeats Greeks at Chaeronea 338
ARSES	338-335		
DARIUS III	335-331		Alexander the Great overthrows Persian Empire
ALEXANDER	336-323		Establishment of Greek Empire

Returns from Exile

RETURN	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
Reference	Ezra 1-6	Ezra 7-10	Nehemiah 1-13
Date	538 B.C.	458 B.C.	444 B.C.
Leaders	Sheshbazzar	Ezra	Nehemiah
Persian King	Cyrus	Artaxerxes (Longimanus)	Artaxerxes (Longimanus)
Elements of the Decree	As man as wished could return. Temple could be rebuilt, partially financed by royal treasury. Vessels returned	As many as wished could return. Finances provided by royal treasury. Allowed to have own civil magistrates	Allowed to rebuild the wall
Number Returning	42,360 <u>7,337</u> (Servants) 49,697	1,500 men 38 Levis <u>220</u> helpers 1,758	unknown
Events. Accomplishments Problems	Temple begun: sacrifices made & Feast of Tabernacles celebrated. Samaritans caused work to cease until 520. Temple completed in 516	Problems with inter-marriage dealt with.	Wall rebuilt in 52 days though opposed by Sanballat, Tobiah & Geshem. Walls dedicated and Law read