

THE BOOK OF EZRA

OT/NT: Old Testament SECTION: History (10 of 12) TRADITIONAL AUTHOR: Ezra

KEY PEOPLE: Artaxerxes I, Cyrus, Darius I, Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, Zerubbabel.

SUMMARY: Canonically, the Book of Ezra is the fifteenth book of the [Holy Bible](#) (1), the fifteenth book of the [Old Testament](#) (2), and the tenth of the twelve [historical books](#) (3). Ezra's purpose was to accurately record the events of the return from the Babylonian exile, after a seventy-year period, and the events that surround the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. God is faithful in fulfilling His promises and so the Israelites return to Jerusalem from their exile in Babylon.

[\(ch 1\)](#) In accordance with the prophecy of Jeremiah and inspired by the Lord, Emperor Cyrus of Persia commands and helps Judah to return to and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. In his proclamation, Cyrus stresses that he has been given all the kingdoms of the earth by God. Temple items previously pilfered by Nebuchadnezzar are also returned. [\(ch 2\)](#) Israel returns from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem and Judah. The 42,360 returnees are listed along with their 7,537 slaves and singers and 8,136 animals. Freewill offerings are made to help rebuild the Temple.

[\(ch 3\)](#) On the seventh month (which sees the celebration of Atonement, Trumpets and Tabernacles), the Jerusalem Temple altar is rebuilt on its ancient foundation. Sacrifices and festivals begin again. Temple rebuilding begins, accompanied by joyous singing and praising of the Lord. Some weep, others rejoice.

[\(ch 4\)](#) The enemies of Judah offer to help rebuild the Temple, but Zerubbabel, Joshua & others refuse their assistance. Resistance to the rebuilding project continues from Cyrus to the reign of Darius. The Samaritan adversaries of Judah, under Ahasuerus, write an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem. In the reign of Artaxerxes, the Samaritans write a letter saying that if Jerusalem is rebuilt, Persian control of it will cease. Artaxerxes forces the rebuilding project to cease – which it does until the second year of the reign of Darius.

[\(ch 5\)](#) Haggai and Zechariah exhort the people to start rebuilding the Temple. They do. Tattenai, the governor of the river, writes to king Darius, saying rebuilding has started on the joint authority of the Lord and of Cyrus. [\(ch 6\)](#) Emperor Darius searches royal records, find Cyrus' decree, and orders the rebuilding of Temple to continue. The Temple is completed and dedicated. Passover is kept. [\(ch 7\)](#) Ezra (a skilled scribe, an Aaronic priest and descendant of Zadok) gains Artaxerxes' favor, and returns from Babylon to Jerusalem. Artaxerxes commands Ezra to offer all the gold and silver found in Babylon for the Temple. Ezra is also given the power to impose taxes, and enforce the Mosaic law. Ezra gives thanks.

[\(ch 8\)](#) Ezra (writing in the first person) provides a list of all those who accompanied him to Jerusalem. Ezra does not ask for a Persian escort, trusting in the Lord to protect them. Gifts to the Temple are made. [\(ch 9\)](#) Some Israelites marry foreigners. Writing in the first person, Ezra grieves, prays to God in front of people, confesses sins, humbles himself, and intercedes for his people.

[\(ch 10\)](#) A meeting is held about Israelites marrying foreign women. Shechaniah proposes a covenant to put away foreign wives. Over a period of 3 months, each case of intermarriage is investigated. A period of mourning ensues and sins are confessed. The "guilty" parties are listed and they agree to "put away" [\(10:19\)](#) their wives.

COMING UP: Next up is the Book of Nehemiah. Click [HERE](#) (4) to explore!

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/the-good-news>
- (2) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/old-testament>
- (3) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/historical-books>
- (4) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/nehemiah>

PAGE SOURCES:

- (a) Bible Hub ([link](#))
- (b) Bible Summary By Chapter Blog ([link](#))

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