

EZRA

Introduction

Historical background of the book

Relationship to Chronicles and Nehemiah

Personal background of the man

Ezra is introduced to the story in chapter 7

His lineage (Ezra 7:5b-6a)

His reputation (Ezra 7:6b, 10, 11, 12, 21, 25)

1. An Overview of Ezra

A) The decree of Cyrus to the Israelites in exile - 42,360 return to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:64)

B) They need to build an altar to offer sacrifices to God and worship Him

C) Rebuilding the temple so that God could dwell with them again

> Their dedication when the foundations are rebuilt (Ezra 3:10-13)

D) Opposition to the exiles

> The prophets of God begin to challenge the people to resume building the Lord's house (Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 1:1-4)

E) The decree of Darius (Ezra 6:7-12)

F) The temple is finished and dedicated (Ezra 6:13-22)

G) Ezra enters the story during the reign of King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11ff.)

H) Israel's sinful behavior (Ezra 9-10)

2. Highlights in the book of Ezra

A) Ezra continues the story of God's Sovereign Grace

> Over the kings and kingdoms of this earth

Ezra 1:1ff. – the edict of Cyrus

Ezra 5 – the letter to Darius and his decree in Ezra 6

Ezra 7 – the letter of Artaxerxes

> Over redemptive history

God's promise to Adam and Eve is still alive

God's covenantal faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David is still alive

B) Ezra reminds us of the Centrality of God's presence to Israel's identity

> The exiles first act when returning to Jerusalem is to build an altar and then a temple

> The unique mark of God's presence – His hand was upon them (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31)

C) Ezra reminds us that the people of God have an enemy

> Those who wanted to help reconstruct the altar and temple (Ezra 4:1-3)

The danger of worldly alliances and influence (2 Kings 17:24-41)

> The threats and decrees of earthly kings (Ezra 4:23-24)

> Those who intermarried with the peoples of the land (Ezra 9:1-2)

Forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 7:1-4)

D) Ezra demonstrates a commitment to God's Reputation in the world

> His faith is tested by his fears (Ezra 8:21-23)

E) Ezra and his people reveal a repentant heart

> Israel had seen the decimation of Jerusalem and the temple, been exiled for 70 years under a foreign king

> Ezra's response when he hears of his people's sin (Ezra 9:3-4)

The Israelites have learned the fear of the Lord

God's discipline – exile, had cured them of stubborn rebellion

> This mass movement of divorce is certainly not meant to serve as a norm

In fact, Paul has something to say about a believer married to an unbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:13-16)