

EZRA

THE HISTORY

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EZRA - The HISTORY

Chapter One

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Ezra 1** and mark every reference to the LORD by marking it with a red triangle. If it is referring to the Lord speaking, i.e. the word of the LORD, still mark LORD with a red triangle but add the following: highlight the phrase in yellow and then circle all that you have highlighted in red.

Read through **Ezra 1** and mark every reference to anything that gives God His Glory, i.e. what Cyrus says about the Lord in **Ezra 1:2**, the house of the LORD, etc. with a yellow box filled in with light purple. Whenever you see the house of the LORD, put a purple house over that as well. (Just a roof and walls is all that is necessary to make it look like a structure.)

Read through **Ezra 1** and mark every reference, including pronouns, to Judah, i.e. His (God's) people living in exile, survivor, etc. with a blue Star of David.

Read through **Ezra 1** and mark every reference to Jerusalem (Zion) or Judah with a blue capital "Z", along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 1** and mark the phrases build and rebuild, along with all synonyms with a light purple circle.

Read through **Ezra 1** and mark all references to encouraging God's people, strengthening their hands, stirring their spirits, etc. with a pink plus sign. *(In later chapters you will also see references to discouraging the people, weakening their hands, etc. In those cases, you will mark the phrases and their synonyms with an orange minus sign.)*

Read through **Ezra 1** and mark every reference to Cyrus king of Persia, along with all pronouns and synonyms, with an orange crown.

Read through **Ezra 1** and mark any official documents or letters which are recorded by drawing a box around the entire letter with a pencil. (Hint: There is one in **Ezra 1**.)

Read through **Ezra 1** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets, i.e. Persian, Babylon, house of his gods (Nebuchadnezzar), etc.

Read through **Ezra 1** and mark every reference to time with a blue box. (References may be varied, i.e. the first year of Cyrus king of Persia or the word then.)

Read through **Ezra 1** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. Cyrus proclaims return to Jerusalem and Judah to build God's house
2. Response and support of those going back to Judah to build God's house
3. Articles of the house of the LORD brought to Jerusalem

READ AND ANSWER

Ezra 1:1-4

When does the book of Ezra begin?

Who is the first person mentioned?



Point of Connection

Who is Cyrus king of Persia?

Isaiah 44:28-45:7

It is I who says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire."

And he declares of Jerusalem, "She will be built,"

And of the temple, "Your foundation will be laid."

Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, whom I have taken by the right hand,

To subdue nations before him

And to loose the loins of kings;

To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:

"I will go before you and make the rough places smooth;

I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars.

I will give you the treasures of darkness

And hidden wealth of secret places,

So that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel,

Who calls you by your name.

For the sake of Jacob My servant,

And Israel My chosen one,

I have also called you by your name;

***I have given you a title of honor though you have not known Me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other;
Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me;
That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
That there is no one besides Me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other,
The One forming light and creating darkness,
Causing well-being and creating calamity;
I am the LORD who does all these.”***

2 Chronicles 36:15-23

***The LORD, the God of their fathers,
sent word to them again and again by His messengers,
because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place;
but they continually mocked the messengers of God,
despised His words and scoffed at His prophets,
until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy.
Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans
who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary,
and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm;
He gave them all into his hand.
All the articles of the house of God, great and small,
and the treasures of the house of the LORD,
and the treasures of the king and of his officers,
he brought them all to Babylon.
Then they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem,
and burned all its fortified buildings with fire
and destroyed all its valuable articles.
Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon;
and they were servants to him and to his sons
until the rule of the kingdom of Persia,
to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah,
until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths.
All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.
Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia—
in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah—
the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia,
so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom,
and also put it in writing, saying,
“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia,
‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth,
and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.
Whoever there is among you of all His people,
may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!’”***

What did the LORD do in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia?

What did the LORD stir up the spirit of Cyrus to do?

What did Cyrus king of Persia do?

1.

2.

Why did Cyrus send a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing? (Who caused him to do it?)

Why did the Lord stir up the spirit of Cyrus in his first year as king of Persia? (Get your answer from the text.)

Was it to fulfill Jeremiah's word? Or was it to fulfill the word of the LORD?

How did the word of the LORD reach His people?

Where were God's people when the word of the LORD reached them through the mouth of Jeremiah?



When Jeremiah first spoke the word that came to him from the LORD,
God's people were still in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 25:1-13

***The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah,
in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah,
(that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon),
which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah
and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,
“From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah,***

**even to this day, these twenty-three years the word of the LORD has come to me,
 and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.
 And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets again and again,
 but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear, saying,
 ‘Turn now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds,
 and dwell on the land which the LORD has given to you and your forefathers
 forever and ever;
 and do not go after other gods to serve them and to worship them,
 and do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands,
 and I will do you no harm.
 Yet you have not listened to Me,’ declares the LORD,
 in order that you might provoke Me to anger
 with the work of your hands to your own harm.’
 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts,
 ‘Because you have not obeyed My words,
 behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,’ declares the LORD,
 ‘and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant,
 and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants
 and against all these nations round about;
 and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing,
 and an everlasting desolation.
 Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness,
 the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,
 the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.
 This whole land will be a desolation and a horror,
 and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.
 Then it will be when seventy years are completed
 I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the LORD,
 for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans;
 and I will make it an everlasting desolation.
 I will bring upon that land all My words which I have pronounced against it,
 all that is written in this book
 which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations.’”**

Although Jeremiah stayed in Jerusalem when Judah and Jerusalem were taken captive,
 God assured that his scrolls made their way to Babylon.
 Daniel, who had been taken to Babylon during the first of three sieges against
 Jerusalem, read Jeremiah’s scrolls while there and found God’s promise—
 the Word of the LORD through the mouth of Jeremiah.

Daniel 9:1-2

**In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent,
 who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—
 in the first year of his reign,
 I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years
 which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet**

for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

Jeremiah 29:4–20

**Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,
to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,
“Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce.**

**Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters,
and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands
that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease.**

**Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile,
and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.”**

**For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,
“Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you,
and do not listen to the dreams which they dream.**

**For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,”
declares the LORD.**

**For thus says the LORD, “When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I
will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.”**

**“For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the LORD,
“plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.
Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.
You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”**

**“I will be found by you,” declares the LORD,
“and I will restore your fortunes**

**and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places
where I have driven you,” declares the LORD,**

“and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.

**Because you have said, ‘The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon’ —
for thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David,**

**and concerning all the people who dwell in this city,
your brothers who did not go with you into exile—thus says the LORD of hosts,**

**“Behold, I am sending upon them the sword, famine and pestilence,
and I will make them like split-open figs that cannot be eaten due to rottenness.**

**I will pursue them with the sword, with famine and with pestilence;
and I will make them a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth,**

**to be a curse and a horror and a hissing,
and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them,**

**because they have not listened to My words,” declares the LORD,
“which I sent to them again and again by My servants the prophets;**

**but you did not listen,” declares the LORD.
“You, therefore, hear the word of the LORD,**

all you exiles, whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon.”

Where were God's people when the word of the LORD reached them through Cyrus king of Persia?

By the way, Cyrus delivered the message in Hebrew. What benefit would that be for the exiles of Jerusalem?

Write out the message Cyrus king of Persia sent to God's people in all his kingdom. (I know it will take a moment, but it is a good observation technique to learn. Note all you can from it while you are writing it out.)

Which nations did Cyrus rule over beside Persia?

How did Cyrus the king of Persia come to be the ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth?

What job was Cyrus appointed to do?

Who gave him that job?

Where was God's house located?

In what region is Jerusalem located?

Who was allowed (of all the exiles taken captive from Jerusalem and Judah so many years before) to return?

What blessing did Cyrus place upon those who chose to go up to Jerusalem?

Look at a map and note where Babylon is and where Jerusalem is. Describe their location from each other below.



Why does Cyrus say to go *up* to Jerusalem, rather than to go over, or to go west?

Ezekiel 20:40

***“For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel,”
declares the Lord God, “there the whole house of Israel, all of them,
will serve Me in the land;
there I will accept them
and there I will seek your contributions
and the choicest of your gifts,
with all your holy things.”***

Not only is Jerusalem on the high mountain of Israel,
it is surrounded by mountains, as well.

Psalms 125:2

***As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.***

Is Cyrus going to build the house of the LORD himself? Who will build it?

Who, or what, does Cyrus call the LORD?

1.

2.

What does it mean to be the God *of* Israel?

What does it mean to be the God Who is *in* Jerusalem?

What does Cyrus call the individuals from Jerusalem?

Why does he call them survivors?

What does Cyrus mean when he says, “at whatever place he may live”?



Point of Depth

The Hebrew word for live is *gur*
and means to dwell as an alien, sojourn, live as aliens, or dwell as strangers.

Beautiful, isn't it?

God's people were never meant to live permanently in Babylon—
only 70 years,
and even Cyrus king of Persia knew it!

What were the neighbors of those who were going to return to Judah supposed to do?

What kind of support were they to give?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Was the freewill offering, or any of the support, for the families making the trip back to Judah?

Ultimately, what was it for?

What was different about the freewill offering? (Hint: Cyrus ordered them to give the silver, gold, goods, and cattle.)

Where is the house of God?



Point of Depth

I wish some of the world's—
political leaders,
archeologists,
historians,
lawyers,
and journalists
would note the historical documentation of Who actually owns—
the heavens (**verse 2**),
the earth and all its nations (**verse 2**),
all authority (**verse 2**),
Judah (**verses 2-3**),
Jerusalem (**verses 1-3**),
the house of God (**verses 2-4**),
and the people of Israel (**verse 3**).

Ezra 1:5-6

Who responded to Cyrus' proclamation to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD in Jerusalem?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What did all these people have in common? (Take your answer from this verse.)

Did they have the same thing in common with Cyrus king of Persia? (**verse 1**)

Who is in control of everything—even what we want to do?

Who responded to Cyrus' proclamation to support those who were going to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD in Jerusalem?

How did they encourage the ones whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD?

What kinds of encouragement?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.



The word support in **verse 4** is the Hebrew word *nasa* and means to lift, carry, or take.

The word encourage in **verse 6** comes from the Hebrew word *chazaq* and means to strengthen someone's hands.

Cyrus' order to take supplies of every sort to the Jews who would be returning to Judah was practical in nature, but it had an effect that God had planned—it strengthened the hands of the Jews who would be traveling—it gave them a resolve they would need just as much as the supplies themselves.

Watch throughout **Ezra** to see the things that strengthened the hands of the exiles and the things that weakened their hands...

Ezra 1:7-11

Were the Jews the only ones who sent things with the travelers to Judah?

What did King Cyrus bring out to send?

Why were the articles of the house of the LORD in Babylon?

Where had Nebuchadnezzar stored the articles of the house of the LORD when he carried them away from Jerusalem?

Who brought them out of storage for Cyrus?

To whom were they given?

Whose responsibility did they become?

What was Sheshbazzar's duty regarding them?

Who was Sheshbazzar according to the text?



You might not know who Sheshbazzar is other than the prince of Judah (**verse 8**).
He has another name which might be more familiar to you.

Read through the cross-references below and see if you can determine who he is.
When you see a fact about him that reveals who he is, circle it.
When you have all your facts circled
tie them all together with a line from one to the other.

The first set of cross-references comes from the book of **Ezra**.

Ezra 1:8
*and Cyrus, king of Persia,
had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer,
and he counted them out to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.*

Ezra 1:11
*All the articles of gold and silver numbered 5,400.
Sheshbazzar brought them all up with the exiles
who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem.*

Ezra 2:2
*These came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai,
Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah.
The number of the men of the people of Israel:*

Ezra 3:2
*Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests,
and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brothers arose
and 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.*

Ezra 3:8
Now in the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem
in the second month,
Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel
and Jeshua the son of Jozadak
and the rest of their brothers the priests and the Levites,
and all who came from the captivity to Jerusalem,
began the work and appointed the Levites from twenty years and older
to oversee the work of the house of the LORD.

Ezra 4:2-3
they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households,
and said to them,
“Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God;
and we have been sacrificing to Him
since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here.”
But Zerubbabel and Jeshua
and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them,
“You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God;
but we ourselves will together build to the LORD God of Israel,
as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us.”

Ezra 5:2
then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak
arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem;
and the prophets of God were with them supporting them.

Ezra 5:14
Also the gold and silver utensils of the house of God
which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem,
and brought them to the temple of Babylon,
these King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon
and they were given to one whose name was Sheshbazzar,
whom he had appointed governor.

Ezra 5:16
Then that Sheshbazzar came
and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem;
and from then until now it has been under construction
and it is not yet completed.

I am assuming you have read through the book of **Ezra** many times by now
(just while looking for key words).
If you still don't know who Sheshbazzar is,
read these additional cross-references which should nail it for. They come mostly from
the books of **Nehemiah** (which was considered one book with **Ezra** at one time),

Haggai and Zechariah,
(which were books written by prophets who were contemporaries of **Ezra**),
and **Matthew** which gives us Jesus' genealogy and includes Sheshbazzar.

Nehemiah 7:7
*who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani,
Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.
The number of men of the people of Israel:*

Nehemiah 12:1
*Now these are the priests and the Levites
who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel,
and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,*

Nehemiah 12:47
*So all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah
gave the portions due the singers and the gatekeepers as each day required,
and set apart the consecrated portion for the Levites,
and the Levites set apart the consecrated portion for the sons of Aaron.*

Haggai 1:1
*In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month,
the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai
to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,
and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying,*

Haggai 1:12
*Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel,
and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest,
with all the remnant of the people,
obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet,
as the LORD their God had sent him.
And the people showed reverence for the LORD.*

Haggai 1:14
*So the LORD stirred up the spirit
of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,
and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest,
and the spirit of all the remnant of the people;
and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,*

Haggai 2:2
*Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,
and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest,
and to the remnant of the people saying,*

Haggai 2:4

***“But now take courage, Zerubbabel,” declares the LORD,
“take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest,
and all you people of the land take courage,” declares the LORD,
“and work; for I am with you,” declares the LORD of hosts.***

Haggai 2:21

***Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying,
“I am going to shake the heavens and the earth.”***

Haggai 2:23

***“On that day,” declares the LORD of hosts,
“I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,” declares the LORD,
“and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you,”
declares the LORD of hosts.***

Zechariah 4:6

***Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying,
‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.”***

Zechariah 4:7

***What are you, O great mountain?
Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain;
and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!”***

Zechariah 4:9

***The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house,
and his hands will finish it.
Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.***

Zechariah 4:10

***For who has despised the day of small things?
But these seven will be glad
when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—
these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.***

Matthew 1:12

***After the deportation to Babylon:
Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel,
and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.”***

If you haven't figured it out by now, let me give you a couple of hints to help.
First—who is appointed governor (other than the name Sheshbazzar)?

Second—who is the son of Shealtiel (other than the name Sheshbazzar)?

Third—who is the leader (prince) who laid the foundations and built the house of God (other than the name Sheshbazzar)?

What articles of the house of the LORD are recorded as being given to Zerubbabel to take to Jerusalem?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Altogether, how many articles of gold and silver were counted?

What did Sheshbazzar, or Zerubbabel, do with them?

What (or who) else was brought back from Babylon to Jerusalem?

READ AND REASON

Perhaps it is too early to determine the theme and purpose of the book of **Ezra**, but you should be able to see the theme of at least the first chapter. (A theme tells you *what* it is about and the purpose tells you *why* it was written.) What would you say is the theme of the first chapter of **Ezra**? Remember, the theme will tell you *what* the chapter is about and it is always going to be the main and plain thing.

While it is true that Cyrus gives a proclamation to Jews living in his territory to return home to their beloved Jerusalem, is that the theme?

It is also true that the articles of the house of God, taken by Nebuchadnezzar, were sent home, too. But is that the theme?

Look at your key words for this chapter. What are they? Do they help to illumine the theme?

What about the segment divisions in this chapter—are they of any help?

Try to come up with a chapter theme yourself and write it out below. I will help you later in the course to make sure you are on the right track, but for now, use the ideas I have mentioned to help you reason through the chapter. First and foremost, ask God to reveal His wonderful truth in this chapter—He will, if you ask Him, and wait on Him...

Chapter by Chapter

Theme of Ezra Chapter 1

EZRA - The HISTORY

Chapter Two

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Ezra 2** and mark every reference to the LORD or God by marking it with a red triangle.

Read through **Ezra 2** and mark every reference to the house of the LORD, along with all synonyms, with a purple house. (Just a roof and walls is all that is necessary to make it look like a structure.)

Read through **Ezra 2** and mark every reference, including pronouns, to Judah, i.e. His (God's) people in living in exile, people of the province, Israel, ancestral, etc. with a blue Star of David.

Read through **Ezra 2** and mark every reference to Jerusalem (Zion) or Judah with a blue capital "Z", along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 2** and mark the phrases build, rebuild, restore its foundation, along with all synonyms with a light purple circle.

Read through **Ezra 2** and underline every reference to a category of people, i.e. priests, singers, temple servants, etc.

Read through **Ezra 2** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets i.e. Persian, Babylon, house of his gods (Nebuchadnezzar), each to his own city, etc.

Read through **Ezra 2** and mark every reference to time with a blue box. (References may be varied, i.e. the first year of Cyrus king of Persia or the word then.)

Read through **Ezra 2** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. The exiles who returned to Jerusalem and Judah
2. The men of the people
3. The priests

4. The Levites
5. The singers
6. The sons of the gatekeepers
7. The temple servants
8. The sons of Solomon's servants
9. Those whose ancestral registration was not found
10. The whole assembly together
11. Giving
12. Living

READ AND ANSWER

Ezra 2:1-2

The first two verses of **Ezra 2** serve as an introduction to what we are about to read next. What is Ezra about to tell us?

The Hebrew word for people is *benai* and means sons. Why would Ezra refer to the *sons* of the province? (How long have the people been in exile?)

Why, according to the text, did the Israelites go to Judah?

Who took them captive?



Do you know why Judah was taken captive to Babylon?

2 Chronicles 36:15-21

***The LORD, the God of their fathers,
sent word to them again and again by His messengers,
because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place;
but they continually mocked the messengers of God,
despised His words and scoffed at His prophets,
until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people,
until there was no remedy.
Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans
who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary,
and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm;
He gave them all into his hand.***

**All the articles of the house of God, great and small,
and the treasures of the house of the LORD,
and the treasures of the king and of his officers,
he brought them all to Babylon.
Then they burned the house of God
and broke down the wall of Jerusalem,
and burned all its fortified buildings with fire
and destroyed all its valuable articles.
Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon;
and they were servants to him and to his sons
until the rule of the kingdom of Persia,
to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah,
until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths.
All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.”**

**Jeremiah 22:8-9
Many nations will pass by this city;
and they will say to one another,
“Why has the LORD done thus to this great city?”
Then they will answer,
“Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD their God
and bowed down to other gods and served them.”**

Where did the people who came up out of the captivity of the exiles go when they returned to Jerusalem and Judah?

Who led the exiles back to Judah?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.

Could this Nehemiah have been the same Nehemiah who brought the third remnant back from Babylon, as recorded for us in the book of **Nehemiah**?

How can you know? (Zerubbabel's group returned in 536 BC. Nehemiah's group returned to Jerusalem in 445 BC when he was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes I. Consider his age.)

Could this Mordecai have been the same Mordecai who was Esther's cousin, , as recorded for us in the book of **Esther**?

How can you know? (The Feast of Xerxes, King Ahasuerus, which started off the book of **Esther** was 483 BC.)



Point of Depth

God names people.
His names send messages to people.

Here are some examples.
Let's look at some of the names of the leaders
who brought the exiles back from Babylon.

The word **Zerubbabel** is our English transliteration of the Hebrew word *Zervavel* which means simply—born in Babyon—this man was born in Babylon. What a great name for the leader of the exiles returning from Babylon to Jerusalem. His name proclaims a remembrance of the fact that God keeps Covenant—both in the realization that he would not have been born in Babylon had the nation of Israel obeyed their God; (he would have been born in Israel, the land God promised His people), and it proclaims a wonderful reminder of the fact that God keeps Covenant and brought His people home after 70 years of captivity just like He said He would. Zerubbabel's name is both a warning sign for the people against disobedience and an encouragement to trust in their God.

Jeshua is the Hebrew word *Yehoshua* and means the LORD is Salvation! Again, what a perfect name for the priest who was their leader back to Israel. All along the way he could remind them time and time again that it was the LORD Who had saved them from the hands of the Persians (who were in control at the time). And once they were back in Judah they could continue to thank the LORD every time they heard Jeshua's name and were reminded that Yah (Jehovah) was their Deliverer.

Nehemiah's name is *Nechemyah* in Hebrew and means Yah comforts. Yah (Jehovah), their God, had comforted them while they were living in Babylon and would comfort them as they made the arduous journey back to Israel and would continue to comfort them as they faced furious and continual opposition once they reached their land.

Seraiah means Yah persists and is the word *serayah* in Hebrew.

Reelaiah means Thunder of Yah and is the Hebrew word *reelayah*.

Bilshan is transliterated from *bilshan* (I know, it's the same.) and means inquirer.

Mispar is the same in Hebrew, *mispar*, and means book.

Bigvai is the Hebrew word *bigwai* and means happy.

Rehum is the Hebrew word *rechum* and means compassion.

Now, take a concordance, like Strong's, and find the meaning of a few of the names in the rest of the chapter. You just might find something noteworthy!

The last line in **verse 2** says, “*The number of the men of the people of Israel!*” It is a heading and refers to the list that follows it starting from **verse 3**. Which verse is the last in the list?

Ezra 2:3-35

I am going to deal with this segment (a list of the men of the people of Israel who came up out of the captivity from Babylon) differently than I normally would.

Observation Bible Study Guides are not meant to be a complete study of any particular book; rather, they are designed to help you observe the text available to you in the Bible. Although I many times will add a “Point of Depth” or a “Point of Connection” which might include a quick word study or some cross-references in order to help you more fully understand the context of the verses you are observing, they are not exhaustive by any means. Observation of God’s Word is the beginning of any study of the Bible and it continues right up until the end (which is never-ending). Bible study at-large is an even more daunting task than that of thorough observation (which is by no means an easy undertaking).

Most people, when reading (or even studying) a list such as exists in **Ezra 2** will gloss blissfully over its contents as though it were insignificant—that is a huge mistake. There is so very much to be gained from every single word God speaks! By nature, a list will not easily reveal as much information (without the extra labor of study) as a sentence or paragraph. And when you study a book that contains a list such as this you must be willing to do the labor or studying, which consists of way more than healthy observation in order to gain the wealth of information that exists—a thorough study, not just observation, needs to be done. Painstaking word studies, comprehensive cross-referencing, commentaries, dictionaries, maps, and variable lexical aids must be employed.

The purpose of WORD Center’s Observation Bible Study Guides is to take you deeper into the Bible study skill of *observation* and therefore, I will focus on pointing out what is available and obvious in the text itself, it just won’t be verse by verse. So now, let’s get back to the business of observing **Ezra 2!**

As you read through the list of the men of the people of Israel, do you notice anything unusual?

If so, what?

Look at the numbers themselves.

What is the lowest number and to whom does it belong?

What is the highest number and to whom does it belong?

Do you notice any duplicate numbers?

If so, what?

To whom do the duplicate numbers belong?

Is there one Elam or two?

Look at the list generally from **verses 3** through **20**. Are they names of men or places?
(Remember, I said generally.)

Look at the list generally from **verses 21** through **35**. Are they names of men or places?
(Again, I said generally.)

What does this imply?

Just a thought to chew on... Read **verses 59** through **63**. What did the men not have?

What does it seem the men in **verses 3** through **20** must have had?

What might their evidence have been?

What does it seem the men in **verses 21** through **35** must have had?

What might their evidence have been?

If you have a Bible map look up the places named in the second portion of this list of the men of the people of Israel who came back from captivity in Israel. Where do they mostly seem to be located in connection with Jerusalem and in Judah? Are they scattered all over Judah or are they mostly located in close proximity to Jerusalem?

Ezra 2:36-39

After the category of the men of the people of Israel, Ezra mentions the priests. The priests would have a position in the house of the LORD once it was built. What about the previous list, the laymen of Israel—what position would they have?

How many different groups (families, clans, tribes) were represented of the priests who came back to Jerusalem?

Are any of the names duplicates from the list of leaders or the list of the men of the people of Israel listed in the previous verses?

How many?

Which ones?

1.

2.

Could Jeshua possibly be of the same family?

Why or why not?

Could Harim possibly be of the same family?

Why or why not?

Are their numbers (per individual family) large or small compared to the numbers of the men of the people of Israel?

Ezra 2:40

What is the next category of people listed?

How many different orders or divisions were represented of the Levites who came back to Jerusalem?

Are there duplicate names listed again?

Could Jeshua possibly be of the same family listed under priests and laymen?

Why or why not?

What position would the Levites have in the house of the LORD once it was built?

Ezra 2:41

What is the name of the next category?

What position would this group have in the house of the LORD once it was built?

How many family groups were listed?

Ezra 2:42

What is the next group?

What position will they have once the house of the LORD is built?

What is a gatekeeper?

What gates will they keep and guard? (Think it through... What are the people going back to build at this time?)

How many family clans are mentioned?

Is this the first time Ezra has not given the number for the individual group?

Another first: Ezra has listed the priests, the Levites, the singers, and now the *sons* of the gatekeepers? Any idea why he added sons to the ones who would guard and keep the gates?



Just a reminder about the importance of names—
because it builds our faith to see how God is in control of absolutely everything!!!

Ater's name comes from the Hebrew word *atar* and means to shut up, close, or bind.

Do you think God named him?

Do you think God purposed for him to be one of His gatekeepers?

Aqeb is the Hebrew root for Akkub and means heel, footprint, hind part, or rear guard!

Do you think God named him?

Do you think God purposed for him to be one of His gatekeepers?

Shobai comes the Hebrew word *shabah* and means (Are you ready?) —to take captive!

Do you think God named him?

Do you think God purposed for him to be one of His gatekeepers?

Maybe it was just all a plain ol' coincidence???

Yeah, right!

God is in Control!!!

He was then!!!

And He is now!!!

Ezra 2:43-54

What is the next category?

What position will they have once the house of the LORD is built?

Do you notice anything different in this category? Were there many families listed?

Do you recognize any names?

What about their numbers? Are there any?

Ezra 2:55-57

What is the next category?

Were they actually Solomon's servants? Could they have been?

Why or why not?

What is different about their position as regards the house of the LORD?

What does that tell you about where they will serve?

What does that tell you about what will be built?

Do you notice anything different in this category from most of the lists so far?

Do you notice anything similar in this category to the one previous?

Do you recognize any names?

What about their numbers? Are there any?

Ezra 2:58

What is the purpose of **verse 58**?

What two groups does it put together?

What number total does it give us?

Ezra 2:59-63

An entirely new category is listed for us—what is it?

What did this group not have?

If this group did not have evidence of their fathers' households and their descendants, whether they were of Israel, what does that tell you the people in the other groups must have had?

Does this listing give us number totals?

Does this listing give us information not included in the other groups?

What type of new information does it give us first?

Why do you think it gave us information about where they were living?

What other new type of information does it give us?

Why do you think the information about Barzillai the Gileadite was given to us?



Barzillai the Gileadite took a wife from the daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and he took their name rather than his wife taking his name. He preferred their family name to that of his own family,

which was part of the house of Levi.
Perhaps he thought the house of Barzillai had greater social status? Who knows?
But his choice had dire consequences—
he lost the nobility of being part of the priesthood of the LORD.

What does it tell us this group did?

What could not be located? What was missing from the ancestral registry?

What was the repercussion of their names not being included in the ancestral registry?



The Book of Life—will your name be found written there?

Who was the governor?



The Hebrew word for governor was *tirshata*, a Persian title.
In Hebrew it meant “Your Honor” or “Your Excellency”,
but in the land of Persia it meant “Your Severity” or “Your Awfulness”
(coming from the Persian word *torsch*).

One of those striking examples of how good our God is.

What instruction did he give to them?

What were they to wait for?



The Urim and the Thummin have always been an inexplicable subject of discussion.
Many theories have been posited concerning them (or it).
However, the truth is we don't know anymore about them than what the Bible tells us.

For instance, in this passage, **Ezra 2:63**, we find out that it is a priest who uses them.

The priest “stands up” with them.

The priest will render a decision through their use.

In this case it would be decided whether those who thought they had a priestly lineage (but were considered unclean because they had no evidence of their Israelite ancestry) would be able to eat from the most holy things.

Go back and read the following references
(along with all the context surrounding them you need
in order to understand the meaning.)

Exodus 28:30

***You shall put in the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim,
and they shall be over Aaron’s heart when he goes in before the LORD;
and Aaron shall carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart
before the LORD continually.***

Leviticus 8:8

***He then placed the breastpiece on him,
and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim.***

Num. 27:21

***Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest,
who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD.
At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in,
both he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation.***

Deuteronomy 33:8

***Of Levi he said,
“Let Your Thummim and Your Urim belong to Your godly man,
Whom You proved at Massah,
With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah;...”***

1 Samuel 28:6

***When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him,
either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.***

Ezra 2:63

***The governor said to them that they should not eat from the most holy things
until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim.***

Nehemiah 7:65

***The governor said to them that they should not eat from the most holy things
until a priest arose with Urim and Thummim.***

Write down what you find out about the Urim and the Thummin,
their purpose, who uses them, and for what.

More could be gleaned by studying the breastplate of judgment,
the position and responsibilities of the priests, etc.,
but basically the meat of the subject is covered in these few verses.
Can you see why they are a bit mystifying to understand?

No matter what information you find, remember this—
whatever God has revealed in His Word is enough for us to know...

2 Peter 1:2-8

***Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our
Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us
everything pertaining to life and godliness,
through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and
excellence.***

***For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises,
so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature,
having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.***

***Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence,
in your faith supply moral excellence,
and in your moral excellence, knowledge,
and in your knowledge, self-control,
and in your self-control, perseverance,
and in your perseverance, godliness,
and in your godliness, brotherly kindness,
and in your brotherly kindness, love.***

***For if these qualities are yours and are increasing,
they render you neither useless nor unfruitful***

in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ezra 2:64-67

What is the category you find in **Ezra 2:64-67**?

Who is not numbered in the 42,360?

How many male and female servants did they have?

Were these servants different than the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants?

How can you know?

1.

2.



Point of Connection

Let's do a little math with **Ezra 2:64-65**.
42,360 (whole assembly)
divided by 7,337 (male and female servants)
equals 5.77347689791468 (per each Israelite who came back from Babylon).

Wow! That's almost one servant per every six people!
The question becomes, "*Did they come back with wealth or were they poor?*"
Seems relatively wealthy to me.
(I'd even be happy with the .77347689791468 person's help a couple hours a week!!!)

I want to show you something sad.
Haggai describes the economic state of the Jews as having changed significantly.

Haggai 1:4-8
***Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses
while this house lies desolate?
Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts,
"Consider your ways!***

***You have sown much, but harvest little;
you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied;
you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk;
you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough;
and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes.”
Thus says the LORD of hosts,
“Consider your ways!
Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple,
that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,”
says the LORD.***

Haggai 1:9-11

***“You look for much, but behold, it comes to little;
when you bring it home, I blow it away.
Why?” declares the LORD of hosts,
“Because of My house which lies desolate,
while each of you runs to his own house.
Therefore, because of you
the sky has withheld its dew
and the earth has withheld its produce.
I called for a drought on the land,
on the mountains,
on the grain,
on the new wine,
on the oil,
on what the ground produces,
on men,
on cattle,
and on all the labor of your hands.”***

Haggai 2:15-17

***“But now, do consider from this day onward:
before one stone was placed on another in the temple of the LORD,
from that time when one came to a grain heap of twenty measures,
there would be only ten;
and when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures,
there would be only twenty.
I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew, and hail;
yet you did not come back to Me”,
declares the LORD.***

What had changed?
Why had they become so very poor?
What had happened to their wealth?

They were living in paneled houses, which was a sign of prosperity,

but their houses were made out of the very timber that was to be used in the building of the house of the Lord.

The rest of their wealth had been taken away by the God Who gave it to them. They disobeyed Him and did not build His house, so He took away the wealth He had given to them.

In **Haggai** (a perfect book to read as a cross-reference to **Ezra**) God brought home His point time and time again—*“Consider your ways!”* *“Consider that you are not obedient to Me—and consider what the result has been!”*

Singing men and women, 200 of them, are listed. Are these the same singers listed in **Ezra 2:41**?

How can you know?



The singers listed in **Ezra 2:65** were hired singers—hired by the people for festivities and funerals alike. ...Hired singers by the people—for the people...

The singers listed in **Ezra 2:41** were of the sons of Asaph and were in the service (not hired) of the LORD. ...Appointed singers by the LORD—for the LORD

What else is listed for the first time in the entire lists of **Ezra 2**?

Ezra 2:68-69

What did some of the heads of fathers' households do when they arrived at the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem?

Why do you think they offered so willingly when they saw it? (Think of its condition after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar and lying dormant for 70 years since.)

They offered willingly (a condition of their heart), but how did they offer practically?

Why did they have such a great ability to offer large amounts to the treasury for the work to restore the house of the LORD on its foundation?

Ezra 2:70

Where did the people live when they came to Jerusalem?

Who lived in their cities (mainly referring to the cities which had been appointed for them, i.e. Anathoth was a city for the priests who labored in Jerusalem to live)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Who lived in their own cities (the ones from which they were driven during Babylon's siege of the land)?

READ AND REASON

Perhaps you have dealt in the past with a long list such as **Ezra 2** in the fashion many people do—by glossing over it or not even reading it at all. I hope not. Every Word of God is inspired by Him and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**)

Don't you find it interesting that we have spent almost 20 pages of observation on this chapter—this chapter that many people might have skipped altogether?

And we really did nothing more than scratch the surface—we could have done word studies, especially on the names of the individuals, and then done cross-referencing on each one of those people and their families. We could have studied the positions of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the sons of the gatekeepers, the temple servants, the sons of Solomon’s servants, etc. We could have read commentaries and gleaned information from God’s teachers through the ages.

In other words, we could have camped here for a very long time and learned a large amount of profitable (*for spiritual ability*) knowledge (*inspired by God*) for teaching (*which puts us on the track that God wants us to walk*), for reproof (*a charge of missing the mark, acknowledgement of the wrong, awareness of the consequences, confession of sin and willingness to repent of being off track*), for correction (*to strengthen and make us erect; to restore us and put us back on track*), for training in righteousness (*repetitive discipline like a child being taught over and over again, to know how to do right and to keep us on track*), so that we could be adequate and equipped (*fully qualified; the result of learning the Scripture*), for every good work (*fitted for a service of the Lord; only the deeds God initiates and performs through a person are considered good by Him*)!

Although we didn’t camp here for a long time, we did observe it—and we did learn from it. **Ezra 2** is a list, alright, but it is a group of lists, or rather, a list of categories. Why? Because it is not just a list of names of people who made a trip and it’s not just a list of names of people who were around at the time—it is a list of people and their positions who were chosen by God to be part of building his house (fulfilling the promise He made to His people!) so that He could be worshiped according to His Law—and that is what the entire book of **Ezra** is all about!

Chapter by Chapter

The previous paragraph gives you a not so subtle hint about what the theme of this second chapter of **Ezra** is about! It won’t be the same as the theme of the entire book of **Ezra**, but it sure will have a integral connection to it!

Theme of Ezra Chapter 1

Theme of Ezra Chapter 2

EZRA - The HISTORY

Chapter Three

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark every reference to the LORD by marking it with a red triangle. If it is referring to the Lord speaking, i.e. the word of the LORD, mark LORD with a red triangle but add the following: highlight the phrase in yellow and then circle all that you have highlighted in red.

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark every reference to anything that gives God His Glory, the people praising the LORD for His attributes, the house of the LORD, etc. with a yellow box filled in with light purple. Whenever you see the house of the LORD, put a purple house over that as well. (Just a roof and walls is all that is necessary to make it look like a structure.)

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark phrases such as “of the LORD” or “to the LORD” by highlighting it in light green and then underlining it in a darker green.

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark every reference to a prophet of God (man of God) with a filled-in green circle.

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark every reference, including pronouns, to Judah, i.e. His (God’s) people living in exile, survivor, etc. with a blue Star of David.

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark every reference to Jerusalem (Zion) or Judah with a blue capital “Z”, along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark the phrases build and rebuild, along with all synonyms with a light purple circle.

Read through **Ezra 3** and underline the phrases that refer to the foundation of the temple of the Lord in purple.

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark all references to encouraging God’s people, strengthening their hands, stirring their spirits, etc. with a pink plus sign. *(In some chapters you will also see references to discouraging the people, weakening their*

hands, etc. In those cases, mark the phrases and their synonyms with an orange minus sign.)

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark every reference to Cyrus king of Persia, along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark any official documents or letters which are recorded or inferred by drawing a box around the entire letter or inference with a pencil. (Hint: There is an inference to one in this chapter.)

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets, i.e. Persian, Babylon, house of his gods (Nebuchadnezzar), etc.

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark every reference to time with a blue box. (References may be varied, i.e. now, when, while, afterward, continual, a certain year, month, or day, a name of a festival of the Lord, even the age of certain persons, etc.)

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark every contrast with a pink diagonal line.

Read through **Ezra 3** and underline the phrases “according to” and “so that” with a pink arrow pointing to the right.

Read through **Ezra 3** and mark the explanatory words “because” and “for” by highlighting them with a pink oval.

Read through **Ezra 3** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. Altar built
2. Feast of Booths celebrated
3. Foundation laid
4. Laying of the foundation of the House of God celebrated
5. Weeping and shouting

READ AND ANSWER

Ezra 3:1-3

How does the first verse identify itself in regard to time?

The seventh month of what?



Tishri is the seventh month of the Jewish calendar.
It takes place in September-October in the western part of the world.

When God delivered the Israelites from Egypt and formally made them His Own nation,
declaring Himself to be their King, He set up a new way of life for them.
While they were at Mount Sinai, He gave them His rules by which they were to live.
He gave them His way of atoning for their sins
until their Messiah came and took care of sin once for all.
And He gave them a new calendar—
He gave them a new life, so a new calendar was appropriate.

The calendar included three major Feasts of the Lord which they were to follow exactly:
Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

All three of these feasts commemorated an actual event in the history of Israel
and at the same time gave a picture of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ!

The **Feast of Passover** was celebrated during March or April.

It consisted of three parts:

- 1) The Passover itself
- 2) The Feast of Unleavened Bread
- 3) The Feast of First Fruits.

These three components pictured:

- 1) *Jesus' Death*
- 2) *Jesus' Burial*
- 3) *Jesus' Resurrection.*

The **Feast of Pentecost** or Feast of Weeks was celebrated during May or June.

Fifty days after the Israelites were delivered from Egypt
they were given the Law to show them how to live their new life of freedom.

*Fifty days after Jesus was resurrected,
God sent the Holy Spirit to write His Law
on the hearts of people who believed that Jesus was The Seed,
The Coming One, The Messiah.*

*Under the New Covenant, instead of following the Law,
they would follow the Holy Spirit's leading.*

The **Feast of Tabernacles** was celebrated during September or October.

It consisted of three parts, as well:

- 1) The Feast of Trumpets
- 2) The Day of Atonement
- 3) The Feast of Booths or Tabernacles

The Feast was a picture of what is yet to come, the reign and rule of Jesus Christ!

- 1) *Christ's Second Coming*
- 2) *Christ's Salvation of Israel in One Day*
- 3) *Christ's Millennial Reign*



Point of Connection

Leviticus 23; Numbers 28-29

There is no better way to learn what God says than to listen to Him!
The above cross-references
give you more information about the Feasts of the Lord
than anywhere else in the Bible.

Take your time observing them—
making sure to ask God to open your eyes to behold wonderful things from His Word—
He will!



Point of Depth

Since the book of **Ezra** is all about reestablishing God's deserved worship,
you will see several mentions of the LORD'S feasts and for good reason—
they are a picture of the New Covenant
that God will make with them in His Son, their Messiah.
Once that Covenant is cut,
God's people will forevermore give Him the worship He is rightfully due.

The Abrahamic Covenant is the Promise of the New Covenant.
The Mosaic Covenant is the Picture of the New Covenant.
Jesus, their Messiah, is the New Covenant.

The Covenant God cut with Israel at Mount Sinai
is called the Mosaic Covenant, the Old Covenant, or the Law.
It was replaced when Jesus came to visit (take care of) His people.

They rejected Him and crucified Him instead of rejoicing in Him and crowning Him.
And so... the time has lingered on for centuries for their Messiah to return
in order to make the final and eternal Covenant with His people.
At the present time His imminent return is looming large in front of a willfully blind world!

In the meantime,
the rituals of the Old Covenant continue to give a Glory filled picture to the world
of God's perfect plan of redemption through His Son.

Feasts of the Lord compared to the Gregorian Calendar (used in the Western world)

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
		Passover		Pentecost				Tabernacles			
		<small>Passover-Unleavened Bread-First Fruits</small>		<small>Pentecost</small>				<small>Trumpets-Atonement-Booths</small>			

Feasts of the Lord using Jewish Calendar

Nisan	Iyyar	Sivan	Tammuz	Ab	Elul	Tishri	Marcheshvan	Chislev	Tebeth	Shebat	Adar
Passover		Pentecost				Tabernacles					
<small>Passover-Unleavened Bread-First Fruits</small>		<small>Pentecost</small>				<small>Trumpets-Atonement-Booths</small>					

What Feast of the LORD should have been celebrated in the Israelite’s seventh month, the month of Tishri? (Check the charts above if you need help.)

*I know you just ran through a volley of Points of Connection and Points of Depth, but I needed to take some time and familiarize you with the Feasts of the LORD because they are important in the book of **Ezra**. We will look at them individually more closely as we move along. But in the meantime... let’s move along!*

When the seventh month (Tishri) came, where were the sons of Israel who had returned from Babylon?

What cities?

Who gathered at Jerusalem?

What was their outlook as they amassed at Jerusalem?

What does it mean by “one man”?

Where had they come from?

Remember that there were no chapter divisions in the original text; they were added later for our benefit. How does the last verse of **chapter 2** connect to the first verse of **chapter 3**?

Although they had all gone to their former cities and homes (or what was left of them), what caused them to assemble as one man at Jerusalem?

Why Jerusalem?

What happened immediately?

Who built the altar of the God of Israel?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Did the people know Jeshua and Zerubbabel and their brothers were going to build an altar?

How?

Which altar was built? (There were to be two in the temple—one for animal offerings and one for incense offerings)

What was the purpose of the altar they built?



Why did Israel need to offer burnt offerings to their God on His holy altar?
If you don't know the answer to this, let me give you a hint—
it has three letters and starts with an "s".

The blood of bulls and goats could never actually take away sin,
but the perfect blood of Jesus could and would!
He would be the perfect sacrifice offered on behalf of all who would believe in Him.

Hebrews 10:1-18

***For the Law,
since it has only a shadow of the good things to come
and not the very form of things,
can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year,
make perfect those who draw near.
Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered,
because the worshipers, having once been cleansed,
would no longer have had consciousness of sins?
But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year.
For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says,
"SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED,
BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME;
IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE."
THEN I SAID, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME)
TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD."
After saying above,
"SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN
YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE IN THEM"
(which are offered according to the Law),
then He said,
"BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL."
He takes away the first in order to establish the second.
By this will
we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ
once for all.
Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same
sacrifices, which can never take away sins;
but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time,
SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,
waiting from that time onward
UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.
For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.
And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,***

***“THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS,
SAYS THE LORD:
I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART,
AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM.”
He then says,
“AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.”
Now where there is forgiveness of these things,
there is no longer any offering for sin.***

How did they know an altar needed to be built?

How did they know how to built it?

What is the Law of Moses? (Remember a few PODs back about the Covenants?)

How is Moses described?



When the phrase “man of God” is used it oftentimes is referring to a prophet. Do you think of Moses as being God’s prophet when he gave Israel God’s Law?

What did Jeshua, Zerubbabel and the priests do once they built the altar of burnt offerings?

What foundation did they set the altar on? Think through the text... has the foundation of the temple even been built yet?

Why did they go ahead and set the altar in place on its own foundation even though the foundation of the temple, much less the temple itself, had not been built?

Of whom were they terrified?

Who was terrified of the peoples of the lands?

Who were the peoples of the lands?



What peoples?
What lands?

The Samaritans
and the peoples of the nations that the king of Assyria had conquered
and brought into the land of Judah.

What did the peoples of the exile, Jeshua's and Zerubbalel's group, believe offering animals on the altar would do for them?

To Whom were the offerings offered?

When were the offerings offered?

Ezra 3:4-6

Once the altar had been set on its foundation and put into use, what did the people do?



*The **FEAST OF TABERNACLES** takes place in the seventh month (Tishri),
and consists of three festivals:*

FEAST OF TRUMPETS
DAY OF ATONEMENT
FEAST OF BOOTHS

All three take place in the fall and look forward to the coming of Messiah.

*Because **Ezra 3:4** tells us the returned exiles celebrated the Feast of Booths,
I want to give you some additional information on that particular feast.*

*Keep the charts of the Feasts of the Lord in mind,
noting that this particular feast is the third, not the first, of the three feasts.*

Note, too, it has three individual festivals or components.

THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

(Part 1 of The Feast of Tabernacles)

The Feast of Trumpets was celebrated
on the first day of the seventh month of the Jewish year.

The Israelites were to have a rest, a holy convocation.

They were to blow the trumpets which were made of rams' horns.

The blowing of the shofar (ram's horn) was symbolic of asking God
to remember and think about His Covenant commitment to them as a people.

It reminds the Israelites of the certainty of His promise, as well.

Leviticus 23:23-25; Numbers 29:1-6

When the prophets spoke, their messages were often warnings.
So too, it was traditional to use the sound of a blowing shofar as a call to alarm—
a time to prepare themselves for what was ahead. (Usually judgment!)

Numbers 10:9-10; Joel 2:1, 15

It was the duty of the Hebrew to hear and respond to the sound of the ram's horn.

He must never ignore it!

Ezekiel 33:1-6; Jeremiah 6:17

Looking back—

the Feast commemorates the time when Joshua led the Israelites
into the land that God had promised them. It was to be a day of rest for the people.

And as Joshua led the people conquering the inhabitants of the land of Canaan,
so indeed, they were resting, for it was God Who was fighting the battle for them!

Joshua 3; 24:13; Nehemiah 4:20

Looking forward—

the *Feast of Trumpets* was a picture of the time when God would call His wife, Israel,
back to the land He had promised her.

Listen... the trumpet is already sounding...

Do you hear it?

Have the people started coming back to Israel?

Oh yes!

In 1948, Israel even regained her status as a nation before the eyes of the world.

God is stirring the hearts of the Jews to return to their homeland.

They are coming back by the droves.

The sound of the shofar was a long slow sound that reached far away from its source.

I believe the sound of the shofar is right now ringing in the souls of the Jews
in all four corners of the earth.

I pray they will respond because Messiah is coming!

God will sound a trumpet that will announce the coming of the Day of the Lord,
a time in the future when God will begin to send forth His judgments.

The trumpet will herald to the people that the *Day of Atonement* is also coming soon so they need to get prepared for the days ahead!
Zephaniah 1:14-16; Isaiah 27:13

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

(Part 2 of The Feast of Tabernacles)

The Day of Atonement or *Yom Kippur* takes place on the tenth day of the seventh month and follows the *Feast of Trumpets*.

The people are to humble their souls and present an offering by fire to the Lord.

They are not to do any work on this day.

The day is set aside to make atonement on their behalf before the Lord.

Leviticus 23:26-32

On this most solemn and important day, no one except the high priest was allowed in the Tabernacle. He had a very important task to perform on the *Day of Atonement*. He would offer blood to God as atonement for the Holy Place itself and for the sins of the people.

God required blood because it contained the life of the flesh and the penalty due for sin was the sinner's life.

It was through the substituted animal blood that God allowed atonement to be made for the people.

Leviticus 16; 17:11, 14

The high priest started out his day with extremely detailed consecrating hygiene which God required. Then he took two male goats and one bull from the congregation.

He offered the bull for a sin offering for himself and for his household.

The high priest was a sinner too, just like the people.

Next he took the two goats to present before the Lord at the doorway of the Tabernacle.

The high priest cast lots for the goats to decide which one was for the Lord and which one would be the scapegoat.

He would offer the Lord's goat as a sin offering, but the scapegoat would be dealt with later that day.

The scapegoat would be presented alive to the Lord, to make atonement on it, and then sent into the wilderness.

Then the high priest would take fire from the altar and incense and bring it inside the veil which partitioned off the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle.

The cloud of incense created by the fire coals covered the Mercy Seat (propitiatory seat) so that the high priest would not die because he saw God.

Exodus 33:20

Next the high priest would sprinkle some of the blood from the bull of the sin offering, for himself and his household, toward the Mercy Seat seven times.

Next he would slaughter the goat of the sin offering for the people.
He would then come back inside the Holy of Holies
and sprinkle the blood of the goat seven times on the Mercy Seat
and in front of the Mercy Seat.
This was because the Tabernacle was among the people in the midst of their impurities;
it had to be atoned for as well.

The high priest's next task was to go out to the altar where the animals were slain daily.
He was to take some of the blood of the bull *and* of the Lord's goat
and put it on the horns of the Altar on all of its sides.
Again, he was to sprinkle blood seven times with his finger.
This was to cleanse the altar from the impurities of the sons of Israel.

When he had finished atoning for the Tabernacle and the Altar,
he would offer the scapegoat.
He would lay both of his hands on its head
and confess all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions of the sons of Israel over it.
Symbolically, the sins of the people were being transferred onto the goat.
The goat was then led into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stood in readiness.
Once in the wilderness, the man released the goat
who symbolically bore all of the Israelites' iniquities into a solitary land.

Next the high priest would cleanse himself all over again
and then offer up in smoke the fat from the bull and the goat.
Their hides and refuse were taken outside the camp to be burned.

In the picture of the Lord's goat,
it is so easy to see our dear Savior offered instead of us,
and His blood, which contained His perfect life, offered instead of ours.
Hebrews 9:11-28

But what about the scapegoat?
What did that show the Israelites?
It showed them the Lamb of God Who came to *take away* the sins of the world.
Jesus too, bore our sins outside the camp.
He took our sins on Himself and took them away from us.
He carried them into the wilderness so we would not bear them any longer.
God doesn't just save us from the penalty of our sin,
He saves us from our sins themselves.
He changes us and causes us to walk in a manner worthy of Him.
We won't sin as the habit of our life any longer!
Praise God and Praise His Scapegoat, Jesus, our Savior!!!

Prophetically the *Day of Atonement* has not yet been fulfilled.
It has to do with the nation of Israel, not the church.
Yes, Jesus provided atonement through His finished work on the cross

for anyone and everyone who would believe in Him—
God showed us that in His Passover picture.
Yet, the nation of Israel did not recognize the time of their visitation by their Messiah.
They rejected Jesus and His death for them.
So God quit dealing with the Jews in the same way He had previously.
God then brought the Gentiles into His plan and created the church.
He grafts individual believers, both Jew and Gentile, into His olive tree.

Israel as a nation has been set aside for awhile.
But is God finished with Israel completely?
No!!!

Romans 11

He is most certainly not finished with His people.
He will come one day (*the Day of Atonement*)
and every single one of them who are alive at that time will have their eyes opened,
and they will look upon Jesus
and mourn over Him as the death of an only child because they killed Him.

Zechariah 12:10

In that day, the entire nation of Israel will receive and embrace their atonement!
They will be cleansed
and then grafted back into their own olive tree alongside of the church!
Amazing!

Ezekiel 36:25-33; Zechariah 13:1

For Israel, the picture of the scapegoat is yet to be fulfilled!

THE FEAST OF BOOTHES

(Part 3 of The Feast of Tabernacles)

The third part of The Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Booths,
has not yet been fulfilled prophetically.
It is called "*Sukkoth*" in Hebrew.
It is to be celebrated in the seventh month
starting on the fifteenth day and lasting for seven days.
The Israelites were to have their crops gathered in by the fifteenth day of the month.
Leviticus 23:33-44; Deuteronomy 16:13-15

It was to be a feast of the LORD.
On the first and eighth day,
the people were to have a holy convocation and do no work whatsoever.
In between, they were to be making offerings to the LORD by fire.
They were to take the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches, and boughs of leafy
trees and willows of the brook and make temporary booths to live in.

They were to decorate their “homes” with the fruit found on these trees.
For seven days they lived in those booths and rejoiced before the LORD.

Looking back—
the *Feast of Tabernacles* commemorated the 40 years
that the Israelites lived in tabernacles, or booths, in the wilderness.
The Israelites were totally dependent on God during that time—
for food and water, for clothing, for shelter, for life!
The Israelites were to celebrate as they remembered the LORD’S provisions for them.

While Herod’s Temple stood in Jerusalem, the Jews would celebrate with all they had.
The city of Jerusalem was lit by beautiful menorahs (lamps).
The people would sing psalms of praise to God
while instruments of every kind filled the air around them.
The priest would bring water from the pool of Siloam
and pour it over the altar on the very last day of the *Feast of Booths*.

Notice the involvement of both *Water* and *Light* during the *Feast of Booths*.
Jesus presented Himself before a great crowd and called out to the people,
*“If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the
Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’”*
John 7:37-39

Guess which day Jesus called out His offer of water?
It was on the last day of the *Feast of Tabernacles*—
the day that the priest performed the ceremony of pouring water over the altar!
Jesus was the True Light of the world.
He made Jerusalem sparkle like a costly stone with His light,
yet the people refused to see...
John 1:1-14; 8:12; 1 John 2:8

Looking forward—
this *Feast of Tabernacles* is a picture of the 1,000 years when Messiah, The Seed,
will rule and reign with a rod of iron over the earth.
Zechariah 14:16-19

During that time all the nations of the earth
will be required to come to Jerusalem yearly and celebrate the Feast of Booths.
If they refuse, Jesus will withhold rain from their land. They will have no water!
The Israelites will live in their land, Israel, during this time.
They will be God’s people and God will be their God!
Ezekiel 36:28

When Jesus starts His Millennial Reign,
it will also be the beginning of a kingdom which will have no end,
an everlasting Kingdom.

Daniel 2:44; 7:14

After the 1,000 years are over,
His saints will live for the rest of eternity in the New Jerusalem on the new earth.
God will actually dwell with man.
God will live on the new earth in the New Jerusalem!

In this city, we also see the *True Light* and the *Living Water*.
Revelation 21:23; 22:1

The Glory of God illumines the city, and Jesus is its Lamp (menorah).
As much fanfare as the people of Israel tried to create
when the priest poured water from the pool of Siloam over the altar,
it was *nothing* compared to the Water of Life that will pour forth from the throne of God!

How did they know how to observe the Feast of Booths correctly?

How did they know how many burnt offerings to offer daily?

What ordinance is **Ezra** referring to?

Were the number of burnt offerings the same every day? (**Numbers 29:12-38**)

How do you know?

Beside the fixed number of burnt offerings required daily, were there other burnt offerings?

What were they?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

4.

To Whom were these offerings offered?

From whom were these offerings offered?

When were these offerings begin to be offered?

Where were these offerings offered?

What obstacle did the people have to offering the offerings?

Ezra 3:7-9

Who received money?

1.

2.

When did they give money to the masons and the carpenters?

Why did the masons and the carpenters need money?

What did they give to the Sidonians and to the Tyrians?

1.

2.

3.

Why? What were the Sidonians and the Tyrians to do?

Find Lebanon and Joppa on a Bible map. Can you visualize the route the cedar wood would have been taken?

Would the sea have been helpful?

What was the cedar wood to be used for?



The prophet Haggai, who was in Jerusalem at the time, gives an explanation for why the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid. What appears to have happened to the original purchase of cedar wood that was to be used to build the house of the LORD?

Haggai 1:1-9

In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'This people says, 'The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.'"
Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?"
Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways! You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes."
Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,"
says the LORD. You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away.

Why?"
declares the LORD of hosts,
"Because of My house which lies desolate,
while each of you runs to his own house."

Was there any opposition from the ruling authority at that time?

According to **verse 7**, who ruled over the Sidonians and the Tyrians at that time?

What happened in the second year of the second month in which the first group of exiled Jewish survivors came back from Babylon with Zerubbabel?



The year **Ezra 3:8** refers to is 536 BC.
Cyrus king of Persia and Darius the Mede are rulers over the Medo-Persian empire.
The Medo-Persian empire rules over Israel
having taken world dominion away from Babylon.

What is the name of the second month? (Check your charts from earlier in the chapter.)

What Feast should have happened in the first month?

Is there any mention of Passover?

What work started in the second month of the second year the exiles were back in the land of Israel?

Who began the work?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Who was appointed to oversee the work of the house of the LORD?

By skimming through the rest of the chapter, what specific work of the house of the LORD was being done?

Was the house of the LORD actually being built yet?

What did Jeshua (with his sons and brothers) do?

How old were these men?

How do you know? (Hint: Could these be the Levites who were appointed in **verse 8**?)

From what tribe of Israel did these men come?

How do you know?



Remember that long list in **Ezra 2**?
God wrote it for good reasons—one of which is to build our faith.
His Word is so detailed and faithful!

Read **Ezra 2:40** one more time, keeping **Ezra 3:9** in mind while you do.
I'll write them both out for you below.

Ezra 2:40
The Levites: the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah, 74.

Ezra 3:9

Then Jeshua with his sons and brothers stood united with Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah and the sons of Henadad with their sons and brothers the Levites, to oversee the workmen in the temple of God.

Do you see?

Why weren't there more families of Levites involved?

Because only two orders or divisions of families had come back with Zerubbabel—they were the only ones in town!

Ezra 3:10-11

What did the builders do?

When the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, what did the priests do?

When the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, what did the Levites do?

When the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, what did the sons of Asaph do?



If you are having any difficulty delineating the three groups in the last three questions, just go back to that wonderful list in **Ezra 2** and things should clear up nicely!

How did the priests, Levites, and singers know what to do for this marvelous celebration?

What type of song did they sing?

1.

2.

What were the words of the song?

What were they praising God for? (Hint: Be careful not to answer this lightly. Think through the whole setting of **Ezra**, including where they had been for 70 years, and why.)

What were they thanking God for? (Hint: Be careful not to answer this lightly. Think through the whole setting of **Ezra**, including where they had been for 70 years, and why.)

What was the specific, immediate event that prompted their song of praise and thanks?

Was this a celebration for the house of the LORD being built?

Or was this a celebration for the foundation of the house of the God being laid?

What was the response of the people?

1.

2.

Why did the people shout with a great shout when they praised the LORD?

Considering the phrase *“His lovingkindness is upon Israel”* and the fact that the exiles had been returned home to Israel from captivity in Babylon, and were now seeing the completion of the first stage of the rebuilding of the house of the LORD, what was being proven right before their very eyes? (Hint: It concerns their God and His control over them and over the nations.)

Ezra 3:12-13

Although there was singing, praising and giving thanks to the LORD because of His goodness and His lovingkindness upon Israel forever, although there was great

shouting when they were praising the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid—what else was going on?

 Point of Connection

The remnant which came back from captivity with Zerubbabel started building the temple of the LORD in the same month of the year that Solomon started building the temple of the LORD hundreds of years earlier. Ziv is the Canaanite name for the month Iyyar.

1 Kings 6:1

Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

The celebration of the temple Solomon built for the LORD took place in the same month as the celebration for the foundation of the house of the LORD by the remnant. Ethanim is the Canaanite name for the month Tishri.

1 Kings 8:2

All the men of Israel assembled themselves to King Solomon at the feast, in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month.

The comparison to Solomon's temple could not have been ignored...
The contrast to Solomon's temple could not have been ignored...

Who was weeping with a loud voice?

When did the old men who had seen the first temple weep with a loud voice?

1.

2.

Just to make sure you have the right picture in your mind's eye, let me ask a couple more questions. What had the old men seen?

What were the old men seeing now?

Why were many shouting for joy?

Why were the old men weeping with a loud voice?

How loud was the loud voice of weeping?

How loud was the shouting of joy?

Why could the people not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the weeping of the people?

1.

2.

Still just making sure you see it—were the old men seeing the new temple or just the foundation of the new temple?

Just by looking at the the foundation, what could the old men discern?

To those who had never seen the former temple, what did the foundation seem like to them?

READ AND REASON

Haggai is a great book to read as a cross-reference to **Ezra**. This passage illumines the idea of God's Glory in His house (or the lack of it) from **Ezra 3**. (Note, though, **Haggai 2** happens later in time than **Ezra 3**.)

Haggai 2:1-9

*On the twenty-first of the seventh month,
the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet saying
“Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,*

*and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest,
and to the remnant of the people saying,
'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory?
And how do you see it now?
Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?'"*

The people had heeded God's warning in **Haggai 1** and worked on building His house, but now the thoughts of those who had seen Solomon's temple were disheartened. God confronts them with their thoughts of fear and unbelief.

*"But now take courage, Zerubbabel,"
declares the LORD,
"take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest,
and all you people of the land take courage,"
declares the LORD,
"and work; for I am with you,"
declares the LORD of hosts.
"As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt,
My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!"*

God calls for them to continue to obey Him and work, because of one reason—God, Himself is with them. He reminds them He promised His Spirit would be in their midst so they need not fear! God has kept His promise to be with them and expects them to believe He will keep the new one He is making. They do not have to worry about the temple being glorified—after all, all the silver and the gold on the planet belongs to Him! He will one day shake all the nations and they will bring all that is His (everything) to Jerusalem to adorn the place of His dwelling.

*For thus says the LORD of hosts,
"Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth,
the sea also and the dry land.
I will shake all the nations;
and they will come with the wealth of all nations,
and I will fill this house with Glory,"
says the LORD of hosts.
"The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,"
declares the LORD of hosts.*

Then He makes the promise that He will actually make the glory of His house greater than it ever was, even when Solomon had built it. And it will have more than glory—it will have peace, something Solomon could never maintain.

"The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,"

*says the LORD of hosts,
“and in this place I will give peace,”
declares the LORD of hosts.*

How will the *later* glory of the house the exiles built be greater than its *earlier* glory,
How will the *later* glory of the house the exiles built be greater than the glory of the house that *Solomon* built?

Well, for one thing—

Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, would enter this temple a few hundred years later and bring His Own Glory into it.

Luke 2:25-32

*And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon;
and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel;
and the Holy Spirit was upon him.*

*And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit
that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.*

And he came in the Spirit into the temple;

*and when the parents brought in the child Jesus,
to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,*

then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

*“Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,
According to Your word;*

For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,

And the Glory of Your people Israel.”

John 1:14

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,
and we saw His Glory,*

Glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And, for another thing—

Solomon’s temple, which had been rebuilt by the remnant during the days of Ezra,
and then “beautified” by Herod,

was still magnificent at the time the Lord’s Christ was on earth
and would be until the Jews rejected their Messiah.

Then it would become rubble and nearly invisible until the time it would be rebuilt for the
Second Coming of Messiah!

Mark 13:1

As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him,

“Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”

Although there are more than these, let’s stop at this final thing—

The Divine God of His temple, Jesus Christ, the One to Whom the throne belonged, was greater than the temple itself.

Matthew 12:6

But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here.

~ Chapter by Chapter

Since we have been looking for the theme of each chapter so far, let's continue.

What would you say is the theme of the third chapter of **Ezra**?

Remember, the theme will tell you *what* the chapter is about and it is always going to be the main and plain thing.

The main and plain thing will always be revealed by your key words.

So... what is **Ezra 3** mainly and plainly about?

Theme of Ezra Chapter 1

Theme of Ezra Chapter 2

Theme of Ezra Chapter 3

EZRA - The HISTORY

Chapter Four

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Ezra 4** and mark every reference to the LORD by marking it with a red triangle. If it is referring to the Lord speaking, i.e. the word of the LORD, still mark LORD with a red triangle but add the following: highlight the phrase in yellow and then circle all that you have highlighted in red.

Read through **Ezra 4** and mark every reference to anything that gives God His Glory, i.e. what Cyrus says about the Lord in **Ezra 1:2**, the house of the LORD, etc. with a yellow box filled in with light purple. Whenever you see the house of the LORD, put a purple house over that as well. (Just a roof and walls is all that is necessary to make it look like a structure.)

Read through **Ezra 4** and mark every reference, including pronouns, to Judah, i.e. His (God's) people living in exile, survivor, etc. with a blue Star of David.

Read through **Ezra 4** and mark every reference to Jerusalem (Zion) or Judah with a blue capital "Z", along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 4** and mark the phrases build and rebuild, along with all synonyms with a light purple circle.

Read through **Ezra 4** and mark all references to discouraging God's people, weakening their hands, etc. with an orange minus sign. *(In previous chapters you have seen references to encouraging God's people, strengthening their hands, stirring their spirits, etc. In those cases, you marked the phrases and their synonyms with a pink plus sign.)*

Read through **Ezra 4** and mark every reference to the kings over nations other than Israel with an orange crown.

Read through **Ezra 4** and mark any official documents or letters which are recorded by drawing a box around the entire letter with a pencil. (Hint: There are two in **Ezra 4**.)

Read through **Ezra 4** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets, i.e. Persian, Babylon, house of his gods (Nebuchadnezzar), etc.

Read through **Ezra 4** and mark every reference to time with a blue box. (References may be varied, i.e. the first year of Cyrus king of Persia or the word “then”.)

Read through **Ezra 4** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. Enemies ask to “build” with people of Judah
2. People of the land discourage people of Judah
3. Example of opposition: Accusation during reign of Ahasuerus
4. Example of opposition: Accusation during reign of Artaxerxes (from Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and colleagues)
5. Example of opposition: Accusation during reign of Artaxerxes (from Rehum and Shimshai, and colleagues)
6. Example of opposition: Response from King Artaxerxes
7. Work stopped after much opposition

READ AND ANSWER

Ezra 4:1-3

What is the first event in **chapter 4**?

Who approached Zerubbabel?

When did the enemies of Judah and Benjamin approach Zerubbabel?

Why did the enemies of Judah and Benjamin approach Zerubbabel?

What did they give as their reasoning for wanting to help build God’s temple alongside of Judah?

How long did they say they had been worshiping Judah’s God?

Were they true worshipers of God or were they enemies?

Who were these enemies of Judah?



2 Kings 17

***“In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah,
Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria,
and reigned nine years.***

***He did evil in the sight of the LORD,
only not as the kings of Israel who were before him.***

***Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him,
and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute.***

***But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea,
who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt
and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria,
as he had done year by year;***

so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison.

***Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land
and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years.***

***In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria
and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria,
and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan,
and in the cities of the Medes.***

***Now this came about
because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God,
who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh,
king of Egypt,***

***and they had feared other gods
and walked in the customs of the nations***

***whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel,
and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced.***

***The sons of Israel did things secretly
which were not right against the LORD their God.***

***Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns,
from watchtower to fortified city.***

***They set for themselves sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill
and under every green tree,***

***and there they burned incense on all the high places
as the nations did which the LORD had carried away to exile before them;
and they did evil things provoking the LORD.***

***They served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them,
“You shall not do this thing.”***

***Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer,
saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments,***

**My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers,
and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.”
However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers,
who did not believe in the LORD their God.
They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers
and His warnings with which He warned them.
And they followed vanity and became vain,
and went after the nations which surrounded them,
concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them.
They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God
and made for themselves molten images, even two calves,
and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.
Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire,
and practiced divination and enchantments,
and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him.
So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight;
none was left except the tribe of Judah.
Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God,
but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced.
The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel
and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers,
until He had cast them out of His sight.
When He had torn Israel from the house of David,
they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king.
Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD
and made them commit a great sin.
The sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did;
they did not depart from them until the LORD removed Israel from His sight,
as He spoke through all His servants the prophets.
So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.
The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva
and from Hamath and Sepharvaim,
and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel.
So they possessed Samaria and lived in its cities.
At the beginning of their living there, they did not fear the LORD;
therefore the LORD sent lions among them which killed some of them.
So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying,
“The nations whom you have carried away into exile in the cities of Samaria
do not know the custom of the god of the land;
so he has sent lions among them,
and behold, they kill them
because they do not know the custom of the god of the land.”
Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying,
“Take there one of the priests whom you carried away into exile
and let him go and live there;
and let him teach them the custom of the god of the land.”**

So one of the priests whom they had carried away into exile from Samaria came and lived at Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.
But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the houses of the high places which the people of Samaria had made, every nation in their cities in which they lived.
The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech the gods of Sepharvaim.
They also feared the LORD and appointed from among themselves priests of the high places, who acted for them in the houses of the high places.
They feared the LORD and served their own gods according to the custom of the nations from among whom they had been carried away into exile.
To this day they do according to the earlier customs: they do not fear the LORD, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances or the law, or the commandments which the LORD commanded the sons of Jacob, whom He named Israel; with whom the LORD made a covenant and commanded them, saying, “You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down yourselves to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them.”
But the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, and to Him you shall bow yourselves down, and to Him you shall sacrifice.
The statutes and the ordinances and the law and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall observe to do forever; and you shall not fear other gods.
The covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you fear other gods.
But the LORD your God you shall fear; and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.”
However, they did not listen, but they did according to their earlier custom. So while these nations feared the LORD, they also served their idols; their children likewise and their grandchildren, as their fathers did, so they do to this day.”

After reading **2 Kings 17** can you now say who the enemies of Judah were? (If you are still not sure, read **Ezra 4:17**.)

Who answered the enemies of Judah?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Did they believe the people of Samaria were their friends?

What answer did they give to the Samaritans?

What did the people of Samaria not have in common with the people of Judah who were building the temple in Jerusalem?

Who did Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the heads of the fathers' household of Israel say would build the temple?

Who, exactly, is referred to as "ourselves"? (Hint: Where had they been living for 70 years?)

Who had commanded them to build the temple?

Who had commanded Cyrus, the king of Persia, to command the exiles of Judah to rebuild God's temple? **2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:2-4**

Who was in control over the nation of Israel?

Who was in control over the Medo-Persian empire?

Who is in control today?

Ezra 4:4-5

What was the response of the enemies of Judah when their “offer” was turned down?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What does that reveal about their true motives?

What effect did their opposition have on the people of Judah?

How long did their opposition last?



Ezra 3:8

Foundation of temple laid 536 BC.

Ezra 4:4-5

Work on temple stops 534 BC.

Ezra 4:24; Ezra 5:1-2

Work on temple resumes 520 BC

Read **verses 4, 5, and 24**. What do you notice?



Chapter 4 could be confusing to understand if you notice the timing mentioned because the kings mentioned in **verses 6-23** reigned *after* the kings mentioned in **verses 4-5** and **verse 24**.

Don't worry, though, because it all makes sense if you slow down and read carefully and thoughtfully.

Verses 4-5 are connected in time to **verse 24**.

All that comes in between, **verses 6-23**, is simply a parenthetical insert showing that opposition to building the temple went on for a long duration of time. The letters referred to in **verses 6-23** were written and sent after 520 BC.

In other words,
if you were trying to understand the thought of the author,
you could read **verse 24** right after reading **verses 4-5**
and see that he had inserted additional information for you in **verses 6-23**.

In more other words,
if you read **verse 24** right after reading **verses 4-5**
you would not miss **verses 6-23** because it is a parenthetical insert
that relates some of the major opposition events that occurred
after the days of Cyrus king of Persia
and *after* the first two years of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

In even more other words,
you could read **verses 6-23** separately from **verses 4-5** and **24**,
because they relate examples of opposition that went on
after the days of Cyrus king of Persia
and *after* the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

In fact, **verse 6** states that one event of opposition happened in the reign of Ahasuerus
who reigned after Cyrus and Darius.

Verse 7 states that another event of opposition happened in the days of Artaxerxes
who reigned after Cyrus and Darius and Ahasuerus.

A third example of opposition which happened in the days of Artaxerxes
is related in **verses 8-10**.

It seems Ezra is relating these more modern examples of opposition—
even while he is recounting the opposition of the previous days of Zerubbabel—
in order to make his point with his present day audience.

Ezra 4:6-23

The parenthetical insert in **verses 6-23** is divided into three accusations. The first two accusations speak only of the letter written to the king at that time. The third accusation includes a copy of the actual letter written to the king and the king's response. Which verses correspond to each accusation?

1.

2.

3.

Verse 6 is Ezra's first example of opposition against the people of Judah. To whom was the letter written?

When was the letter written?

Against whom was the letter written?

Who wrote the letter?

Verse 7 is the second example of opposition against the people of Judah. Who wrote the letter?

1.

2.

3.

4.

To whom was the letter written?

In what language was the letter written?

Verses 8-11 relate information about the third example of opposition against the people of Judah. Who wrote the letter?

1.

2.

Who partnered with Rehum and Shimshai in writing the accusation against Jerusalem?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

To whom was the letter written?

Against whom was the letter written?

Verses 11-16 give us a copy of the letter written against Jerusalem. To whom is it addressed?

How do the authors of the letter describe themselves?

1.

2.

What name are the people of Judah given?

Where had the Jews recently come from?

Where had the Jews lived previously to their exile?

To where did the Jews return?

What did the Jews return to do?

The enemies (who are writing this letter) claim that Jerusalem has been a rebellious and evil city. Has she been?

Although the enemies are accusing Jerusalem of being rebellious and evil against the nations who governed her, what is the truth?

Who, really, has Jerusalem and the people of Judah rebelled against?

Against Whom had the people of Israel committed evil?

In fact, why were the people of Judah taken out of the land of Israel?

What did the accusers say the people of Judah were doing as they were rebuilding the city of Jerusalem?

1.

2.

What walls were they finishing?

What foundations were they repairing? (Hint: They had already laid the foundation of the temple.)

What did the accusers say the Jews would do once they had rebuilt Jerusalem and the walls surrounding her?

1.

2.

3.

How did the accusers speculate that would affect the kings of Persia?

Why do the accusers say they are writing their letter? Who do the accusers say they are looking out for?

What do the accusers say they are trying to prevent on the kings behalf?

What do they urge the king to do?

What do they hope the king will find in the history books regarding Jerusalem?

1.

2.

3.

4.

What do they say is the reason Jerusalem was laid waste?

What is the real reason Jerusalem was laid waste? **Ezra 5:12; Ezra 9:7**

What dire prediction do the accusers of Jerusalem make regarding the king's future dominion?

What exactly do they say the king will lose?

Verses 17-22 give us the response of King Artaxerxes. To whom did the king address his response?

1.

2.

3.

4.

In what language had the letter been written?

What needed to happen before the king could hear the contents of the letter?

What did the king say he had done in response to the document?

1.

2.

What did the king say was found in the record books concerning Jerusalem?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

The letter from King Artaxerxes refers to three decrees made (or to be made) by him. What were each of them?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Which decree issued called for the men of Judah to stop building?

What were they to stop building?

When would they be allowed to start rebuilding the city once again?

What warning did the king give to the men of Samaria and beyond the River?

Why? What had he been convinced of through the letter sent to him?

To whom was the king's response read?

- 1.

2.

3.

What did they do immediately?

How did they stop the Jews from rebuilding?

Ezra 4:24

What did the Jews cease to do?

How long was the rebuilding stopped?

Why did the work on the house of God cease? (Remember that this last verse comes directly after **verses 4-5** chronologically.)

READ AND REASON

We know God is in control. We know He sent the Jews back to Israel to rebuild His house in Jerusalem, but yet He allowed the work to cease. Perhaps there was a reason.

Verse 12 gives us a hint. The people had started to rebuild the walls of the city and the foundations of the city. (Remember the foundation to the temple was already finished. **Ezra 3:10-13**)

I've taken you to the book of **Haggai** a few times and I'm going to do it again because it is a perfect cross-reference for us. Haggai tells us the heart's intent of the people at that time. He tells us they are thinking that it is not time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt; instead, they believe they need to build their own houses first.

Haggai 1:1-4a

In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'This people says, "The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt."'"

*Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying,
“Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses
while this house lies desolate?”*

God tells them to consider why things are going the way they are, which is not so good for them. It is because they are not putting Him first; rather, they are putting themselves first. They are building their own houses instead of His.

Haggai 1:9

*“You look for much, but behold, it comes to little;
when you bring it home, I blow it away.
Why?” declares the LORD of hosts,
“Because of My house which lies desolate,
while each of you runs to his own house.”*

God had brought them back to the land to build His house. They disobeyed Him and did not build His house; instead they built their own.

In **Haggai** God brings home His point time and time again—*“Consider your ways!”*
“Consider that you are not obedient to Me—and consider the results!”

Could it be that God allowed the work to cease because they weren't obeying Him?

Chapter by Chapter

Chapter 4's theme should be pretty simple to see.

Remember that **verses 6-23** are a parenthetical insert between **verses 1-5** and **24**.

What is **chapter 4** mainly and plainly about?

Try to keep your title congruent with your other chapter titles if at all possible. (I.e. They have all been mainly about the purpose of rebuilding the house of God.)

Theme of Ezra Chapter 1

Theme of Ezra Chapter 2

Theme of Ezra Chapter 3

Theme of Ezra Chapter 4

EZRA - The HISTORY

Chapter Five

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Ezra 5** and mark every reference to the LORD by marking it with a red triangle. If it is referring to the LORD speaking, i.e. the word of the LORD, still mark LORD with a red triangle but add the following: highlight the phrase in yellow and then circle all that you have highlighted in red.

Read through **Ezra 5** and mark every reference to anything that gives God His Glory, i.e. what Cyrus says about the LORD in **Ezra 1:2**, the house of the LORD, etc. with a yellow box filled in with light purple. Whenever you see the house of the LORD, put a purple house over that as well. (Just a roof and walls is all that is necessary to make it look like a structure.)

Read through **Ezra 5** and mark every reference, including pronouns, to Judah, i.e. His (God's) people living in exile, survivor, etc. with a blue Star of David.

Read through **Ezra 5** and mark every reference to Jerusalem (Zion) or Judah with a blue capital "Z", along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 5** and mark the phrases build and rebuild, along with all synonyms with a light purple circle.

Read through **Ezra 5** and mark every reference to prophets with a green circle.

Read through **Ezra 5** and mark every reference to the kings over nations other than Israel with an orange crown.

Read through **Ezra 5** and mark any official documents or letters which are recorded by drawing a box around the entire letter with a pencil. (Hint: There is one in **Ezra 5**.)

Read through **Ezra 5** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets, i.e. Persian, Babylon, house of his gods (Nebuchadnezzar), etc.

Read through **Ezra 5** and mark every reference to time with a blue box. (References may be varied, i.e. the first year of Cyrus king of Persia or the word "then".)

Read through **Ezra 5** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. Prophecy begins work again
2. Opposition tries to stop work on house of God again
3. Opposition letter sent to King Darius

READ AND ANSWER

Ezra 5:1-2

What word begins **Ezra 5:1**?

What word begins **Ezra 5:2**?

What is the connection?

Who were Haggai and Zechariah?

To whom did they prophesy?

In Whose Name did they prophesy?

Who was over all the Jews?

What happened when God's prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, prophesied?

Who responded to the prophecies?

When did Haggai and Zechariah prophesy? (Hint: When does **Ezra 4:24** tells us the work resumed?)

What did the prophets do once the rebuilding resumed?

Ezra 5:1-2

Who came to the Jews?

1.

2.

3.

When did the opposition speak to the Jews?

What did they say to the Jews?

What was the Jews' answer?

Were Tattenai and Shethar-bozenai able to thwart the rebuilding this time?

Why not?

What were they waiting for?

1.

2.

Who was in control of the entire situation?

Why was the eye of God on the elders of the Jews?

Ezra 5:6-11

Who wrote a letter to King Darius of Persia?

1.

2.

3.

How did they begin their letter to King Darius?

What did they inform him of?

Why were they able to describe the rebuilding of the house of God so well? (Where had they traveled to?)

How did they describe the God of Israel?

How did they describe the rebuilding?

1.

2.

3.

4.

What did they tell Darius they had asked the Jews?

Did the Jews have a decree to rebuild the temple and finish the structure?

What else did they ask the Jews?

What was their stated reason for asking the names of the Jews who were in charge of rebuilding God's house?

1.

2.

When the Jews answered, who did they say they were?

What did the Jews say they were doing?

Who did they say built the original temple?

Who was that great king?



The great king Ezra refers to is King Solomon, son of King David. Saul was the first (human) king of Israel, David was the second, and Solomon was the third.

1 Kings 4:29-34

Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

1 Kings 5:5

Behold, I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to David my father, saying,

*“Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place,
he will build the house for My Name.”*

1 Kings 6:12-14

*Concerning this house which
you are building,
if you will walk in My statutes
and execute My ordinances
and keep all My commandments by walking in them,
then I will carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father,
“I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel.”
So Solomon built the house and finished it.*

Ezra 5:12-16

Who destroyed the temple Solomon built?

Who was sovereign over that destruction?

Who deported the people to Babylon?

Who was sovereign over that deportation?

Why did God give Israel into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean?

Who is being referred to when it says “our fathers”?

Even though God had sent His people to Babylon after causing Nebuchadnezzar to destroy His temple, what did He do in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon?

Just to make sure you take note once again: Why did Cyrus king of Babylon issue a decree to rebuild the house of God that Solomon had built? **2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:2-4**

What had Nebuchadnezzar done with the gold and silver utensils of the house of God in Jerusalem when he overtook it?

To where had he taken them?

Where were the Jews when Cyrus decreed they were to go home to Jerusalem and rebuild the house of God?

What did Cyrus do with the gold and silver utensils that belonged to the God of Israel?

1.

2.

Who was Sheshbazzar?

Who had appointed him governor?

Zerubbabel was the governor of Israel. Are Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel the same person?

What did Cyrus king of Babylon tell Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar) to do with the gold and silver utensils of the house of God?

1.

2.

3.

What did Cyrus tell Zerubbabel to do regarding the house of God?

What did Sheshbazzar (Zerubbabel) do at the command of King Cyrus?

Although Zerubbabel had begun the process of rebuilding the house of God, had it been finished?

Why not? (Remember **Ezra 4.**)

Ezra 5:17

Just to make sure you are keeping things in context: Who has been recounting all of this?

And to whom have they sent this letter?

What did Tattenai, the governor of the province beyond the River and Shethar-bonzenai and his colleagues the officials, who were beyond the River, ask King Darius to do?

Where did they want the king to search?

Where was the king's treasure house?

What did they want King Darius to do if he found the decree issued by King Cyrus?

Once King Darius made his decision regarding the rebuilding of the house of God in Jerusalem, what did Tattenai, Shethar-bonzenai and the officials beyond the River ask Darius to do?

What were they hoping his decision would be?

They were about to be very disappointed... (**Ezra 6**)

READ AND REASON

What's the big deal about God rebuilding His house?

Why are Tattenai, the governor of the province beyond the River, and Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues so determined to stop the progress?

Why has there been continual opposition from the start?

Why can't the nations just let God's people be?

Why do the nations want to stop God's people from worshiping their own God?

Maybe it has something to do with Who the God of Israel really is...

He isn't just the God of Israel—He is the God of heaven and earth!

Notice how the enemies refer to God—the great God, the God of heaven and earth, the God of heaven. Hmmmm... perhaps they are on to something.

1 Kings 9:3 tells us that God began His answer to Solomon regarding his prayer of consecration after he had finished building the temple by saying this, *“The LORD said to him, ‘I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.’”*

This God, Whose house they were trying to eliminate, was not just an ordinary “god” like their own false gods; He was not just the god of a nation—He was the God of heaven and earth! He ruled over all!

In their own minds that meant if they could thwart Him from having a house (a place to worship Him) they could eliminate Him altogether! How wrong they were! This God, the God of heaven and earth, was the One True God! He would establish His kingdom whenever and wherever He chose—and He had chosen Jerusalem! If God finished rebuilding His house, they reasoned, He might start to make trouble for them.

This God, the God of heaven and earth, was all-powerful and they were concerned! They knew their own gods were useless and they knew that the great God of heaven and earth would rule over them eventually. Their efforts to stop Him were as useless as their gods.

~ Chapter by Chapter

What is **chapter 5** mainly and plainly about?

Try to keep your title congruent with your other chapter titles if at all possible. I.e. They have all been mainly about the purpose of rebuilding the house of God.
(Hint: What starts again? What comes against the work again?)

Theme of Ezra Chapter 1

Theme of Ezra Chapter 2

Theme of Ezra Chapter 3

Theme of Ezra Chapter 4

Theme of Ezra Chapter 5

EZRA - The HISTORY

Chapter Six

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Ezra 6** and mark every reference to the LORD by marking it with a red triangle. If it is referring to the LORD speaking, i.e. the word of the LORD, still mark LORD with a red triangle but add the following: highlight the phrase in yellow and then circle all that you have highlighted in red.

Read through **Ezra 6** and mark every reference to anything that gives God His Glory, i.e. what Cyrus says about the LORD in **Ezra 1:2**, the house of the LORD, etc. with a yellow box filled in with light purple. Whenever you see the house of the LORD, put a purple house over that as well. (Just a roof and walls is all that is necessary to make it look like a structure.)

Read through **Ezra 6** and mark every reference, including pronouns, to Judah, i.e. His (God's) people living in exile, survivor, etc. with a blue Star of David.

Read through **Ezra 6** and mark every reference to Jerusalem (Zion) or Judah with a blue capital "Z", along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 6** and mark the phrases build and rebuild, along with all synonyms with a light purple circle.

Read through **Ezra 6** and mark every reference to prophets with a green circle.

Read through **Ezra 6** and mark every reference to the kings over nations other than Israel with an orange crown.

Read through **Ezra 6** and mark any official documents or letters which are recorded by drawing a box around the entire letter with a pencil. (Hint: There is one in **Ezra 6**.)

Read through **Ezra 6** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets, i.e. Persian, Babylon, house of his gods (Nebuchadnezzar), etc.

Read through **Ezra 6** and mark every reference to time with a blue box. (References may be varied, i.e. the first year of Cyrus king of Persia or the word "then".)

Read through **Ezra 6** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. Darius finds memorandum about Cyrus' decree
2. Darius responds to enemies of Judah
3. Rebuilding of house of God continues and is completed
4. Dedication of the completed house of God
5. Passover observed in house of God (1st time since exile)
6. Feast of Unleavened Bread observed in house of God (1st time since exile)

READ AND ANSWER

Ezra 6:1-5

What decree did King Darius issue?

Where was the search to be made?

What was being searched for?

Was the decree issued by King Cyrus found in the archives in Babylon?

Where did Darius finally find information regarding Cyrus' decree?

Where is the fortress in Ecbatana located?

If you are not familiar with the locations of Babylon and Persia, get out your Bible maps and find them.

Although Tattenai and his gang had directed the king to the treasure house in Babylon, the document was not found. What must the king have decided to do?

Due to his continued efforts at locating the document, what did he find?

How was the scroll labeled?

The memorandum recorded when Cyrus' decree was issued—when was it?

What did the king's decree concern?

What was his decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem?

1.

2.

What were Cyrus' instructions concerning dimensions?

What were Cyrus' instructions concerning layers?

What were Cyrus' instructions concerning the cost?

What were Cyrus' instructions concerning the gold and silver utensils of the house of God which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon?

1.

2.

By ordering them to be put in the house of God, Cyrus was acknowledging who owned them—Who did?

Ezra 6:6-12

Verse 6 begins King Darius' response to the enemy group in the provinces beyond the River—what is the message?

Don't you love it! *"Keep away from there!!!"* What else does he command?

1.

2.

Moreover, Darius issues a decree concerning what the enemies are to do for the elders of Judah in the rebuilding of the house of God. What does he decree regarding the cost of God's temple?

The full cost! Way to go, Darius! And how soon were the Jews to receive the money for the building of the house of God?

What else do the enemies have to provide for God's people?

Whatever is needed! It's just wonderful, don't you think? What does Darius suggest the Jews will need for their burnt offerings?

1.

2.

3.

What does Darius suggest the priests will need and request?

1.

2.

3.

4.

And just how soon are the priests to receive whatever they request?

Without fail!!! Awesome!!! What does King Darius say the priests will do with what is given to them?

What else does the king say the priests will do?

What king is Darius referring to?

Whose sons are referred to?

Why does Darius want the priests of Israel to pray for him and his sons? What does he hope will continue for him? What does he hope to avoid? (**Ezra 7:23**)

What decree did Darius issue regarding any man who violates his edict?

1.

2.

3.

What supplication does Darius make regarding God's help to secure his edict?

How does he describe God?

What does he expect God to do if any king or people attempts to change his edict, to destroy God's house in Jerusalem?

What does Darius affirm?

What last command does he make?



They Absolutely Hate The Name!

Who does?
Most of the peoples of the earth.

Why?
Because they hate Him and His ways.

Israel! It's the place where God chose to put His Name!
Israel became the most important place in all the world when God put His Name there.
That is why so many nations hate it so—
because they want to erase God's Name
(just like the builders of the tower of Babel did).

Mt. Zion, or Jerusalem, in Israel, is the place where God chose to put His Name!
Israel is the most important place in all of the world because God put His Name there,
and someday soon He will come and dwell there Himself.
He chose Zion to be the place where He would put His throne
and rule the world for 1,000 years.
He will sit on His throne and rule over all the nations... and that is why they hate it so—
because they want to erase God's Name
(just like men did when they built the tower of Babel).

***They have said, "Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation,
That the name of Israel be remembered no more."
Psalm 83:4***

It has never really been about Israel,
just like it was never really about the tower of Babel—
it is about man's rebellion against God, their Creator.
He had (and has) all rights over His creation,
but man arrogantly thinks he has all rights over himself.
However, one day soon, very soon, God will ensure that His Word will be obeyed.

***I have sworn by Myself,
the Word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back,
that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.
Isaiah 45:23***

Mankind has never obeyed its God, the God of heaven and earth,

but God's will defies the defiance of man.
Mankind does not worship God, but someday he will—all men, every man!

**...Christ Jesus, Who, although He existed in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant,
and being made in the likeness of men.
Being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.
For this reason also, God highly exalted Him,
and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
so that at the Name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW,
of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the Glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:5-11**

Ezra 6:13-14

How did Tattenai, Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues respond to King Darius' decree to support the Jews in their building rather than trying to stop them?

How closely did they follow King Darius' orders?

How were the Jews doing with their building at this time?

What facilitated their success?

Who were the prophets?

1.

2.

Did they complete the building of God's house?

Who had commanded the Jews to build God's house?

Who had decreed for the Jews to build God's house?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Ezra 6:15-18

When was the temple completed?



Point of Depth

Ezra 3:8

Foundation of temple laid 536 BC.

Ezra 4:4-5

Work on temple stops 534 BC.

Ezra 4:24; Ezra 5:1-2

Work on temple resumes 520 BC

Ezra 6:15

Temple completed 516 BC



Point of Depth

The month of Adar is the last month in the Hebrew calendar. That means that the first month, Nisan, is the very next month.

Why is that remarkable?

The end of the year meant a new year was coming and in the new year they could now start celebrating the Feasts of the LORD which He had commanded them to observe. It was necessary for the house to be completed in order to observe the year of feasts— after all, it was their purpose in returning!

From 586 BC to 516 BC Passover had not been celebrated— that's 70 years, the exact time of Babylonian exile apportioned for the Jews by God.

Their exile was over and now they could return to worshipping God in His house.

What did the sons of Israel, the priest, the Levites, and the rest of the exiles do after the house of God was complete?

How did they celebrate the dedication of the house of God?

What did they offer for the dedication of the temple of God?

1.

2.

3.

What did they offer as a sin offering for all Israel?

Why were there exactly 12 male goats?

What did they do next?

1.

2.

How were priests appointed and separated?

How were Levites appointed and divided?

What was their purpose?

Where were they to perform their service to God?

How did they know what they should do?

Ezra 6:19-21

What was celebrated in the first month of the new year?

When was Passover celebrated?

What had the priests and the Levites done to prepare for the Passover celebration?

How many of them had purified themselves?

What was done once they had been purified?

For whom was the Passover lamb sacrificed?

1.

2.

3.

Who ate the Passover?

1.

2.

What did the sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land have in common?

Ezra 6:22

Passover itself was the first part of the entire Passover Feast while the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the second part. How long was the Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrated?

How was it celebrated?

Why was it celebrated with joy?

1.

2.

Who caused them to rejoice?

Who had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God?

To Whom did the house of God belong?

READ AND REASON

This ends the first segment of **Ezra**. **Chapter 7** through **10** speak about Ezra's group of exiles which returned to Jerusalem and his encounters with all of Israel living in Jerusalem.

Zerubbabel led the first remnant back to Jerusalem with the purpose of rebuilding the house of God. He did that, finally, despite much opposition. Ezra will lead the second remnant back to Jerusalem with the purpose of adorning (beautifying or glorifying) the house of God.

Zerubbabel worked on rebuilding the house of God. Ezra will work on rebuilding the people of God.

Zerubbabel's opposition came from without; Ezra's will come from within.

The people without a house to worship their God is not doable; neither is the house of God functional without His people.

Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.

Exodus 25:8

In the New Jerusalem on the New Earth there will be no temple because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. God will forever, beyond the horizon of time ,dwell with His people.

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Revelation 21:22

 Chapter by Chapter

What is **Ezra 6** mainly and plainly about?
Try to keep your title congruent with your other chapter titles if at all possible.
I.e. They have all been mainly about their purpose in returning to the land—
rebuilding the house of God.

Theme of Ezra Chapter 1

Theme of Ezra Chapter 2

Theme of Ezra Chapter 3

Theme of Ezra Chapter 4

Theme of Ezra Chapter 5

Theme of Ezra Chapter 6

EZRA - The HISTORY

Chapter Seven

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Ezra 7** and mark every reference to the LORD by marking it with a red triangle. If it is referring to the LORD speaking, i.e. the word of the LORD, still mark LORD with a red triangle but add the following: highlight the phrase in yellow and then circle all that you have highlighted in red.

Read through **Ezra 7** and mark every reference to anything that gives God His Glory, i.e. what Cyrus says about the LORD in **Ezra 1:2**, the house of the LORD, etc. with a yellow box filled in with light purple. Whenever you see the house of the LORD, put a purple house over that as well. (Just a roof and walls is all that is necessary to make it look like a structure.)

Read through **Ezra 7** and mark every reference, including pronouns, to Judah, i.e. His (God's) people living in exile, survivor, etc. with a blue Star of David.

Read through **Ezra 7** and mark every reference to Jerusalem (Zion) or Judah with a blue capital "Z", along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 7** and mark every reference to the kings over nations other than Israel with an orange crown.

Read through **Ezra 7** and mark any official documents or letters which are recorded by drawing a box around the entire letter with a pencil. (Hint: There is one in **Ezra 7**.)

Read through **Ezra 7** and mark the phrases which refer to the good hand of his God being on him by underlining them in purple and highlighting them in yellow.

Read through **Ezra 7** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets, i.e. provinces, Persian, Babylon, my kingdom, etc.

Read through **Ezra 7** and mark every reference to time with a blue box. (References may be varied, i.e. the first year of Cyrus king of Persia or the word "then".)

Read through **Ezra 7** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. Ezra the priest
2. Ezra the scribe
3. Decree for Ezra from King Artaxerxes
4. Ezra's response—Praise to God!

READ AND ANSWER

Ezra 7:1-5

When does **Ezra 7** begin?

After what things?



Point of Depth

It was still 516 BC at the end of **Ezra 6**.
It is now 458 BC at the beginning of **Ezra 7**.
Almost 6 decades have passed.

What did Ezra do?

Who was Ezra?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.

What can be seen from Ezra's ancestry? Is Ezra from the priestly line?

What does that make Ezra?



Ezra's prominent ancestry showed that he was of the priestly line.

We don't know if he was a high priest, but we do know his priestly heritage gave him authority to teach (**Leviticus 10:11**), which was going to be indispensable in the job God gave him—adorning the house of God with faithful worshipers—his job would be to rebuild the worship in Israel.

Ezra 7:6-10

Where had Ezra been living?

What had Ezra been doing in Babylon during the exile?



The Hebrew word for scribe in **Ezra 7:6** is *sopher* and means enumerator, secretary, or scribe. It is the first time in the Bible where the word scribe is given as a title to a person.

The word for skilled in **Ezra 7:6** is *mehir* and means ready, quick, prompt, skilled, or rapid. This is not referring to how fast a scribe could write, but rather how well he knew and applied the law of God. A scribe knew the law of God well and was ready to apply it to any situation.

The proper description of a scribe would not simply be a penman, but an attorney, rabbi, and doctor.

Was Ezra a skilled scribe?

What was he skilled in?

Who gave the law of Moses?

Ezra evidently went to the king of Persia and asked for help to return to Jerusalem. How did the king respond to his request?

Why did the king grant him all he requested?

Who accompanied Ezra to Jerusalem?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

When did Ezra go up to Jerusalem?

When did Ezra arrive at Jerusalem?

When, in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, did Ezra begin his trip?

From where did Ezra depart?

When, exactly, in the fifth month in the seventh year of the king, did Ezra arrive at Jerusalem?

How long did his journey take?



Corresponding to our Gregorian calendar Ezra left Babylon on April 8 and arrived in Jerusalem on August 4.

Why did his trip succeed?

Why was the good hand of God upon Ezra?

What had Ezra set his heart (determined in his mind) to do?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Before Ezra could practice God's statutes and ordinances what did he need to do?

Before Ezra would teach God's statutes and ordinance what does it seem like he did?

- 1.
- 2.

Ezra 7:11-26

What does Ezra give us beginning in **verse 12**?

Who gave Ezra this decree?

Why? (**verse 6**)

How is Ezra identified?

1.

2.

Besides his ancestry, what other qualifications are given?

1.

2.

Do you think King Artaxerxes was aware of Ezra's qualifications?

Why or why not?

How does King Artaxerxes describe himself?

How does King Artaxerxes describe Ezra?

How does King Artaxerxes describe God?

What does King Artaxerxes extend to Ezra?

King Artaxerxes states he has issued a decree. What has he decreed?

Who may go with Ezra to Jerusalem?

1.

2.

3.

Where does he mention they are residing at the time?

Who does the king say is sending Ezra to Jerusalem?

1.

2.

What does the king say he wants Ezra to do?

1.

2.

About what will Ezra be inquiring?

How will Ezra inquire about the condition of the religious and civil relations of the Jewish remnant in Judah and Jerusalem? What will be his guide and standard?

Where is the law of God?

Ezra is also appointed to carry silver and gold. Who has given him this money?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

To Whom are the king and his counselors offering the money?

Does it tell us why they are offering the money?

What does it tell us?

What do they acknowledge concerning Jerusalem?

What is the money to benefit?

Where is the house of God?

What are they to buy with the money?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What is to happen to the bulls, rams, lambs, grain offerings, and drink offerings?

What is Ezra to do with the rest of the money?

How is Ezra to decide what to do with the rest of the money?

What else is given to Ezra?

What are the utensils to be used for?

What is Ezra supposed to do with the utensils?

Who will be watching Ezra's delivery?

Where does King Artaxerxes tell Ezra he can find more money if he has any other needs for the house of God?

King Artaxerxes includes a decree to all the treasurers who are in the provinces beyond the River. What does he command them to do?

What does he call Ezra?

1.

2.

If Ezra requires money from the treasurers in the provinces beyond the River, what is to be their response?

Do they have a limit?

What is it?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Is there a limit on salt?

Who does King Artaxerxes acknowledge has total power and sovereignty?

What does he call God?

If God commands anything, how are the servants of King Artaxerxes to respond?

Why?

Where does he believe wrath, if it came, would be from?

What last caveat does the king add to his decree?

Who is not to be charged tax, tribute, or toll?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

The king addresses Ezra once again. What does he say is in Ezra's hand?

What does the king command Ezra to do with God's wisdom?

1.

2.

What are the appointed magistrates and judges to do?

Which people in the province beyond the River?

What if someone is ignorant of the laws of Ezra's God?

What if someone will not observe the law of Ezra's God and the law of King Artaxerxes?

What types of judgement will be strictly executed on anyone who will not observe the law of God and the law of the king?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Ezra 7:27-28

What is Ezra's response to the king's decrees?

Who does he bless?

Who put the ideas (which the king put into his decrees) into his heart?

What does Ezra say the king wants him to do?



How will Ezra adorn the house of the LORD in Jerusalem?

King Artaxerxes probably didn't know what he was really commanding Ezra to do.
Ezra's mission was to call God's people to holiness (sanctification)
in order to worship Him in truth.
There can be no true worship without holy people!

Ezra would find that the people were in great sin and although it distressed him greatly,
he rose to the challenge and dealt with it as a man of God.

In order to glorify God's house there needs to be holy people!
It was true then...
And it is true now...

In order to truly worship God you need to be holy.

Who extended lovingkindness to Ezra before the king?

Who extended lovingkindness to Ezra before the king's counselors?

Who extended lovingkindness to Ezra before the king's mighty princes?

What happened to Ezra?

How was he strengthened?

What did he do in the strength he obtained from the hand of the LORD his God being upon him?

Who did he gather?

READ AND REASON

Three times in **Ezra 7** we are told that the hand of his God is on him. It seems like something everyone would want.

But what exactly does it mean? The phrase, or a form of the phrase, is used six times in **Ezra** and twice in **Nehemiah**. Let's look at those usages and see what we can glean from them.

Ezra 7:6

This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the LORD his God was upon him.

Ezra 7:9

For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God was upon him.

Ezra 7:27-28

Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to adorn the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, and has extended lovingkindness to me before the king and his counselors and before all the king's mighty princes. Thus I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my God upon me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

Ezra 8:18

According to the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of insight of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, and his sons and brothers, 18 men...

Ezra 8:22

For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him."

Ezra 8:31

Then we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was over us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way.

Nehemiah 2:7-8

And I said to the king, "If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go." And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.

Nehemiah 2:18

I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work.

What do each of the above references have in common?

Each one is referring to doing the work which God has commanded to be done. In each case, God's hand (power and strength) were causing the circumstances of each situation to turn out successfully, according to the plan of God.

In other words, God's hand was not "on" Ezra or Nehemiah as they were doing their own thing—they were working for the Lord, doing business He had clearly called them to do.

Look at **2 Chronicles 30:12**.

The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD.

What do you see? The same thing. The hand of God empowered the people to do what was commanded by the Word of the LORD.

What about us? What about today? Does the hand of God work on our behalf today?

Let's look at **Romans 8:28**.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

This perennial favorite is so often taken out of context. Yes, it is true that God causes all things to work together for good for people, but for which people? For those who love God—the ones who are called according to His purpose. His purpose—not ours.

What is His purpose?

Romans 8:29-30

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom

He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Very clearly His purpose is our glorification—being made into the image of His Son, Who is the radiance of God’s Glory and the exact representation of His Nature!
(Hebrews 1:3)

Romans 8:31

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Yes, it is true that God is for us (those who are called according to His purpose of glorification), but He is for us in the work we do for Him—the work of glorifying Him here on earth as we are conformed more and more into the image of His Son—Who looks just like Him!

It’s all about Him. It’s not about us at all.

May the hand of God be upon you...

 Chapter by Chapter

What is **Ezra 7** mainly and plainly about?
Try to keep your title congruent with your other chapter titles if at all possible.
I.e. They have all been mainly about their purpose in returning to the land—
rebuilding the house of God.

Theme of Ezra Chapter 1

Theme of Ezra Chapter 2

Theme of Ezra Chapter 3

Theme of Ezra Chapter 4

Theme of Ezra Chapter 5

Theme of Ezra Chapter 6

Theme of Ezra Chapter 7

EZRA - The HISTORY

Chapter Eight

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Ezra 8** and mark every reference to the LORD by marking it with a red triangle. If it is referring to the LORD speaking, i.e. the word of the LORD, still mark LORD with a red triangle but add the following: highlight the phrase in yellow and then circle all that you have highlighted in red.

Read through **Ezra 8** and mark every reference to anything that gives God His Glory, i.e. what Cyrus says about the LORD in **Ezra 1:2**, the house of the LORD, etc. with a yellow box filled in with light purple. Whenever you see the house of the LORD, put a purple house over that as well. (Just a roof and walls is all that is necessary to make it look like a structure.)

Read through **Ezra 8** and mark every reference, including pronouns, to Judah, i.e. His (God's) people living in exile, survivor, etc. with a blue Star of David.

Read through **Ezra 8** and mark every reference to Jerusalem (Zion) or Judah with a blue capital "Z", along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 8** and mark the phrases which refer to the good hand of his God being on him by underlining them in purple and highlighting them in yellow.

Read through **Ezra 8** and highlight every reference to fasting with light brown.

Read through **Ezra 8** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets, i.e. provinces, Persian, Babylon, my kingdom, etc.

Read through **Ezra 8** and mark every reference to time with a blue box. (References may be varied, i.e. the first year of Cyrus king of Persia or the word "then".)

Read through **Ezra 8** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. Ezra's group
2. Ezra stops at Ahava and gathers group

3. Ezra proclaims fast
4. Ezra sets apart 12 priests to carry offering
5. Ezra's group journeys to Jerusalem
6. Ezra's group arrives at Jerusalem

READ AND ANSWER

Ezra 8:1-14

How does **Ezra 8** begin? What is listed?

Look back at **Ezra 7:28** and notice who Ezra gathered. The word for leading is actually the same Hebrew word, *rosh*, that is used for heads in **Ezra 8:1**. Are these the same men?

From where were the men gathered?

When were these men gathered?

What two categories does Ezra list?

- 1.
- 2.



Point of Depth

God names people.
His names send us a message.

Here are some examples.
Let's look at the names of the leaders who brought the exiles back from Babylon.

Gershom is the first name listed.
The Hebrew word is *Gereshom* and it's root means to drive or cast out.
It holds the idea of dispossessing, divorcing, evicting, or expelling.

Daniel, the next name listed, is the Hebrew word *Daniyyel*.

It means God is my Judge.

The fourth name listed is Zechariah which is the Hebrew word *Zeckaryahu*.
It means to remember or be mindful of God.

Considering what Ezra would find when he arrived at Jerusalem
(the sin among the people)...

Considering that Ezra would call on these same heads of households to do what
needed to be done (putting away foreign wives and children)...

Knowing that the leading men who came with Ezra were chosen by God...
Knowing that these same leading men were named by God at their birth...

Don't you just want to bow your head before him
and worship Him in all His greatness?

We won't go through all the names of these heads of households,
but I want you to feel free to do any research on them you can!
You can take a concordance, like Strong's,
and find the meaning of a few of the names in the rest of the chapter.
You just might find something noteworthy!

It can be very faith building to find a nugget of truth inside of a list of names.

Let me restate what I did when we came to the list in **Ezra 2**. I am going to deal with this segment (a list of the men of the people of Israel who came up out of the captivity from Babylon with Ezra) differently than how I normally do.

Observation Bible Study Guides are not meant to be a complete study of any particular book; rather, they are designed to help you observe the text available to you in the Bible. Although I many times will add a "Point of Depth" or a "Point of Connection" which might include a quick word study or some cross-references in order to help you more fully understand the context of the verses you are observing, they are not exhaustive by any means. Observation of God's Word is the beginning of any study of the Bible and it continues right up until the end (which is never-ending). Bible study at-large is an even more daunting task than that of thorough observation (which is by no means an easy undertaking).

Most people, when reading, or even studying, a list as exists in **Ezra 8** will gloss blissfully over its contents as though it were insignificant—that is a huge mistake. There is so very much to be gained from every single word God speaks! By nature, a list will not easily reveal as much information (without the extra labor of study) as a sentence or paragraph. And when you study a book that contains a list such as this you must be willing to do the labor or studying, which consists of way more than healthy observation in order to gain the wealth of information that exists—a thorough study, not just

observation, needs to be done. Painstaking word studies, comprehensive cross-referencing, commentaries, dictionaries, maps, and variable lexical aids must be employed.

The purpose of WORD Center's Observation Bible Study Guides is to take you deeper into the Bible study skill of *observation* and therefore, I will focus on pointing out what is available and obvious in the text itself, it just won't be verse by verse. So now, let's get back to the business of observing **Ezra 8!**

Gershom was of the sons of Phinehas. Who was Phinehas? (**Exodus 6:25**)

Daniel was of the sons of Ithamar. Who was Ithamar? (**Exodus 6:23**)

What do Phinehas and Ithamar have in common?

Then what can we know about Gershom and Daniel?

Who was David? (**2 Samuel 5:12**)

Although we don't know much about Hattush, what can we know because he was of the sons of David?

The rest of the list includes names of laymen. What additional information is given along with the names of the laymen?

Are any names of women or children given?

Were any women or children in Ezra's group that went to Jerusalem? (**Ezra 8:21**)



It is estimated, drawn from these numbers, that Ezra's group consisted of 4,000 to 7,000 individuals.

It is estimated that Zerubbabel's group consisted of almost 50,000.



Point of Connection

One more thought before we move on past this list.
According to a few commentaries I read,
everyone on this list (except the sons of Joab)
was related to exiles of the first return under Zerubbabel.
It should give us pause to think of the many split families that were generated
as a result of those who chose to follow God back to Jerusalem.

It should also give us pause to think of how many reunited families there were
as a result of these descendants finally returning to the land of Israel.

Finally, I can't help but think of how many relatives decided not to return
to the land of the LORD...

Ezra 8:15-20

Where was the gathering place for Ezra's group?



Point of Depth

You won't be able to find the exact Ahava on a map,
but the route Ezra took was most likely Northeast alongside the Euphrates River.
This would make their meeting place just a little North of Babylon.

How long was the group at Ahava?

What did Ezra discover about the group?

What groups were present?

What group was missing?

When Ezra saw there were no Levites accompanying him to Jerusalem, what did he do?

Who were the leading men Ezra sent for?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

Who were the teachers Ezra sent for?

1.

2.

To whom did Ezra send the leading men and the teachers?

Why do you think Ezra sent leading men?

Why do you think Ezra sent along two teachers?

Where did Iddo live?

How did the leading men and teachers know what to say to Iddo and his brothers?

Who were Iddo's brothers?

What was the purpose of sending for Levites?

Where would the Levites minister?

Who was brought to be part of Ezra's group?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Who was Sherebiah?

How was Sherebiah described?

How many of Sherebiah's sons and brothers came with him?

Who were Hashabiah and Jeshaiiah?

How many of Jeshaiiah's brothers and sons came with him?

How many temple servants came with the Levites?

Who were the temple servants?

Who had given the temple servants (originally) for the service of the Levites?

How were each designated?



The word for temple servant is the Hebrew word (and also the Aramaic word) *nethinim* and means given or dedicated one.

They were likely foreigners, such as the descendants of the Gibeonites, who performed the more lowly and humble tasks for the service of the Levites.

The delegates Ezra sent succeeded, but was their success produced by the influence of the leading men and the diplomacy of the teachers?

Who caused the mission to succeed?

How was it determined who they would bring to Ezra?

Ezra 8:21-23

What did Ezra do once the Levites and temple servants were gathered with the rest of the group heading to Jerusalem from Babylon?

Where were they still located?

Why did Ezra proclaim a fast?

What requirement does it seem is necessary to go before God?

What were they seeking?

For whom and what were they seeking a safe journey?

1.

2.

3.

Why did Ezra think he needed to proclaim a fast?

What had Ezra said to the king?

To whom is the hand of God favorable disposed?

To whom is the power of God and His anger against?

Could Ezra have requested troops and horsemen from the king to protect his group from the enemy on the way?

Why didn't he?



It is important to note that both Nehemiah and Ezra made requests from the king to provide for their journey back to Jerusalem and yet Ezra decided to not ask for troops and horsemen while Nehemiah had no qualms about it.

Is one man right and the other wrong?

Both men believed it was God Who was the Protector and Keeper of Israel.
Nehemiah believed the king's protection came from God.
Ezra believed his protection came from God.
Both men chose different avenues to display their faith in the God of Israel.

Ezra, in this case, simply followed that faith to a different level.
He had said so much about the sovereignty of God to the king (which is a good thing)
that when the matter came up,
he did not want to dishonor his true King by seemingly not trusting in Him.

He chose to request protection from God alone,
Whom he knew the protection was really coming from anyway.

What did Ezra's group do?

- 1.
- 2.

What did God do?

How did God answer their entreaty? (**Ezra 8:31**)

Ezra 8:24-30

What did Ezra do after the group had fasted?

Who were the priests Ezra set apart?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What did he give to the twelve leading priests?

What was this offering for?

How did he count out the silver, gold, and utensils to them?

Who had donated this offering?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How much silver did he weigh into their hands?

How much were the silver utensils worth that he weighed into their hands?

How much gold did he weigh into their hands?

How much were the gold bowls worth that he weighed into their hands?

What bronze did he weigh into their hands?

How precious was the bronze?

What did Ezra tell them about their lives?

What did Ezra tell them about the utensils?

What did Ezra tell them about the silver and the gold?

What were they to do with the valuables?

1.

2.

How long were they to watch them and keep them?

Who would they eventually relinquish their responsibility to?

1.

2.

3.

Where in Jerusalem would they eventually turn over their valuables to the next group of watchers/keepers?

Did the priests and Levites accept Ezra's charge?

What did they agree to do?

Ezra 8:31

After Ezra had requested provisions from the king, after Ezra had gathered the heads of households to return with him to Jerusalem, after Ezra had sent for Levites to return with his group, after Ezra had proclaimed a fast to seek protection from God, after God listened to their entreaty, after Ezra set apart twelve of the leading priests to carry the offering for the house of God... what did his group finally do?

Where had they been staying since they gathered together?

When did they leave?

Under what glorious condition did they leave?

What did God do for them along the way?



It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word translated ambushes is actually singular. It could read "He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and ambush by the way." This would mean that God not only delivered them from the outcome of any possible political enemies or outlaw ambushes, but He actually delivered them, or saved them, from being attacked in the first place. In other words, probably no enemies ever approached them!

This is all the more amazing when you do the math on the fortune they were carrying (which was available for public knowledge). 1 talent equals 30 kilograms and 1 kilogram equals 2.20 pounds. This comes out to 30 tons of precious metals! Their caravan would have been hunted by every bandit in the desert!

Considering they were carrying an enormous load of valuables worth millions... which had high visibility... Considering that they did not have an armed guard... and that they were traveling in the desert for four long months...

It is impossible to think they could have made it to Jerusalem

without any attempt at robbery...

Unless, that is, the hand of their God had been over them!

Ezra 8:32-36

When they finally came to Jerusalem what did they do?

After three days (probably resting and taking care of carts, wagons, animals, and feet) what did they do?

What was weighed out at Jerusalem?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Where was it weighed out in Jerusalem?

Into whose hand did the priests and Levites of Ezra's group weigh out their silver, gold, and utensils?

Who was Meremoth?

Who was with Meremoth?

Was Eleazar a priest, too?

How do you know? (Remember who Phinehas was.)

Who was with Eleazar the son of Phinehas?

1.

2.

3.

Was anything found missing?

How do you know?

What did they do as they weighed it out?

After everything was numbered and weighed out, what did they do in their books?

What did the exiles do next?

What burnt offerings did they offer?

1.

2.

3.

4.

To Whom were the burnt offerings offered?

What was the purpose of the burnt offerings?

Why were there exactly 12 bulls?

What about the 12 male goats? For whose sins were they offered?



Burnt offerings dealt with homage and dedication *to* God.
Sin offerings dealt with atonement *from* God.

What did they do once they had taken care of their business and relationship with their God?

To whom did they deliver the king's edicts?

1.

2.

What was in the king's edicts to the king's satraps? (**Ezra 7:21-24**)

As a way of reminder, which king are we talking about?

What was the response of the king's satraps and the governors in the provinces beyond the River?

1.

2.

READ AND REASON

Ezra told the carriers of the valuables they were holy to the LORD. What exactly did that mean?

In **1 Peter 1:15-16** God has written, “...but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’” What exactly does that mean?

Holy is such a “churchy” word that sometimes we say it without really understanding what it means. God says we are to be holy, even as He is holy. If we are supposed to be holy, then, by all means let’s make sure we know what it means.

Holy is used in 580 verses in the Bible. The Greek word is *hagios*. It means “an awful thing, consecrated, set apart, a saint.” It has to do with something being totally different from everything else around it. God is holy. He is consecrated unto Himself. He is set apart unto Himself. He is awful.

You’re probably saying, “Wait a minute! God isn’t awful! God is Love!!!”

I would answer you, “God is awe-full!” Let’s look at His Word together in several passages, and then maybe you will see what I am trying to show you. The first time we see the word “holy” is on Mt. Horeb, the mountain of God, where the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush.

Exodus 3:1-5

Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

Fire consumes. The bush was definitely on fire, yet it wasn’t being consumed. Moses saw something that just didn’t make sense. He turned aside to see it more closely, but God told him not to come any nearer. God told Moses to take off his shoes because he was on holy ground.

In this first exposure to the word “holy” we see two aspects of its meaning. First of all, holy means to be awful or awe-full. It means to be full of awe! Moses was full of awe when he saw the bush. It was more than mere idle curiosity about a nonchalant event in the desert. Moses called it a marvelous sight. He marveled when he saw it.

Secondly, we see that the bush was unique to itself. There were lots of bushes in the desert, but none like this bush. Moses had probably seen hundreds of fires but never one like this fire. This bush couldn’t be categorized with any others. It was in a class all by itself. That made it holy.

You see, it was set apart from all others. More importantly, it was set apart *unto* something! It was set apart *unto* God. God was occupying that corner of the desert right then, and nothing else could enter unless it, too, was holy—unless it was set apart unto God.

Let's look at one of the aspects of holiness: the aspect of being set apart *unto* God. Read these passages and notice the phrases that show we are His and are possessed by Him.

Numbers 15:40

...so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God.

Deuteronomy 7:6

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His Own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Ephesians 1:4

...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

1 Peter 1:15-16

...but like the Holy One Who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

Our beautiful little granddaughter, Anna, was born prematurely. She was placed into the NICU (Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit) at the hospital and carefully protected from all outside health dangers. No one was allowed to enter the unit if they were ill or had been exposed to illness. When we went inside the care unit to be with her, we needed to wash our arms and hands with antiseptic soap and wear face masks. You see, we had to become "holy" to the health of the care unit. Nothing unholy was allowed to enter. Why? Because to bring unhealthiness into the unit would contaminate the healthiness of the unit. We had to be healthy because the NICU was set apart unto health.

God commands His people to be holy. Why? Because He is holy. He is set apart *unto* Himself—He is set apart *unto* holiness—and we cannot be with Him unless we, too, are holy. If He allowed unholiness to be with Him then He would no longer be holy. And that just is not going to happen!

Deuteronomy 23:14

Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.

God clearly defines holiness for us in **Leviticus 20:26**, “*Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.*” To be holy is not just to be separated from the world. That alone does not make us holy. We are separated from the peoples to be His!

I use a simple illustration in my classes. Since I use whiteboards when I teach, I usually have a whole set of colored whiteboard markers in my desk. I take them out and lay them on the top of the desk so the whole class can see them: purple, blue, green, red, black, yellow, brown, and orange. They are a set.

Then I pick up one of them, let’s say the yellow one. I give it to one of my students. Now there are seven markers in one group on the desk, and one yellow marker all by itself in the hand of a student.

Does that make the yellow one holy? Not completely.
Does that make the yellow one holy unto me? No, not at all!

Simply being separated *from* the other markers does not make the yellow marker holy to me. It can be set apart from the other markers and still not be useful to me at all. It is not available for me. Rather, it has been set apart to one of my students.

As the illustration demonstrates, separating the yellow marker from the others did not set it apart for my use, and neither does separating oneself from the ways of the world set a person apart for God’s use. You see, to be holy is to be set apart *unto* God, for His use alone. Many people think they will give up the ways of the world and that will make them holy. Wrong! As long as they live for themselves, no matter how “good” they are, they are not holy *to* God.

Out of a dozen markers, which one will I take? The one that I will use. When I take it in my hand, it becomes holy to me, it becomes holy for my use alone. It no longer resides with the other markers because it is no longer holy to the world it came from. It is not just “on call” for my use, it is “on duty” for my use. It is mine! When we belong to God we are always, always, always on duty for His use. We are His!

Let’s look at a couple of verses that show us the other part of the definition of “holy.” The part that means He is awful.

Psalm 111:9-10

He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever; Holy and awesome is His Name. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.

Isaiah 29:23

But when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, They will sanctify My name; Indeed, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.

Let me give an illustration that might help you understand this idea. Just imagine you are the witness of a horrible car accident. You hear the screeching of tires, the blare of horns, followed by a piercing scream from one of the passengers. You find out in moments that one of the victims is dead and the others are critically injured. You would agree with me, wouldn't you, that an accident like that would be a terrible thing to witness?

Would you, however, agree with me that an accident like that would be an awesome thing as well? Perhaps you wouldn't. But actually you should because terrible and awesome are cousins!

The original meaning of awe is to be "full of fear." To "be in awe" is "to stand in fear." Over the years, although the definition may have stayed the same, the connotation has changed. In the present time the connotation for something being awesome is that it is "cool!" or "great!" But when God wrote His Word that is not what it meant. Awesome meant just that—full of awe, full of fear. He is so *different from* anything that we know or can imagine!

God is awesome! God is to be feared! God isn't just a "really cool God!" He is to be marveled at, for sure, but not without inspiring a deep reverential fear inside of you. So when I say that God is awful, I mean it! He is full of awe! And Who He is should produce a fear of Him in you.

God said that in the New Covenant we will know Him. If we truly know God, then we will reverence Him. He is awesome and terrible and fearful. We will fear disobeying Him! If we are afraid to disobey Him, then we will do His bidding and the result will be our own holiness! We will be holy because we will be set apart to Him.

The world is set apart to itself, so, as God's holy people, we will be different from the world and the world will notice our holiness! As the world notices our holiness, it will see a faint reflection of the awesome holiness of God, and therefore, part of His vast and stunning Glory!

Chapter by Chapter

What is **Ezra 8** mainly and plainly about?

Keep trying to keep your title congruent with your other chapter titles.

Each chapter has been mainly about the purpose of the Jews' return to the land—
rebuilding the house of God—

Each chapter will partially reflect the theme of the book of Ezra.

Theme of Ezra Chapter 1

Theme of Ezra Chapter 2

Theme of Ezra Chapter 3

Theme of Ezra Chapter 4

Theme of Ezra Chapter 5

Theme of Ezra Chapter 6

Theme of Ezra Chapter 7

Theme of Ezra Chapter 8

EZRA - The HISTORY

Chapter Nine

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Ezra 9** and mark every reference to the LORD by marking it with a red triangle. If it is referring to the LORD speaking, i.e. the word of the LORD, still mark LORD with a red triangle but add the following: highlight the phrase in yellow and then circle all that you have highlighted in red.

Read through **Ezra 9** and mark every reference to anything that gives God His Glory, i.e. what Cyrus says about the LORD in **Ezra 1:2**, the house of the LORD, etc. with a yellow box filled in with light purple. Whenever you see the house of the LORD, put a purple house over that as well. (Just a roof and walls is all that is necessary to make it look like a structure.)

Read through **Ezra 9** and mark every reference, including pronouns, to Judah, i.e. His (God's) people living in exile, survivor, etc. with a blue Star of David.

Read through **Ezra 9** and mark every reference to Jerusalem (Zion) or Judah with a blue capital "Z", along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 9** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets, i.e. provinces, Persian, Babylon, my kingdom, etc.

Read through **Ezra 9** and mark every reference to time with a blue box. (References may be varied, i.e. the first year of Cyrus king of Persia or the word "then".)

Read through **Ezra 9** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. Ezra hears the people have not separated themselves
2. Ezra reacts to the news of Israel's sin
3. Ezra prays to the God of Israel and confesses the past sins of Israel
4. Ezra prays to the God of Israel and confesses the present sins of Israel

READ AND ANSWER

Ezra 9:1-2

When does **Ezra 9** begin?

When what things had been completed? (Check out **Ezra 8** for your answer.)

Who is the me in **verse 1**?

Who approached Ezra?

Who are the princes? Are they the leaders of Israel? Could they have been the men who were established as leaders from Zerubbabel's group?

What did the princes tell Ezra?

Who had not separated themselves from the peoples of the land?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Why should they have separated themselves from the peoples of the land?

What peoples are listed?

- 1.
- 2.

- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.



Evidently the Israelites had been disobeying God for many years in this area. When Ezra came and began to teach the statutes and ordinances of God to them perhaps these leaders' consciences were smitten. What we know for sure is that they came to Ezra and confessed the sin of their people.

We also know for sure the people knew what they were doing was wrong because God had warned them repeatedly against it!

Exodus 34:11-16

Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim—for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose Name is Jealous, is a jealous God—otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods.

Deuteronomy 7:1-4

When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.

What have the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites done?

What has been the result of taking daughters of the peoples as wives for themselves and their sons?

Who is the holy race?

Why is Israel called the holy race?

To Whom should Israel have been separated *unto*?

What is disobeying the LORD in the matter synonymous with?

Who has been the foremost in this unfaithfulness?

Ezra 9:3-4

What was Ezra's reaction when he heard the news?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Who else reacted?

What was the reaction of everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiles?

How long did Ezra sit there appalled over the news?

Does this give you a clue as to Ezra's location? (Check out **Ezra 10:1** to be sure.)

Ezra 9:5-10

What did Ezra do at the time of the evening offering?

What does Ezra call his reaction to the news of sin in God's people?

I need to ask this—what is your reaction to the news of sin in God's people? How does your reaction compare to Ezra's?

What did Ezra do after arising from his humiliation?

1.

2.

How did Ezra tell God he felt about lifting up his face to Him?

1.

2.

Why was Ezra ashamed and embarrassed to lift up his face to God?

1.

2.

What does sin bring? (If you sin, are you guilty before God?)

What does guilt bring?

How long had Israel been guilty before God? (From when to when?)

What type of guilt had they been in?

What was the result of their sin and consequent guilt?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Had the consequence been removed?

In the middle of the consequence of their sin, what had God shown them?

Does Ezra expect this grace to be permanent?

How do you know?

What has the grace of God given them?

1.

2.

What is the result of leaving Babylon and coming home to Jerusalem to the house of God going to do for them?

1.

2.

Who will enlighten their eyes?

Who will grant them a little reviving in their bondage?

What does Ezra say is still true of the exiles?



The Israelites were still under the rule of the Medo-Persians even though God had brought them back to the land of Israel.

Has God forsaken them in their bondage?

Instead, what had He extended to them?

Through whom did God extend lovingkindness to the exiles?

In what forms would the lovingkindness would bring reviving to the exiles?

1.

2.

3.

Ezra 9:11-15

Ezra has just recalled the goodnesses of God to Israel despite their continual sin against Him. He is dumbfounded to know what to say next—why?

It is unbelievable to Ezra that Israel has done the same thing once again. They were taken out of the land because of their sin, and now that they are back in the land again they have sinned again—and it is something God has clearly warned them against doing! Who spoke to the nation of Israel about the very sin they are presently guilty of?

What were the prophets doing when they prophesied?

Who were they serving?

What did the prophets tell them about the land they were going to enter? (This is recalling the time when Israel entered the land after their captivity in Egypt and their journeys in the wilderness for 40 years under Moses right before the time of Joshua.)

What made the land unclean?

What had the peoples of the lands done inside the land of Israel?

1.

2.

Because the people in the land were full of abominations and impurities what did the prophets warn the people of Israel against doing?

1.

2.

3.

Why?

1.

2.

3.

Ezra acknowledges that much has come upon the people of Israel. What does he say is the cause?

1.

2.

Ezra continues his lament and reasons that God has requited them less than their iniquities deserve and has even given them an escaped remnant of exiles at that time. What can't he comprehend?

1.

2.

Ezra can't believe that the people have actually broken God's commandments once again and intermarried with foreign peoples who commit such abominations. What does He say would be God's reasonable response to their actions?

To what point, regarding the Jews, could God be angry and still be righteous?

What would destruction mean to the Jews?

1.

2.

How does Ezra address God?

What does He say God is?

Why does He say they have been left an escaped remnant at that time?

What condition is the nation of Israel in before the LORD?

What can Israel not do before the LORD?

Why not?

What does it mean that they cannot stand before the LORD?

READ AND REASON

Break down Ezra's prayer of confession into segments and see what you come up with. When you are done check out my segment ideas below.

Do you find anything in this short outline of Ezra's prayer which could help you to pray to God in a righteous manner such as Ezra did?

Ezra's prayer of confession.

We were guilty.
You judged us righteously.
You extended lovingkindness and gave us a reprieve.
We, instead of obeying You, sinned again right away.
You are righteous to judge us again and even more harshly.
We are guilty.

By the way, there are many extraordinary prayers in the Bible that God gives us to build our faith and to use as an example in our own lives. As you study God's Word take note of them and perhaps make a list of them in your Bible somewhere (such as on those front and back blank pages). Ezra's prayer would be a good beginning to that list! You would be wise to break them down into segments as well in order to observe them all the more carefully.

~ Chapter by Chapter

What is **Ezra 9** mainly and plainly about?

Keep trying to keep your title congruent with your other chapter titles.
Each chapter has been mainly about the purpose of the Jews' return to the land—
rebuilding the house of God—
Each chapter will partially reflect the theme of the book of Ezra.
Remember that Ezra is rebuilding the house of God, too—
his part concerns the people of the house of God.

Theme of Ezra Chapter 1

Theme of Ezra Chapter 2

Theme of Ezra Chapter 3

Theme of Ezra Chapter 4

Theme of Ezra Chapter 5

Theme of Ezra Chapter 6

Theme of Ezra Chapter 7

Theme of Ezra Chapter 8

Theme of Ezra Chapter 9

EZRA - The HISTORY

Chapter Ten

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Ezra 10** and mark every reference to the LORD by marking it with a red triangle. If it is referring to the LORD speaking, i.e. the word of the LORD, still mark LORD with a red triangle but add the following: highlight the phrase in yellow and then circle all that you have highlighted in red.

Read through **Ezra 10** and mark every reference to anything that gives God His Glory, i.e. what Cyrus says about the LORD in **Ezra 1:2**, the house of the LORD, etc. with a yellow box filled in with light purple. Whenever you see the house of the LORD, put a purple house over that as well. (Just a roof and walls is all that is necessary to make it look like a structure.)

Read through **Ezra 10** and mark every reference, including pronouns, to Judah, i.e. His (God's) people living in exile, survivor, etc. with a blue Star of David.

Read through **Ezra 10** and mark every reference to Jerusalem (Zion) or Judah with a blue capital "Z", along with all pronouns and synonyms.

Read through **Ezra 10** and mark every reference to covenant, oath, or pledge with a red box.

Read through **Ezra 10** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets, i.e. provinces, Persian, Babylon, my kingdom, etc.

Read through **Ezra 10** and mark every reference to time with a blue box. (References may be varied, i.e. the first year of Cyrus king of Persia or the word "then".)

Read through **Ezra 10** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. Ezra is called to arise, be courageous, and act!
2. Ezra makes Israel take oath to separate themselves
3. People decide to wait to separate themselves
4. Ezra appoints heads of fathers' households to investigate the matter

5. List of those who had married foreign wives

READ AND ANSWER

Ezra 10:1-4

When does this chapter of **Ezra** begin?

What is Ezra doing?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Why is he doing these things? What has he found out? (**Chapter 9**)



God had been clear that they were not allowed to intermarry with other nations so their actions were defiance against Him.

God had been clear and told them what would happen if they did intermarry with other nations—they would turn away from Him.

God was clear.

Exodus 23:32-33

*You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods.
They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me;
for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.*

Exodus 34:12-16

Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land

*into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst.
But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars
and cut down their Asherim—
for you shall not worship any other god,
for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God—
otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land
and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods,
and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice,
and you might take some of his daughters for your sons,
and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods
and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods.*

Deuteronomy 7:1-6

*When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it,
and clears away many nations before you,
the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites
and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you,
and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them,
then you shall utterly destroy them.
You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.
Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them;
you shall not give your daughters to their sons,
nor shall you take their daughters for your sons.
For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods;
then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.
But thus you shall do to them:
you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars,
and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.
For you are a holy people to the LORD your God;
the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession
out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*

1 Kings 11:1-3

*Now King Solomon loved many foreign women
along with the daughter of Pharaoh:
Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women,
from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel,
“You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you,
for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.”
Solomon held fast to these in love.
He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines,
and his wives turned his heart away.*

God was clear.

Who gathered to Ezra?

Who made up the large assembly?

1.

2.

3.

Why did they assemble to Ezra?

Who was weeping bitterly? (**Ezra 9:4**)

Who was still sitting with Ezra?

Who spoke for the group?

Who was Shecaniah?

What did Shecaniah confess to Ezra?

1.

2.

Despite what the people had done, what did Shecaniah believe?

What was Shecaniah's plan?



Point of Depth

Have you ever made a covenant?

If you are a Christian, you have entered a covenant with Jesus Christ.
If you are married, you have entered a covenant with your husband or wife.

Other than those two covenants,
I wouldn't recommend entering a covenant
because it is the most indissoluble agreement anyone can ever make—
and it can only be truly dissolved by death.

When a covenant was made (cut) an animal was cut in half down the spine.
Two people stood opposite one another and each removed his own robes and handed
them to the other, then each clothed himself in his covenant partner's garment.
This signified that each was "putting on the other" and the two had become one.

Each would pick up their weapons from the ground
and hand their sword and bow to their covenant partner.
This showed that each of their enemies had become one another's enemies.

Then they handed each other their belts.
They were committing their strength to their covenant partner.

In a figure-eight path,
they both walked through the pieces of flesh lying opposite one another.
It was a walk into death.
They were now dead to their own independent living.
They were now dead to their own rights.

They swore by an oath as they pointed first to heaven and then to the slain animals.
They were saying, "*God—do so to me if I break this covenant!*"

Then each made a cut on their wrist,
and with a handclasp the two mingled their blood.
The two had now become one.

In turn they recited what they owned and what they owed;
from this day forward they would share all their resources...
They agreed that whatever they owned now belonged to their covenant partner.
They agreed that whatever the other owed was now their own responsibility.

Each reached down and scooped up dirt mingled with small stones
and rubbed this abrasive into the cut in their wrists.
The scar was a reminder to them—
no matter how far away they were from each other or their covenant partner.

They exchanged new names.
Because of covenant, where two became one, they now had a new identity.

They sat down to partake of a covenant meal.
One broke bread and placed it in their covenant partner's mouth;
then the other did the same.

They were saying, *"I am eating you, and you are eating me."*

Finally a memorial was set up—a pile of stones, a planted tree, a written contract—
as a testimony of the covenant they had made.
This is what the word friend really means—one who truly sticks closer than a brother.

When the people of Israel were called to make a covenant to put away their foreign
wives, it was a serious, serious matter.
Those who entered the covenant would be responsible with their lives to do their duty.
And those who entered the covenant
would be responsible with their lives to see to it that the others did their duty.
It was a duty unto obedience or death.

What would the covenant require the people to do?

Who would they put away?

1.

2.

Whose counsel did he suggest they follow?

1.

2.

Who were those who trembled at the commandment of God? (**Ezra 9:4; 10:1**)

What was Shecaniah's criteria for any plan suggested by Ezra and those around him?

What law?

What did Shecaniah demand that Ezra do?

Why?

What did Shecaniah promise to Ezra?

What did Shecaniah tell Ezra he needed to do?

1.

2.

Ezra 10:5-8

Did Ezra respond?

How?

1.

2.

What did the oath entail?

What proposal?

Who was to take the oath?

1.

2.

3.

Did they?

Where was this all taking place?

Where did he go?

What did he not do when he went in to the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib?

What did he do when he went in to the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib?

To whom was a proclamation made?

To do what?

How soon did they need to appear at Jerusalem?

What would happen to the person who would not come within three days?

By whose authority was this threat made?

1.

2.

Ezra 10:9-15

Did the men of Judah and Benjamin respond according to the proclamation?

Where did the people gather in Jerusalem?

Did they stand or sit in the open square before the house of God?

What condition was manifested in their bodies?

Why were they trembling?

1.

2.

Had Ezra been sitting?

What did Ezra do when they all arrived?

What did he say to them?

How had Israel been unfaithful?

To Whom had Israel been unfaithful?

What had their sin made greater?

Because of their sin, what were the people to do?

1.

2.

What was the LORD God's will?

1.

2.

To whom was Ezra speaking?

What was their reply?

Did they agree with Ezra?

What did they say was their duty?

What, however, was their next word?

What were their reasons, or excuses, for not doing their duty immediately?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Why couldn't the task be done in a short amount of time, such as one or two days?

What plan did they present to Ezra?

1.

2.

3.

How long would the appointments between those who had married foreign wives and the elders and judges continue?

Did everyone agree?

Who did not agree?

1.

2.

Who supported Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah?

1.

2.

Ezra 10:16-17

Did the exiles listen to Jonathan and Jahzeiah?

Whose plan did they follow?

Did Ezra insist they do their duty immediately?

What did Ezra do?

What is the significance of the fact that all the heads of fathers' households were named?

What were the heads of fathers' households to do?

When were they to convene to investigate the matter?

When did they finish the job?

How long did it take them?

Ezra 10:18-44

Another list! Are you beginning to value the idea of a list? I hope so. We won't dig out everything in the list, but you should know how to begin that digging process for yourself by now, so let the digging begin! I will still ask a few questions to help a little.

Should we be surprised that the priests were involved in this crime against their God? (Hint: Remember what we were told in **Ezra 9:2**)

How is the list of names divided?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What did Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah do when they were found to have married foreign wives?

- 1.
- 2.

Who was their (grand)father?

Who was their (grand)father's (grand)father?

In order to build your skill in observing, I want you to make a list of the fathers listed from the fourth division (of Israel)—not their sons, but the head of each household. Then give the number of sons found guilty under his name. I will do the first one for you.

Parosh: 7

How many (grand)fathers, with a group of (grand)sons, were listed?

Are any of the names familiar to you?

Look up any names that seem interesting and find out who they were by using a concordance.

What had each man on the list of names done?

In addition to foreign wives, what did some of them have as a result of their unfaithfulness to God?

READ AND REASON

Why does God mention that some of the Israelites who married foreign wives had children? Was it because we are to feel sorry for them because they had such a hard emotional thing to do under their covenant? No, I don't believe so.

It was because “like” produces “like” and the Israelites needed to be holy unto God so the “like” they produced would look like Him and not like the world. God's plan was like Father—like son—through His Son.

If you plant a corn seed, you expect a corn plant. If you plant a bean seed, you expect a bean plant. Why? Because kind produces kind, like produces like. The seed determines the result. ‘Like father, like son’, a longtime favorite expression of many, is actually a grand truth that we see manifested regularly in our world—a truth that started long before our time, way back in the beginning of the world, a truth that was created by the Creator just as surely as Creation itself—and it's all about His Glory!

In the beginning, God created both the heavens and the earth. Once God created the earth, He created light, which He then separated from the darkness. God called the light day and He called the darkness night. It is fascinating to think of the fact that God created light before He created the sun and moon, before He created the stars, in fact, before He created any luminaries at all...

God continued with His creation and made the expanse. He separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse. The Spirit of God had hovered over the surface of the waters which were covering the earth (**Genesis 1:2**) and now (**Genesis 1:6**) God separated those waters into two places—one part was below the expanse and the rest of the waters were above the expanse. God called His expanse heaven. Again, it is a lofty thing to ponder—waters on the earth and waters above the expanse of heaven. Held there by... God.

Two days of creating had passed when God gathered the waters which were below His heavens into one place and He called for dry land to appear on the earth. The dry land He now named earth and the gathering of the waters He named seas. The seas were in one place, not many like they are today; there was only one piece of earth showing and the rest of the planet was one big gathered bunch of waters. God would change that one day...

Before this third day was over, God commanded the earth to sprout vegetation—plants which had seeds in them, and fruit trees—trees bearing fruit with seeds in the fruit. Let me say this more clearly with a little help from the original Hebrew of the Genesis account. These weren't little tiny plants—they were full-grown mature plants, each created *in the state of sowing its seeds*. Each of the seeds which the plant sowed would produce another plant of the exact same kind. Each plant ‘A’ was created *yielding and scattering plant ‘A’ seeds!* Each plant ‘Z’ came with plant ‘Z’ seeds ready to

reproduce more plant 'Z's! And in the same way, each fruit tree was created with fruit already on it! And inside of each piece of fruit were seeds, each seed ready, willing, able, *and commanded* to produce another fruit tree exactly like the one it came from! Grass made more grass, and trees produced more trees—*after its kind, after its kind, after its kind*, over and over and over again.

God did not need anything to hold His light, but just a few days after He created light, He made many lights, light-bearers, or luminaries, which He used for many things: for separating the day from the night, for signs, for seasons, for days, for years, and for lighting the face of the earth. He made two great lights (we call them the sun and the moon); one to govern the day and one to govern the night. Remember what the day was? It was the light God created on that very first day. Think that through for awhile and then praise your marvelous Creator!

On the fifth day of creation God created living creatures in the waters, including great sea monsters, which would populate abundantly *after their own kind*. God blessed them by saying, "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas.*" Do you see a connection to the vegetation and the fruit trees? God caused the living creatures in the waters to *produce after their own kind—kind produces kind*, just like He caused the vegetation and fruit trees to do. Not only did He make them with the ability to reproduce and give them a command to reproduce, but He created them in the act of reproducing—swarming! In other words, as soon as God was finished creating living creatures in the waters, there were more, and more, and more... and *each looked like the one that had produced it!*

On that same day He also created birds flying above the earth in the expanse--the very expanse which He created three days earlier. And once again, God created them *producing after their own kind*, starting the moment He created them and continuing, well... right up until now! And, just as He blessed the living creatures in the waters, He blessed the birds by saying, "*Be fruitful and multiply, and let birds multiply on the earth.*"

On that last and final day in which God created, He told the earth to bring forth living creatures *after their kind*. The earth immediately brought forth cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth. God made the beasts of the earth *after their kind*, and He made cattle *after their kind*, and He made everything that creeps on the ground *after its kind*. Are you starting to see a repeated pattern here?

Finally, God created man—and when He did, He created man *in His Own image!* Do you see it? *After His Own likeness!* He ordained for man to rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, over the cattle—over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God says it over again (actually four times in all)—let's make sure we listen! God says that He created man *in His Own image*. God says that He created man *in the image of God*. Wow!!! God blessed them (man—male and female) and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply. Can you see the amazing pattern repeated once again?

Question: God created man, male and female, in His image, and told them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. What, then, would the earth be filled with? Whose image? Whose Glory?

Everything God created was part of a perfect plan to bring Him Glory; He looked at all He had made and He beheld that it was very good. What do you think He was referring to? Do you think His 'very good' was referring to just the things He created on the sixth day? Or maybe just man? Do you think His 'very good' was referring to all the things, every thing He had created from the beginning, each individually? Or do you think His 'very good' was referring to all that He had made, not individually, but as one great and glorious plan—His plan for His creation—His plan for His Glory—His plan for THE SEED?

I know I am jumping ahead a little, but I just can't help it! You see, God *did* have a plan, and it was a plan to bring Himself Glory! He would receive His rightful and due Glory through THE SEED. If you will stick with me here, I hope I can help you to see a very basic, yet one of the most over-looked (or under-believed), truths in the entire Word of God!

While God created light by simply speaking it into existence (He is God, you know!), it took mankind thousands of years to simply display that light from within a 'luminari', i.e. the light bulb. Light bulbs have three main parts: the glass bulb on the outside, the thin filament wire which carries electricity (the heat of which glows and makes the light), and the metal base which connects to the actual source of the electricity. Do you see any interesting similarities to mankind's relationship with God? Or more specifically, to a believer's relationship with His Father?

Throughout the book of **John** Jesus is revealed as the Son of God. Like Father-Like Son. Jesus was, and is, the radiance of God's Glory. (**Hebrews 1:3**) Jesus is the '*apaugasma*' of God's Glory. He beams forth His Father's Glory! Like Father-Like Son. Jesus is the exact representation of God's nature. (**Hebrews 1:3**) Jesus is the '*charakter*' of the substance of God. Jesus is the perfect copy of His Father!

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

The Word existed in the beginning right along with God—in fact, the Word was God! The Word, '*logos*' means an expression as in a statement or a message. Could it be that God has a message for His creation? Ohhhh, yes!

John 1:2

He was in the beginning with God.

The Word, referred to in **verse one**, is revealed as a 'being', a 'He', in **verse two** and is further revealed as taking on flesh and becoming man in **John 1:14**.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His Glory, Glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus, the radiance of God's Glory, became man, the Son of God, and showed the world the Glory of His Father! Jesus, the perfect copy of His Father, let the world see and understand the Father's Glory by bringing that Glory to the earth! Jesus was, and is, the expression of God. Jesus, the Son, was sent to us by His Father. God, the Father, had (and has) a message for His creation and the first and foremost part of that message is to *show the world Who God is!*

John 1:3

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Jesus was not unaware of this message, nor of Creation, to whom He would bring the message; Jesus Himself was intricately involved in creating Creation! God has always been in existence and He has always been Glorious. He is worthy of all Glory! God did not create Creation because He was lonely—God is self-existent and self-sufficient, He does not need anything or anyone. He created Creation for His pleasure, because of His will, simply so His Glory could be seen! (**Revelation 4:11**)

John 1:4

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

In Jesus was life, sort of like the metal base of the light bulb. God is the source of all life (electricity in this analogy). When man (glass part of light bulb) is 'in Jesus' (metal base) he is connected to that source, and is able to bring God Glory by showing the world Who God is. The light bulb (man) is the lamp, or light-bearer, or carrier of the light. What is the wire filament? The Holy Spirit of God, Who is given to any man Who would believe (true biblical belief) in Jesus as the Promised One, the Messiah, the Christ.

Jesus was given the Holy Spirit by the Father upon successful completion of His work on the earth. What was that work? To give His life as a ransom for many. Jesus did that perfectly, and the Father accepted Jesus' perfect life-blood as payment for the many. The Father exalted Jesus and gave Him what had been promised, and Jesus poured forth that promise (the Holy Spirit) on the day of Pentecost. (**Acts 2:33**)

John 1:5

The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Interesting thing about light—it always wins in any contest between light and darkness. Light shines right into darkness, consuming it and making room for greater and brighter light. Light shines—and the darkness that won't repent retreats into further darkness (waiting for the final showdown, I might add).

John 1:12-13

But as many as received Him to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His Name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

In order to be like the Father, you must become His son. To *become His son*, you must *receive His Son! Receive God's Son* and you are given the incomprehensible privilege of *being God's child!*

God's Son, Jesus, is THE SEED that was promised in **Genesis 3:15**, the One Who would come and bring Life! He did come, and THE SEED 'reproduces' Himself whenever a person believes the Truth so as to be saved and is born again as a child of God.

John 12:23-28

*And Jesus answered them, saying,
"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
Truly, truly, I say to you,
unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone;
but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*

Jesus is the 'grain of wheat' that fell into the earth and died. Jesus is no longer alone as God's Son, because He died and is risen again, and He bears much fruit (many brothers).

Like produces like. Jesus 'produces' much fruit—many others who are conformed into the image of Jesus, Who is the exact image of God and the radiance of His Glory!

Romans 8:29

*For those whom He foreknew,
He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son,
so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Colossians 1:27

...Christ in you, the hope of Glory.

Jesus, the Christ, showed the world the Father, and now, just as a light bulb brings forth light, so Christians bring forth the Light of Jesus within them and show all people the Son, and by necessity, the Father.

In Jerusalem, during one of the Feasts of the Lord, Jesus cried out and said, "*He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent me. He who sees Me sees the One Who sent Me. I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.*" **John 12:44-46**

If you are truly saved, then you are no longer in darkness. If you are truly His child, then you are showing the world Who God is by the things you say and do. (**John 12:44-46**) You will not speak on your own initiative, but your Father, the One Who has given you life, has given you a commandment as to what to say and speak. Do you know that His commandment is eternal life? It is! Therefore, speak just as the Father has told you in His Word. (**John 12:49-50**) Then you will truly bring Him the Glory He is due!

NASA's space station sent back awesome images of the Earth. One showed part of the Earth at night. The lighted parts of the photograph revealed the places where human life exists on our planet. If the earth were filled with more people, there would have been more light. More people, more light. Without the life, deep darkness would overtake the planet. God told mankind to be fruitful (use your seed to produce more of you) and multiply and *fill* the earth. Why did God want the earth filled with human life?

In God was life and that life became the Light of men. (The ones who received the love of the Truth so as to be saved. **2 Thessalonians 2:10**) When the life of God is put into a man, it lights him up, spiritually speaking. That is how man can manifest the Glory of God, because the life of God lights us up, and changes us.

John 1:5

The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Notice the verb tense of what the Light does—it says it shines, not shone. It started shining when Jesus came and dwelt among men, but it is still shining today in the lives of the ones who, centuries later, have believed in Him and been made sons of God.

Think for a moment with me. Let's look at the spiritual truth about Light on planet Earth rather than the empirical truth about it—in other words, the picture of truth God gives us in everyday life. Night and darkness, and day and light, switch back and forth every day—night, then day, then night, then day... or darkness, then light, then darkness, then light... Back and forth it goes over and over and over again on planet Earth. It seems to us that our world is lit up half of the time, right? Empirically, yes, but spiritually, that's not really true. This world is actually in complete spiritual darkness except for the times when God's Light touches it, like when Jesus walked on Earth.

Matthew 4:13-17

*...He [Jesus] came and settled in Capernaum,
which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.
This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:
“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea,
beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
the people who were sitting in darkness saw a great Light,
and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death,
upon them a Light dawned.”
From that time Jesus began to preach and say,
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

There was Light as God, Himself—Jesus, walked on Earth, and there is Light as Christians, the sons of Light, maneuver through this evil obstacle course called Earth.

The empirical world is simply an illustration of what is true spiritually. The world is in complete darkness except for the moments in time when light shines upon it. When our part of the planet faces the sun, then the darkness cannot continue; it is not powerful enough to continue to be darkness. When light comes, the darkness dissipates; it is overpowered. Darkness cannot overpower the light; it is always overpowered by the light, even if it is for a short period of time (like the times when our part of the earth faces the sun). Sunlight itself is a picture for us to see the real truth—spiritual truth.

John 1:5

The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Think about what a privilege it is to be born (given life) as a child of God. Like Father—like child. You now become a Light-bearer for the Light; you have been lit up and it is your privilege and your responsibility to speak His Truth so that His Light (Jesus), shining in you, can be seen by others. Others, when seeing your walk and hearing your talk, will reject your Light most of the time. Just like a piercing bright light is very unappealing when you are fast asleep and enjoying ‘darkness’, so too will the Light of God be painful in the eyes of a son of darkness. But be encouraged that God has called some to be His Own, and those who are His Own know His voice and will come to the Light. (**John 10:4, 14**) Be faithful to let your (His) Light shine before men!

Matthew 5:14-16

You are the Light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Let your Light shine before men in such a way that they may see your goods works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.

While Jesus was still among men on the earth He said, “*For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.*” (**John 12:35-36**) What was He saying? If you do not receive the Light, when He shines on you, while you see Him, you will be overtaken again by the darkness. He said if you do believe in the Light, while you see it shining, you become a son of Light yourself. Down through the centuries, many men have been illumined by the Light—although Jesus, Himself, has returned to heaven to be with His Father. The sons of Light who presently walk this earth bring Light to its dark environment; they bring the message of the Word, the Light, the Son of God, Jesus, Who died so that men might be ransomed from the darkness—to all who will listen.

Those who believe are born again and become sons of God. Like produces like. Like Father—Like Son. Jesus came to Earth as the Son of God. He shows the world His Father because He was, and is, the radiance of God's Glory. (**Hebrews 1:3**) Like Father—Like Son. Jesus is the exact representation of God's nature. (**Hebrews 1:3**) As sons of God, we are conformed into the image of Jesus.

Romans 8:29

*For those whom He foreknew,
He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His son,
so that He would be the first born among many brethren.*

Because we are conformed into the image of Jesus and Jesus is the exact image of the Father and the radiance of God's Glory, we too, show the world the Glory of the Father. Wow!!! What a privilege! Wow!! What a responsibility!

Because our Light is really a reflection of the radiance of God's Glory, you can imagine what the world would look like if it were a spiritual snapshot, rather than an empirical one. Imagine a picture of the earth by night (darkness) with areas of light coming from populations of dense life. Then try to think what it would look like if the earth was completely filled with life, men who were filled with the Holy Spirit, radiating the Glory of God for all of Creation to see.

Isaiah 45:18

*For thus says the Lord, Who created the heavens
(He is the God Who formed the earth and made it,
He established it and did not create it a waste place,
but formed it to be inhabited...)*

Did you catch that? Why did God form the earth? He formed it to be inhabited. Look at the command God gave to man after He created them.

Genesis 1:28

...Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...

Look at the command God gave to Noah after God destroyed the world by flood because of its sin.

Genesis 9:1

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

Genesis 9:7

As for you, be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.

Why did God want the earth to be inhabited? Look at **Genesis 1:27**. "God created man in His Own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created

them.” God wanted His Own Image to be seen; God wanted His Glory to be seen! It goes back to His plan of Creation, the plan to bring Himself Glory! He would receive His rightful and due Glory through THE SEED because THE SEED would bring life out of death, life which resembled the Father.

THE SEED is Jesus, the Promised One, Who would come and bring life, even while man was dead.

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise him on the heel.

God had personally planted a wonderful garden in which He would put man. (**Genesis 2**) Out of the ground of that garden God grew a tree called “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” and God told man not to eat fruit from it because if he did, he would die. Then God made a helper for the man—a woman.

There was a crafty serpent in the garden and he tempted the woman to eat from that banned tree. She ate and she tempted the man, and he ate, too. They had disobeyed God and God would be true to His Word—they would surely die. They died spiritually that day and would die physically, as well. God cursed the serpent, the woman, the man and the earth, but He also gave a promise—the promise of life, the promise of eternal life. And the promise was fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, God’s Son, Who took on flesh and became the Son of man, so that He could be born of flesh in order to be able to bring life to those who would believe in Him. (**Hebrews 2:9-18**) Those who believe in Jesus—that He truly is the Promised One, THE SEED sent by God—to those He gives the right to become children of God.

Are you a child of God? How do you know? Does your Light shine before men so that they see God instead of you? Does your Light help dissipate the darkness of the world? When God looks at the earth from His heavenly throne, does He see your Light?

Revelation 4:11

Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.

Some day soon, Christ is going to come and take back His planet, which is now in the midst of massive global rebellion. And when He does, He will begin to receive His Glory.

Isaiah 43:7

Everyone who is called by My Name, and whom I have created for My Glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.

The nation of Israel was called by God’s Name, He formed her and made her—He created Israel for His Glory. She was to be a light to the rest of the world. “Like”

produces “like” and the Israelites needed to be holy unto God so the “like” they produced would look like God and not like the world. God’s plan was: like Father—like son—*through His SON, Jesus of Nazareth, their Messiah.*

Some day soon, all that He has called to Himself will be saved and sanctified, and will begin anew to bring Glory to God on the new Earth. The new city of God, the new Jerusalem, will have no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, because the Glory of God, the fantastic blazing brilliance of His Glory, will illumine it, and its lamp is the Lamb, THE SEED.

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Chapter by Chapter

What is **Ezra 10** mainly and plainly about?
Keep trying to keep your title congruent with your other chapter titles.
Each chapter has been mainly about the purpose of the Jews’ return to the land—
rebuilding the house of God—
Each chapter will partially reflect the theme of the book of Ezra.
Remember that Ezra is rebuilding the house of God, too—
his part concerns the people of the house of God.

Theme of Ezra Chapter 1

Theme of Ezra Chapter 2

Theme of Ezra Chapter 3

Theme of Ezra Chapter 4

Theme of Ezra Chapter 5

Theme of Ezra Chapter 6

Theme of Ezra Chapter 7

Theme of Ezra Chapter 8

Theme of Ezra Chapter 9

Theme of Ezra Chapter 10

Well, we have finished a good observation of the book of **Ezra**. This absolutely does not mean you are finished studying **Ezra**.

The Bible will take the rest of our lives to study, book by book, but we must always approach God's Word with a heart that wants to learn. Therefore, we should always be observant as we read it, asking it the questions that the Word, and only the Word, can answer.

If we are faithful to study and listen, He will teach us all about Himself and His ways—He will show us the way in which we are to walk before Him.

I pray you will listen to Him in His Word and respond rightly to your Creator and God.