

Outline of Ezra

With the book of Ezra, we return to the historical section of the canon after taking a brief digression into Daniel, a book that is primarily prophetic. In chronological terms, Ezra comes after 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; in fact, the decree of Cyrus first seen there is repeated in Ezra 1:1-4 as well as 6:3-5 (looking back from a later point in history). This is an important decree in Israelite history, as it marked the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (25:11-13, 29:10). Ezra records the initial return of Zerubbabel and Ezra, the rebuilding of the temple, and Ezra's reforms. Ezra is a contemporary of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

Note the following historical information:

Three Phases of Exile	Three Phases of Return
605 B.C. (Daniel)	538 B.C. (Zerubbabel)
597 B.C. (Jehoiachin)	458 B.C. (Ezra)
586 B.C. (Zedekiah)	444 B.C. (Nehemiah)

In the first phase of the return, the focus is on the rebuilding of the temple; in the second phase, the moral rebuilding of the people; and in the third phase, the rebuilding of the city itself.

- I. First phase of return: Zerubbabel leads in rebuilding of temple 1:1-6:22
 - A. Decree of Cyrus and return of temple items 1:1-11
 - B. Roll of returnees 2:1-70
 - C. Worship re-instituted in Jerusalem..... 3:1-6
 - D. First phase of temple re-construction, political obstacles 3:8-4:24
 - E. Second phase of temple re-construction, more politics..... 5:1-6:15*
 - F. Passover re-instituted in Jerusalem 6:16-22

- II. Second phase of return: Ezra's reforms 7:1-10:44
 - A. Summary of Ezra's role in Jerusalem 7:1-10
 - B. Artaxerxes commission of Ezra and Ezra's thanksgiving 7:11-28
 - C. Roll of returnees 8:1-14
 - D. Preparation of Levites returning with Ezra 8:15-30
 - E. Arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem..... 8:31-36
 - F. Ezra's confession 9:1-15
 - G. Illegal marriages dissolved..... 10:1-44

Notes

- ❑ Significant verses: 7:10, 9:13.
- ❑ * See Haggai and Zechariah at this point, as indicated in 5:1.
- ❑ Notice that the political opposition of chapters 4-6 was the start of over 80 years of conflict. Nehemiah suffered similar trouble (chapters 4, 6).
- ❑ Why is Ezra 7:1-5 important? Hint: Correlate this passage with 2:59-63.
- ❑ What kind of government was established under Ezra in 8:25-26?
- ❑ Ezra 9 is one of the Bible's great prayers. See Nehemiah 9, Daniel 9, 1 Kings 8, John 17.
- ❑ How do you explain the divorce issue present in chapter 10?