

**Return Period:
Ezra: Rebuilding the Temple *Ezra 1:1-10:44***

Ezra, "help," is one of five books we will study in the Return Period. The post-captivity history books are Ezra and Nehemiah. The post-captivity prophetic books are Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Ezra gave the history from the time of the Decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple until the dedication of the temple. The events recorded in Ezra include the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah.

Ezra is broken down into two different time periods. The first is the ministry of Zerubbabel and the rebuilding of the temple. The second comes some 50-60 years later with the return of Ezra to Jerusalem. (**See STEPS IN TIME V**)

The two time divisions of Ezra give us a natural division to outline the book. We will look at Ezra as follows:

I- The Ministry of Zerubbabel. *Ezra 1:1-6:22*

II- The Ministry of Ezra. *Ezra 7:1-10:44*

I- The Ministry of Zerubbabel. *Ezra 1:1-6:22*

There were three different returns to Jerusalem by those who had been taken captive. (See **STEPS IN TIME V**) The first return took place in 536 under Zerubbabel.

First we ask who was Zerubbabel? He was the grandson of King Jehoiachin and a descendant of King David. He is listed in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. (***Matt 1:12-13***). He was an heir to the throne of Judah. (***1 Chron 3:17-19***)

a- The Decree of Cyrus: ***1:1-4***

(***Is 44:28; 45:1***) 170 years before these events Isaiah had prophesied that a man named Cyrus would make a decree for the Jews to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

b- Return Preparation: ***1:5-11***

Not only does he make this decree but Cyrus gave the temple instruments to be taken back ***1:7***. Those who were not going to return financed the endeavor of those who would.

c- 49,897 Return: ***2:1ff***.

There were almost 50,000 who returned in the first return. This would be the largest of the three groups by far.

d- Events in Jerusalem: ***3:1ff***.

The first thing the exiles did when they returned after the 800 mile journey was build an altar and make a sacrifice. (***3:3-7***)

When the Temple foundation was laid those who had memories of the first temple mourned. This was a celebration that included great joy and great sadness. (***3:13***)

Ezra 4 records the opposition to the rebuilding of the temple. Cyrus who had allowed this work to start had died and Artaxerxes now ruled. The enemies were successful in stopping the work for some fifteen years. These enemies were later known as Samaritans.

The temple construction was once again begun when God sent Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people. Darius searches the history books and found the decree of Cyrus and then allows the temple to be completed. (***6:1-3***)

e- Zerubbabel's Temple Completed. ***6:15ff***

The temple was completed and dedicated after a total of some 20 years. They were then able to celebrate the Passover. This temple is known as Zerubabel's Temple. It is the second of three temples constructed until this time. The first was Solomon's temple, which was destroyed when the Babylonians carried Jerusalem into captivity. The next one after this will be Herod's temple, which stood in Jesus day and was destroyed in AD 70.

The events of the 50-60 years between the completion of the temple and the return of Ezra include the book of Esther (See **STEP 25**) Xerxes (KJV Ahasuerus) ruled during a portion of this time after Darius. His son Artaxerxes followed him as king of Persia.

Artaxerxes was the king who allows both Ezra and Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem.

II- The Ministry of Ezra. *Ezra 7:1-10:44*

We might ask who Ezra was and why he did not return at first. Ezra was a priest, as we see from his genealogy in ***Ezra 7***. He was the great grandson of Hilkiah, the priest who found the word of the Lord in the temple during Josiah's reign.

Ezra was a man of God's Word who gave his life to teach God's Word. The reason he did not return at first might have been that there was no place of service for him in Jerusalem at the time of the return under Zerubabel.

a- Decree of Artaxerxes *7:11ff*

Again a decree was made allowing anyone who wanted to go back to help in Jerusalem to do so. The King makes Ezra ruler over the land on the West Side of the Euphrates River. (***7:25-26***)

b- List of Returnees *8:1ff*

There were about 1500 men and their families who when with Ezra. When Ezra stopped at the river Ahava for a roll call he found there was not one Levite who had volunteered to come. (***8:15***)

They returned to make a plea for some of the descendants of Levi to return with them and some 300 responded and went. (***8:16-20***)

This group was carrying a large sum of money that had been donated for the project. Twelve priests were set over the task of transporting this treasure to Jerusalem. This little band arrives safely.

c- Corruption of Testimony: *9:1ff*

Ezra returned to find that the people of Israel had compromised their testimony (***9:1***). They had married the daughters of the pagans in the land (***9:2***).

d- Ezra's Prayer *9:5ff*

When Ezra heard this he was amazed and prayed a prayer of confession that equals the great prayers of Daniel and Nehemiah. (see ***Dan 9*** and ***Neh 9***) He confessed the sins of the people and the evil of the day.

e- Revival in the Land *10:1ff*

The prayers of Ezra were answered. God moved in the hearts of the people. A decree went out that all men should assemble in three days in Jerusalem. When the people gathered they had great fear of the Lord. (***10:9***). Ezra brought the Word of God to bear on the lives and encouraged them to confess. The people answered in a loud voice that they would do what Ezra proclaimed from God.

The corruption of the nation was evidenced by the latter 25 verses of ***Ezra 10***. 17 priest, 10 Levities, and 3 gatekeepers were guilty. This marrying of strange wives was forbidden by the

law of God in order to keep the nation of Israel pure. This was to prevent the wives from turning the hearts of the nation away from Jehovah. You will recall that Ruth and Rahab were Gentiles who worshipped God and therefore were not excluded from marriage by a Jewish man. In fact they were both in the lineage of Messiah.

These men who did this put away these wives and the children born of these wives. A national revival took place. Within a year all this matter had been resolved.

The book of Ezra ends abruptly. The temple is rebuilt and the worship of the true and living God has been restored. They could have proper fellowship with God now with proper worship and live according to God's Word.

Application to Life's Steps:

- 1- We should be obedient to go when God says go.
- 2- Those who God send need to be supported by those who stay behind.
- 3- The worship of God is an important element in our Christian lives.
- 4- God in His providence arranges the circumstances to His purposes, even the Kingdoms of the World.
- 5- The preaching of God's Word brings to light the wrong in our lives.

6- Repentance of sin will never be out of style in God's kingdom.

Retracing our Steps:

- 1- The name Ezra means?

- 2- Who was Zerubbabel? _____

- 3- What did Zerubbabel do in Jerusalem? _____

- 4- What two prophets of God did He send to encourage the work to go forward? _____ and _____.
- 5- What was Ezra? _____
- 6- What was the sins of the people that Ezra preached against? _____

- 7- Why was this wrong? _____

- 8- What book of the Bible is chronologically set between the two division of Ezra? _____

PATH TWO SOURCES CITED

Page #	Source Cited
43-45, 47, 53-56, 57, 73	<i>The Reese Chronological Bible</i> , 12 th Edition 1994 Bethany House Publishers, 1980 A Ministry of Bethany Fellowship, Inc. 11300 Hampshire Avenue South Mineapolis, MN 55438 © 1977 Edward Reese ISBN 0-87123-115-8
61	<i>Unger's Bible Handbook</i> , 1966, P 307 Merrill F. Unger; Th.D, Ph. D. Moody Press 820 N. LsSalle Blvd. Chicago IL. 60610 © 1966 Moody Bible Institute of Chicago ISBN 0-8024-9039-5
63	<i>Bible Textbook Series- Minor Prophets A Study of Micah Through Malachi</i> Clinton R. Gill © 1971 College Press College Press; Joplin, Missouri ISBN 0-89900-027-4
67	<i>The Bible Knowledge Commentary</i> , P 1123 Editors: John F. Walvoord; Roy B. Zuck Victor Books, A division of SP Publications, Inc. Wheaton, ILL 60187 © 1985, SP Publications, Inc. ISBN 0-88207-8315