

Ezra

The Israelites rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, and a scribe named Ezra teaches the people to renew their love for God's laws. His ministry was so vast he was called the 2nd Moses.

He presented the Law to the people. He also ended the practice of mixed marriages and succeeded in persuading the people to divorce their foreign wives. His ministry was so effective the people entered a solemn covenant before God to enter into no more mixed marriages, to refrain from work on the Sabbath, to levy on themselves an annual tax for the support of the Temple, to present their tithes and offerings, and otherwise to comply with the demands of the Law.

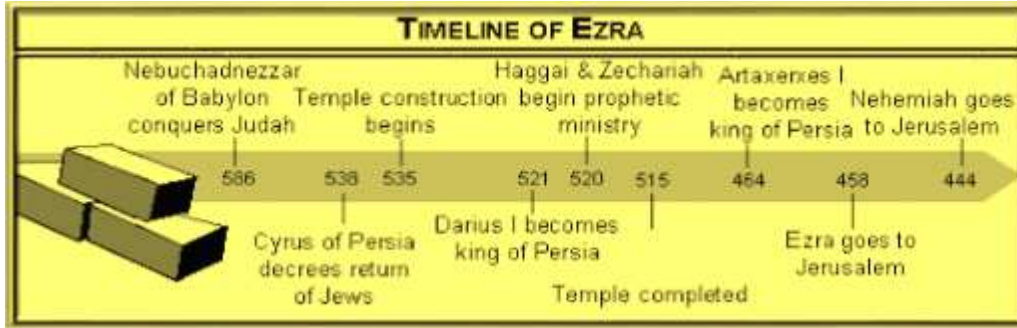
Author: Ezra, a contemporary of Nehemiah, was in the Babylonian captivity.

In Ezra – Jesus is our Wall of Defense

Ezra 7:10

"Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws."





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TEACHER: 10 CHAPTERS

Ezra and Nehemiah are key to how the Lord paved the way for Jesus and the birth of the church, and the oldest manuscripts have the 2 books as 1 volume. To re-cap, the Assyrians hassle Israel for the reigns of a few kings, they are overrun by the Babylonians, who take Israel into captivity, who are in turn overrun by the Persians, who in time, free the Jewish people to return to Israel. Historically we are now in the period called "The Restoration." Not only was Judea rebuilt physically, but spiritually as well. The Temple was re-built, sacrifices were re-instated, and the Word of God was once again taught. The Northern Tribes were carried off into captivity by the Babylonians around 597 B.C. The Southern Tribes of Judah and Benjamin were carried off by the Babylonians around 586 B.C. This would last 70 years, and is referred to as "The Babylonian Captivity." Israel would lay barren, picked through by scavengers and over grown.

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STUDENT:

CH. 1

In the first year Cyrus was king of Persia, the LORD caused Cyrus to send an announcement to his whole kingdom and to put it in writing. This happened so the LORD's message spoken by Jeremiah would come true. He wrote:

²This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

The LORD, the God of heaven, has given all the kingdoms of the earth to me, and he has appointed me to build a Temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³May God be with all of you who are his people. You are free to go to Jerusalem in Judah and build the Temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, who is in Jerusalem. ⁴Those who stay behind, wherever they live, should support those who want to go. Give them silver and gold, supplies and cattle, and special gifts for the Temple of God in Jerusalem. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

Cyrus returned all the temple utensils that Nebuchadnezzar had removed from Solomon's Temple.

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STUDENT:

King Cyrus brought out the bowls and pans that belonged in the Temple of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his own god. ⁸Cyrus king of Persia had Mithredath the treasurer bring them and count them out for Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

⁹He listed thirty gold dishes, one thousand silver dishes, twenty-nine pans, ¹⁰thirty gold bowls, four hundred ten matching silver bowls, and one thousand other pieces.

¹¹There was a total of fifty-four hundred pieces of gold and silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these things along when the captives went from Babylon to Jerusalem. (NCV)

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CH. 2

TEACHER:

FYI Sheshbazzar is Zerubbabel. He was the Governor assigned by Cyrus, and accepted by the people as the heir to David's throne, and rightful King of Judah. He was a descendant of King David. Chapter 2 starts with a genealogy of the returnees listing Mordecai as among them. All together they numbered around 50,000 souls.

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STUDENT:

These are the people of the area who returned from captivity, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken away to Babylon. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each going back to his own town. ²These people returned with Zerubbabel; Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

They would quickly move in and get settled, rebuilding their homes, and making them habitable again.

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STUDENT:

⁶⁸ When they arrived at the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the leaders of families gave offerings to rebuild the Temple of God on the same site as before. ⁶⁹ They gave as much as they could to the treasury to rebuild the Temple—about 1,100 pounds of gold, about 6,000 pounds of silver, and 100 pieces of clothing for the priests.

⁷⁰ All the Israelites settled in their hometowns. The priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and Temple servants, along with some of the other people, settled in their own towns as well. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

7 months in, the people make their homes as livable as possible and they begin to turn their hearts toward God, as Passover was approaching.

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CH. 3

STUDENT:

In the seventh month, after the Israelites were settled in their hometowns, they met together in Jerusalem. ² Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests joined Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and began to build the altar of the God of Israel where they could offer burnt offerings, just as it is written in the Teachings of Moses, the man of God. ³ Even though they were afraid of the people living around them, they built the altar where it had been before. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

They offered all the correct sacrifices, but the foundations of the Temple had not yet been laid. Time to take an offering. Building project!

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STUDENT:

⁷ Then they gave money to the bricklayers and carpenters. They also gave food, wine, and oil to the cities of Sidon and Tyre so they would float cedar logs from Lebanon to the seacoast town of Joppa. Cyrus king of Persia had given permission for this....

They chose Levites twenty years old and older to be in charge of the building of the Temple of the LORD. ⁹ These men were in charge of the work of building the Temple of God....(NCV)

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STUDENT:

¹⁰ The builders finished laying the foundation of the Temple of the LORD. Then the priests, dressed in their robes, stood with their trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, stood with their cymbals. They all took their places and praised the LORD just as David king of Israel had said to do. ¹¹ With praise and thanksgiving, they sang to the LORD:

“He is good;
his love for Israel continues forever.” (NCV)

TEACHER:

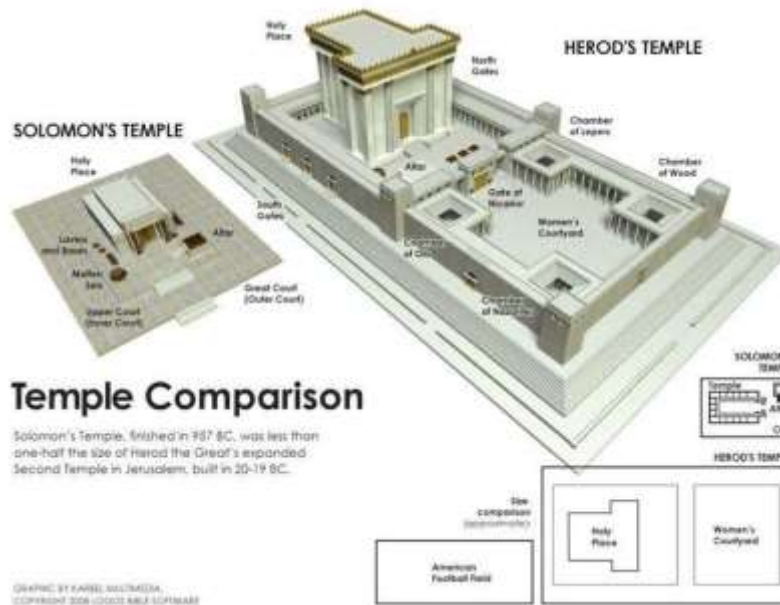
Not everyone was happy though.

STUDENT:

And then all the people shouted loudly, “Praise the LORD! The foundation of his Temple has been laid.” ¹² But many of the older priests, Levites, and family leaders who had seen the first Temple cried when they saw the foundation of this Temple. Most of the other people were shouting with joy. ¹³ The people made so much noise it could be heard far away, and no one could tell the difference between the joyful shouting and the sad crying. (NCV)

TEACHER:

With 70 years in captivity, the memory certainly would’ve been a shock. I remember visiting the street I grew up on just 20 years later and couldn’t believe how small everything looked. Seeing just the foundation must have been heartbreaking to them. In actuality the temple when in its final state 500 years later, would dwarf Solomon’s temple, thanks to the Romans.



The real problem with this Temple would be no Holy of Holies, No Ark of the Covenant, and No Shekinah Glory. All in all this 2nd Temple would last 585 years. The Romans under Titus destroyed the temple in 70 A.D. to quell a Jewish revolt, and 2000 years later we wait for the 3rd Temple. We are 1 step closer with President Trump recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital on December 6th, 2017.

CH. 4

STUDENT:

When the enemies of the people of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned captives were building a Temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, ² they came to Zerubbabel and the leaders of the families. The enemies said, "Let us help you build, because we are like you and want to worship your God. We have been offering sacrifices to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here."

³ But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the leaders of Israel answered, "You will not help us build a Temple to our God. We will build it ourselves for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us to do."

⁴ Then the people around them tried to discourage the people of Judah by making them afraid to build. ⁵ Their enemies hired others to delay the building plans during the time Cyrus was king of Persia. And it continued to the time Darius was king of Persia. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The enemies of Israel succeeded in stopping the work, until Darius took the Persian throne. By his 2nd year in office, the Temple construction was begun again. The same enemies tried again to stop it by sending a letter as they did before, but to no avail.

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CH. 6

STUDENT:

¹³ So, Tattenai, the governor of Trans-Euphrates, Shethar-Bozenai, and their fellow workers carried out King Darius' order quickly and carefully. ¹⁴ The Jewish elders continued to build and were successful because of the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the Temple as the God of Israel had commanded and as kings Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes of Persia had ordered. ¹⁵ The Temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar in the sixth year Darius was king. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

It was a wonderful time and the celebration would last 7 days. Everyone ate the Passover lamb. While all this was happening, Ezra was studying the Law of God in Babylon. And God helped him greatly.

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CH. 7

STUDENT:

After these things during the rule of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra came up from Babylon...

⁶ This Ezra came to Jerusalem from Babylon. He was a teacher and knew well the Teachings of Moses that had been given by the LORD, the God of Israel. Ezra received everything he asked for from the king, because the LORD his God was helping him....

⁹ Ezra had left Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, because God was helping him. ¹⁰ Ezra had worked hard to know and obey the Teachings of the LORD and to teach his rules and commands to the Israelites. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

Ezra receives papers of blessing from the King, and starts out for Jerusalem with great joy.

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STUDENT:

²⁷ Praise the LORD, the God of our ancestors. He caused the king to want to honor the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. ²⁸ The LORD has shown me, Ezra, his love in the presence of the king, those who advise the king, and the royal officers. Because the LORD my God was helping me, I had courage, and I gathered the leaders of Israel to return with me. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

Ezra is concerned for their safety as the trip would be dangerous. They carried much wealth from the King, and Israel was surrounded with enemies.

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CH. 8

STUDENT:

I announced we would all fast and deny ourselves before our God. We would ask God for a safe trip for ourselves, our children, and all our possessions.

²² I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road. We had said to the king, "Our God helps everyone who obeys him, but he is very angry with all who reject him."

²³ So we fasted and prayed to our God about our trip, and he answered our prayers. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The Israelite leaders came to Ezra complaining that the Israelites had inter-married with people from the surrounding nations, the very thing that caused them to be taken into captivity in the 1st place, 70 years earlier.

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CH. 9

STUDENT:

³ When I heard this, I angrily tore my robe and coat, pulled hair from my head and beard, and sat down in shock.

⁴ Everyone who trembled in fear at the word of the God of Israel gathered around me because of the unfaithfulness of the captives who had returned. I sat there in shock until the evening sacrifice.

⁵ At the evening sacrifice I got up from where I had shown my shame. My robe and coat were torn, and I fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the LORD my God.

⁶ I prayed, (NCV)

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STUDENT:

"My God, I am too ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are so many. They are higher than our heads. Our guilt even reaches up to the sky. ⁷ From the days of our ancestors until now, our guilt has been great....

⁸ "But now, for a short time, the LORD our God has been kind to us. He has let some of us come back from captivity and has let us live in safety in his holy place. And so our God gives us hope and a little relief from our slavery. ⁹ Even though we are slaves, our God has not left us.....(NCV)

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STUDENT:

¹³ "What has happened to us is our own fault. We have done evil things, and our guilt is great. But you, our God, have punished us less than we deserve; you have left a few of us alive. ¹⁴ We should not again break your commands by allowing marriages with these wicked people....

We admit that we are guilty and none of us should be allowed to stand before you." (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The people of Israel repent.

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CH. 10

STUDENT:

As Ezra was praying and confessing and crying and throwing himself down in front of the Temple, a large group of Israelite men, women, and children gathered around him who were also crying loudly. ² Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel the Elamite said to Ezra, (NCV)

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STUDENT:

“We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying women from the peoples around us. But even so, there is still hope for Israel. ³ Now let us make an agreement before our God. We will send away all these women and their children as you and those who respect the commands of our God advise. Let it be done to obey God’s Teachings. ⁴ Get up, Ezra. You are in charge, and we will support you. Have courage and do it.” (NCV)

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TEACHER:

Israel obeyed and sent the foreign wives and children back to their native homes.

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NEXT LESSON NEHEMIAH

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“...but even now, there is hope.”

Ezra 10:2

These coins from Ezra’s time are among the oldest coins in existence.



This is a relief of Artaxerxes 1 Grandson of Darius





