

Ezra

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Author: Ezra · Written: c. 450-400 BC · Category: History

Introduction

Ezra chronicles one of Scripture's most remarkable narratives—the return of God's people from Babylonian exile and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. After seventy years of captivity, precisely as Jeremiah had prophesied, God stirred the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to decree that the Jews could return home and rebuild the house of the LORD. This book demonstrates with compelling clarity that God's promises never fail, that His sovereignty extends over pagan empires, and that His purposes for His people continue even after the most devastating judgments.

The book divides naturally into two major sections separated by approximately sixty years. Chapters 1-6 record the first return under Zerubbabel's leadership (538-515 BC), focusing on the rebuilding of the temple despite fierce opposition. Chapters 7-10 describe Ezra's own return (458 BC) and his reforms addressing the crisis of intermarriage with pagan peoples. Between these accounts lies a sixty-year gap during which the events of Esther occurred. This structure emphasizes that restoration involves both physical reconstruction (the temple) and spiritual reformation (the people)—buildings alone do not constitute authentic return to God.

The central figure of chapters 7-10, Ezra himself, stands as one of Scripture's exemplary spiritual leaders. Described as 'a ready scribe in the law of Moses' who 'had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments' (7:6, 10), Ezra modeled the proper sequence: personal study of Scripture, personal obedience to Scripture, then public teaching of Scripture. His combination of priestly heritage and scribal expertise, coupled with deep personal piety, equipped him to lead spiritual reformation. His intercessory prayer confessing the nation's sins (chapter 9) ranks among Scripture's great prayers, demonstrating how leaders should respond to corporate unfaithfulness.

Ezra was likely compiled by Ezra himself, written for the post-exilic community to document God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises, to establish the legitimacy of the rebuilt temple, and to call subsequent generations to covenant faithfulness. The book addresses the perennial question facing God's people: How do we maintain spiritual distinctiveness while living in a pagan culture? Ezra's answer is clear—through unwavering commitment to God's Word, separation from practices that compromise covenant loyalty, and wholehearted devotion to proper worship.

Book Outline

- **First Return: Temple Rebuilt** (1-6) — Cyrus's decree, returnees listed, altar and temple foundation, opposition, completion
- **Second Return: People Restored** (7-10) — Ezra's journey, his commission, the mixed marriage crisis

Key Themes

- **Fulfillment of Prophetic Promises:** The book opens with explicit reference to Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10), demonstrating that God's word never fails. The precise fulfillment of the timeline—Babylon's conquest in 586 BC, Cyrus's decree in 538 BC—validates both the prophet's message and God's faithfulness. This theme assures readers that despite long delays and seemingly impossible circumstances, God's promises will be fulfilled exactly as He spoke. The restoration from exile was not political accident but divine faithfulness to prophetic word. This establishes Scripture's reliability and encourages believers to trust God's promises even when fulfillment seems distant.
- **God's Sovereignty Over Pagan Rulers:** The book repeatedly demonstrates that God controls the hearts of pagan kings to accomplish His purposes. He 'stirred up the spirit of Cyrus' (1:1), moved him to issue the decree allowing return, and even provided resources for temple reconstruction. Later, He 'turned the heart of the king of Assyria' (6:22, referring to the Persian king) to support the work. This sovereignty extends to changing hostile opposition into support. The theme teaches that no human power can ultimately thwart God's purposes. Even rulers who know nothing of the true God serve His plans. This encouraged the vulnerable post-exilic community and assures believers today that God reigns over all earthly authorities.
- **The Centrality of Temple Worship:** Rebuilding the temple takes priority over all other reconstruction efforts. The returnees first establish the altar and reinstitute sacrifice (3:2-3), then lay the temple foundation, and persist through decades of opposition to complete the structure. The temple represented far more than a building—it was the visible manifestation of God's presence among His people, the center of covenant worship, and the symbol of their identity as God's people. Without the temple, they were merely scattered refugees; with it, they were a worshiping community with a future. This emphasis teaches that proper worship must be central to God's people in every generation, not peripheral or optional.
- **Opposition to God's Work:** The rebuilding faces persistent, fierce opposition from surrounding peoples who use intimidation, legal maneuvering, political intrigue, and slander to stop the work (chapters 4-5). Adversaries first offer deceptive 'help,' then when refused, turn hostile. They hire counselors to frustrate the work, write accusatory letters to Persian authorities, and succeed in halting construction for years. Yet God's work cannot ultimately be stopped. This pattern teaches that opposition should be expected when doing God's work, that Satan uses both overt hostility and subtle compromise, and that perseverance through difficulty is essential. The opposition also demonstrates the importance of maintaining spiritual distinctiveness even when it brings conflict.

- **The Primacy of God's Word:** Ezra's defining characteristic is his devotion to Scripture—he 'prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments' (7:10). This threefold commitment (study, obedience, teaching) models proper relationship to God's Word. The people's positive response to Ezra's teaching and their willingness to undertake painful reforms demonstrate Scripture's authority over their lives. When Ezra reads the law, the people weep, recognizing their failure and committing to obedience. This theme establishes that spiritual renewal always involves return to Scripture—reading it, understanding it, obeying it, and allowing it to shape community life.
- **Separation and Covenant Purity:** The crisis of intermarriage with pagan peoples (chapters 9-10) addressed far more than ethnicity—it concerned covenant loyalty. The law explicitly forbade marriage with Canaanite peoples not from ethnic prejudice but because 'they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods' (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). This prediction had proven tragically accurate—Solomon's foreign wives turned his heart from God. The post-exilic community's intermarriages threatened to repeat this pattern. Ezra's grief and the people's radical response (divorcing pagan spouses) demonstrate the seriousness of maintaining covenant distinctiveness. The principle applies to Christians regarding spiritual compromise and unequal yoking with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).
- **Responding to God's Grace with Worship and Obedience:** The book repeatedly shows God's gracious action prompting joyful worship and practical obedience. When Cyrus issues his decree, the people praise God (1:5-6). When the temple foundation is laid, they worship with 'singing together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD' (3:11). When the temple is completed, they celebrate with sacrifices and joy (6:16-18). Yet worship also leads to action—recognizing God's grace in preservation, Ezra and the people undertake the difficult work of reformation. This pattern teaches that authentic worship involves both celebration of God's goodness and commitment to live according to His will.
- **The Remnant and God's Continuing Purposes:** Only a remnant returns from Babylon—about 50,000 initially, a small fraction of the Jewish population scattered throughout the Persian Empire. Most chose to remain in relative comfort rather than face the hardship of rebuilding. Yet God works through this committed remnant to accomplish His purposes. This theme, central to Scripture, demonstrates that God's work never depends on majority support or impressive numbers but on faithful people willing to obey. The remnant becomes the core through which God preserves His covenant people and prepares for the Messiah's coming. This encourages believers that even when faithful seem few, God's purposes continue through those who respond to His call.

Key Verses

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing.

— Ezra 1:1 (The book's opening verse establishes its central theme: God's absolute faithfulness to His prophetic word. The explicit reference to Jeremiah's prophecy demonstrates that the seventy-year exile was neither accident nor divine failure but precisely what God had predicted. The phrase 'the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus' reveals divine sovereignty over pagan rulers—God works through unbelieving kings to accomplish His purposes for His people. This verse assured the post-exilic community that their return was God's work, not merely political fortune.)

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

— Ezra 7:10 (This verse provides perhaps Scripture's clearest model for proper relationship to God's Word. The sequence is crucial: first, personal preparation of heart to seek Scripture; second, personal obedience to what is learned; third, public teaching of others. Ezra's pattern refutes both intellectualism (study without obedience) and activism (teaching without personal practice). The phrase 'prepared his heart' indicates intentional, disciplined commitment—this was no casual interest but life-orienting devotion. This verse establishes the foundation for all biblical ministry and spiritual leadership.)

And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

— Ezra 3:11 (The temple foundation-laying ceremony demonstrates proper response to God's gracious work—corporate worship characterized by praise, thanksgiving, and celebration. The specific praise—'he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever'—echoes the refrain from Psalms 106, 107, 118, and 136, connecting the post-exilic community with Israel's historic worship. Yet this joyful celebration was mixed with weeping from older people who remembered Solomon's temple (3:12), showing that progress toward restoration doesn't eliminate all sadness about what was lost. Still, the dominant note is gratitude for God's mercy enabling a new beginning.)

And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

— Ezra 6:22 (The temple completion and Passover celebration demonstrate how God provides what His people need to complete His work. The reference to 'the king of Assyria' (meaning Persia, which had conquered Assyria) turning to support temple construction shows God's sovereignty—He can change hostile opposition into active support. The phrase 'the LORD had made them joyful' reveals that authentic joy is divine gift, not merely human emotion. This verse encouraged the discouraged post-exilic community that God could and would provide resources needed for His work.)

And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

— Ezra 9:6 (Ezra's prayer upon learning of the intermarriage crisis models how spiritual leaders should respond to corporate sin—with identification rather than condemnation. Though personally innocent, Ezra uses 'our iniquities' not 'their iniquities,' placing himself within the community's guilt. His shame and inability to lift his face before God demonstrate genuine grief over sin rather than mere anger about a problem. This intercessory identification with the people's sin anticipates Christ who, though sinless, bore our sins and made our guilt His own. The prayer teaches that authentic spiritual leadership involves bearing the burden of others' failures.)

Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.

— Ezra 10:4 (The people's response to Ezra demonstrates that effective spiritual leadership produces willing followership. Their charge to Ezra—'arise... be of good courage, and do it'—shows they recognized both the necessity of action and the difficulty of what was required. The promise 'we also will be with thee' committed them to support the painful reforms. This verse teaches that addressing sin requires courage, that difficult spiritual decisions need community support, and that leaders need encouragement from those they lead. The people's readiness to undertake painful separation from pagan spouses demonstrates that Scripture authority, rightly taught, produces obedience even when costly.)

Historical Context

Ezra spans approximately 80 years (538-458 BC) during the Persian Empire's dominance under Cyrus the Great, Cambyses, Darius I, and Artaxerxes I. This was an era of relative religious tolerance—Persian policy allowed conquered peoples to maintain their religious practices and even funded temple reconstructions as a way of ensuring loyalty and stability throughout the empire. Cyrus's decree permitting Jewish return was consistent with this broader policy.

The Jews who returned faced enormous challenges. Jerusalem lay in ruins, its walls broken down, the temple destroyed. The land had been settled by other peoples during the seventy-year absence. The returning exiles were a tiny, vulnerable minority without political power, dependent on Persian authorization and goodwill. They faced hostility from surrounding peoples—Samaritans to the north, Ammonites to the east, Arabs to the south, Ashdodites to the west—who viewed the restoration as a threat to their interests.

The book was compiled during or shortly after these events, likely by Ezra himself, who had access to official Persian documents (quoted in Aramaic, the imperial language), temple records, and personal memoirs. The inclusion of both Hebrew and Aramaic sections demonstrates the bilingual nature of the post-exilic community. The genealogical lists served crucial purposes: validating priestly lines, establishing land claims, and demonstrating continuity with pre-exilic Israel. These weren't mere historical curiosities but legal documents essential to the restored community's identity and function.

Literary Style

Ezra employs diverse literary forms within a carefully structured narrative. The book includes genealogical lists (chapters 2, 8), official imperial correspondence in Aramaic (4:8-6:18; 7:12-26), personal memoir (chapters 7-10), prayers (chapter 9), and historical narrative. This variety reflects the book's composite nature—compiled from multiple sources yet unified by consistent theological perspective.

The shift between Hebrew and Aramaic is deliberate and meaningful. Hebrew appears in sections addressing Jewish internal matters and worship; Aramaic appears in sections involving Persian imperial authority and official correspondence. This bilingual approach authenticated the narrative—readers could verify that actual Persian documents supported the account.

The book's structure emphasizes theological themes over strict chronology. Chapter 4 combines opposition from different periods (spanning several decades) to demonstrate the persistent nature of resistance to God's work. The lengthy genealogical lists in chapter 2 serve multiple purposes: they validate returnees' claims, demonstrate continuity with pre-exilic Israel, and slow the narrative pace to emphasize the significance of this return—these aren't merely refugees but the covenant community returning to their inheritance.

Ezra's first-person memoir (chapters 7-10) provides intimate access to his thoughts and prayers, creating emotional connection with his grief over the people's sin. The prayer in chapter 9 is among Scripture's finest examples of intercessory confession, demonstrating how to acknowledge corporate guilt while maintaining theological accuracy about sin's nature and consequences.

Theological Significance

Ezra develops several crucial theological themes:

Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: The book demonstrates both God's sovereign control over history and human responsibility to respond to His initiatives. God stirs Cyrus's spirit, moves Persian kings to support temple building, and fulfills His prophetic word—all apart from human merit or effort. Yet human response remains essential—the people must choose to return, persist through opposition, and undertake difficult reforms. This tension between divine initiative and human responsibility pervades Scripture and receives clear expression in Ezra.

Scripture's Authority Over Life: Ezra's devotion to God's law establishes Scripture as the authoritative guide for both personal life and community practice. When conflict arose between established practice (intermarriage) and Scripture's commands, Scripture prevailed. This demonstrates that God's Word stands above tradition, personal preference, or pragmatic consideration. The people's willingness to undertake painful separation from pagan spouses shows genuine submission to biblical authority. This principle remains foundational—Scripture must shape our lives, not merely inform them.

The Nature of True Return: Physical return to Jerusalem proved insufficient—spiritual reformation was essential. Rebuilding the temple mattered, but reforming the people mattered more. This teaches that authentic restoration involves both external structures (proper worship, covenant community) and internal transformation (heart devotion, obedience to God's Word). The pattern appears throughout Scripture—external religion without heart change never satisfies God.

Separation and Purity: The emphasis on separation from pagan peoples addressed covenant purity, not ethnic superiority. The law's marriage prohibitions protected Israel from idolatry—foreign spouses would 'turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods' (Deuteronomy 7:4). This prediction had proven accurate throughout Israel's history. The post-exilic community's intermarriages threatened to repeat the pattern that brought the exile. Ezra's reforms demonstrate that maintaining spiritual distinctiveness sometimes requires painful separation from compromising relationships. For Christians, this principle applies to avoiding spiritual compromise and being 'not unequally yoked together with unbelievers' (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Corporate Solidarity: Ezra's prayer identifies with the people's sin though personally innocent, using 'our iniquities' not 'their iniquities.' This demonstrates corporate solidarity—leaders bear the burden of their people's failures. Yet the book also maintains individual responsibility—those who had married foreign wives must

personally decide to obey God's Word. This balance between corporate identity and personal accountability runs throughout Scripture.

The Remnant: The small number who returned (about 50,000 initially from a much larger exilic population) demonstrates that God works through faithful remnants. Most Jews chose comfort in Babylon over the hardship of restoration. Yet God accomplishes His purposes through those who respond to His call, regardless of numbers. This remnant theology encouraged the discouraged post-exilic community and assures believers that faithfulness matters more than majority support.

Christ in Ezra

Ezra points to Christ through multiple channels:

The Return from Exile as Type of Redemption: The return from Babylonian captivity foreshadows the greater deliverance Christ accomplishes. Just as God brought His people out of exile in a foreign land back to their inheritance, Christ delivers believers from sin's captivity and brings us into our spiritual inheritance. The timing —'when the seventy years are accomplished'—demonstrates that redemption occurs according to God's perfect schedule. Christ came 'when the fulness of the time was come' (Galatians 4:4). The restoration following judgment points toward the resurrection following death.

The Temple and Christ's Body: The rebuilt temple, though inferior to Solomon's in physical splendor, was the dwelling place where God chose to manifest His presence. This points toward Christ as the ultimate temple—the place where God fully dwells with humanity. Jesus declared, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (John 2:19), identifying His body as the true temple. The post-exilic temple's relative poverty compared to Solomon's glory parallels Christ's humble appearance—'he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him' (Isaiah 53:2). Yet just as the post-exilic temple became the dwelling place of God's presence, Christ is God incarnate, Immanuel, God with us.

Ezra as Type of Christ: Ezra's combination of priestly lineage and teaching ministry, his devotion to Scripture, his identification with the people's sin, and his work of reformation all point toward Christ. Where Ezra studied and taught God's law, Christ is the Word made flesh who perfectly revealed the Father. Where Ezra interceded for the people's sin while remaining personally sinless, Christ became sin for us though He knew no sin. Where Ezra led reformation, Christ transforms hearts. Ezra's weeping over sin anticipates Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.

Cyrus as Type: Isaiah prophesied that God would raise up Cyrus as His 'anointed' (messiah—the same word applied to Christ) to accomplish redemption for His people (Isaiah 45:1). Cyrus's decree freeing the captives and providing resources for temple rebuilding foreshadows Christ's greater work—proclaiming liberty to captives, opening the prison to those who are bound (Isaiah 61:1, fulfilled in Luke 4:18-19). Just as Cyrus provided what was needed for temple reconstruction, Christ provides what is needed for building God's spiritual temple, the church.

The Mixed Multitude: The returnees included not only ethnic Israelites but also 'the children of Solomon's servants' and others who joined themselves to Israel. This anticipates the gospel's inclusion of Gentiles in God's people. Just as foreigners could

become part of Israel by embracing covenant faith, Gentiles become part of spiritual Israel through faith in Christ. Yet the requirement for separation from pagan spouses demonstrates that inclusion requires genuine conversion, not mere external association. This points toward the New Testament principle that belonging to God's people requires heart transformation, not merely external identification.

The Foundation-Laying: The joyful celebration at the temple foundation, mixed with weeping from those who remembered the former glory, anticipates the kingdom's inauguration in Christ. The 'already but not yet' tension of Christian experience—rejoicing in present redemption while longing for consummation—parallels the post-exilic community's mixed response. They had returned but not to former glory; believers are redeemed but await glorification.

Relationship to the New Testament

The New Testament references and applies Ezra in several significant ways:

Fulfillment of Prophecy: The explicit reference to Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy (Ezra 1:1) demonstrates Scripture's reliability. This pattern of prophetic fulfillment pervades the New Testament, particularly Matthew's Gospel with its repeated 'that it might be fulfilled' formula. The principle that God's word never fails, established in Ezra, undergirds New Testament confidence in Old Testament prophecies about Christ.

Genealogies: Ezra's careful preservation of genealogical records served God's purposes in validating Jesus' Davidic lineage. Matthew's and Luke's genealogies depend on records like those preserved in Ezra. This demonstrates that seemingly tedious biblical lists serve crucial theological purposes.

Separation from the World: Ezra's emphasis on separation from pagan influences finds New Testament expression in commands to 'be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers' (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), to 'love not the world' (1 John 2:15-17), and to 'keep oneself unspotted from the world' (James 1:27). While the specific application differs (Christ broke down the wall between Jew and Gentile, Ephesians 2:14), the principle of maintaining spiritual distinctiveness remains.

Scripture's Authority: Ezra's pattern of studying, obeying, and teaching God's Word (7:10) anticipates New Testament emphasis on Scripture. Paul charges Timothy to 'preach the word' (2 Timothy 4:2), the Bereans are commended for examining Scripture (Acts 17:11), and Jesus consistently appealed to Scripture's authority. Ezra's model of personal obedience before public teaching parallels Paul's requirement that elders be 'holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught' (Titus 1:9).

Intercessory Confession: Ezra's prayer identifying with the people's sin (chapter 9) anticipates Christ's greater work. Where Ezra confessed 'our iniquities' though personally innocent, Christ who knew no sin was 'made sin for us' (2 Corinthians 5:21). Ezra's intercessory identification foreshadows Christ's substitutionary atonement.

Joy in God's Work: The repeated emphasis on joy at the temple foundation (3:11-13) and completion (6:16, 22) parallels New Testament descriptions of joy in salvation and church life. The phrase 'the LORD had made them joyful' (6:22) anticipates the New Testament teaching that joy is fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), a divine gift rather than mere human emotion.

Opposition to God's Work: The fierce opposition to temple rebuilding (chapters 4-5) parallels opposition to the early church (Acts 4-5). The strategies remain consistent—intimidation, legal maneuvering, slander, political intrigue. Yet just as God's work could

not ultimately be stopped in Ezra, so the gospel advances despite opposition. The church's experience validates Ezra's pattern—expect opposition, persist through difficulty, trust God's sovereignty.

Practical Application

Ezra speaks powerfully to contemporary believers across multiple dimensions:

God's Faithfulness to His Promises: The book's opening—'that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled'—assures believers that God's promises never fail. What He speaks, He performs, even if fulfillment requires seventy years. When God's promises seem delayed or impossible, Ezra encourages patience and faith. The precise fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy demonstrates that God's timing is perfect, neither early nor late. This sustains hope when circumstances seem to contradict God's word.

The Pattern for Bible Study and Ministry: Ezra's model—'prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach'—provides the essential pattern for all biblical ministry. Personal study must precede teaching; personal obedience must accompany study. This refutes both intellectualism (knowledge without practice) and activism (ministry without deep biblical foundation). Those who would teach must first learn; those who would lead must first follow. The sequence cannot be reversed or abbreviated.

Perseverance Through Opposition: The temple rebuilding faced fierce, persistent opposition using multiple strategies—offers of deceptive 'help,' intimidation, legal challenges, slander. Yet the work was eventually completed because the people refused to quit. This teaches that God's work always faces opposition, that we should expect difficulties rather than being surprised by them, and that perseverance through hardship is essential. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the builders when they grew discouraged, reminding us that we need spiritual encouragement to persist in difficult tasks.

Maintaining Spiritual Distinctiveness: Ezra's crisis over intermarriage addressed the perennial challenge: How do we maintain spiritual distinctiveness while living in a pagan culture? The answer involves clear boundaries based on Scripture, even when these create tension or conflict. The principle applies to Christians regarding spiritual compromise—we must maintain distinctiveness in beliefs, values, and practices even when culture pressures conformity. This doesn't mean isolation but does require refusing to adopt worldly values or practices that conflict with biblical commands.

Corporate Confession of Sin: Ezra's prayer identifies with the people's sin though personally innocent, using 'our iniquities' not 'their iniquities.' This models how to respond to corporate or institutional sin. Leaders bear responsibility for addressing failures even when personally uninvolved. The prayer demonstrates genuine grief over

sin, acknowledgment of God's justice, and confession without excuse-making. Churches facing corporate failure need leaders willing to stand in the gap like Ezra.

The Cost of Obedience: The requirement that men divorce their foreign wives seems harsh to modern sensibilities, yet it demonstrates that obedience to God sometimes requires painful action. The people didn't debate or water down the law's demands but submitted to Scripture even when costly. This challenges contemporary tendencies to ignore biblical commands that create difficulty or seem culturally unacceptable. While the specific application differs for Christians (Paul forbids divorce even from unbelieving spouses, 1 Corinthians 7:12-13), the principle remains—Scripture's authority takes precedence over personal cost.

Joy as Gift and Response: The repeated emphasis on joy—at the altar restoration, foundation laying, and temple completion—teaches that authentic worship produces joy, and that joy in God's work is divine gift ('the LORD had made them joyful'). This counters both grim duty (serving God without joy) and shallow emotionalism (pursuing feeling rather than faithfulness). Genuine spiritual work produces joy because we participate in God's purposes. When that joy is absent, we should examine whether we're truly engaged in God's work or merely pursuing our own agendas.

Small Beginnings Matter: The remnant who returned was small, the rebuilt temple was modest compared to Solomon's, and the resources were limited. Yet this was the community through which God would send the Messiah. This encourages believers that faithfulness matters more than impressive numbers or resources. What seems insignificant can become the channel for God's greatest purposes. Those discouraged by small or struggling ministries should remember that God works through faithful remnants, not necessarily impressive multitudes.

Chapter 1

Cyrus Helps the Exiles Return

- 1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,
 - 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.
 - 3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.
 - 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.
 - 5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.
 - 6 And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.
 - 7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;
 - 8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.
 - 9 And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives,
 - 10 Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.
 - 11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.
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Chapter 2

The List of the Exiles Who Returned

- 1 Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city;
- 2 Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:
- 3 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two.
- 4 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two.
- 5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five.
- 6 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve.
- 7 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.
- 8 The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five.
- 9 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.
- 10 The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two.
- 11 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three.
- 12 The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two.
- 13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six.
- 14 The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six.
- 15 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four.
- 16 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight.
- 17 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three.
- 18 The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve.
- 19 The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three.
- 20 The children of Gibbar, ninety and five.
- 21 The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty and three.
- 22 The men of Netophah, fifty and six.
- 23 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight.
- 24 The children of Azmaveth, forty and two.

- 25 The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three.
- 26 The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one.
- 27 The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two.
- 28 The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three.
- 29 The children of Nebo, fifty and two.
- 30 The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six.
- 31 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.
- 32 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.
- 33 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five.
- 34 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five.
- 35 The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty.
- 36 The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three.
- 37 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two.
- 38 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven.
- 39 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.
- 40 The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four.
- 41 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight.
- 42 The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, in all an hundred thirty and nine.
- 43 The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth,
- 44 The children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon,
- 45 The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub,
- 46 The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmi, the children of Hanan,
- 47 The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah,
- 48 The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam,
- 49 The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai,
- 50 The children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim,
- 51 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,

- 52 The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,
53 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah,
54 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.
- 55 The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of
Sophereth, the children of Peruda,
56 The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel,
57 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of
Zebaim, the children of Ami.
- 58 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred
ninety and two.
- 59 And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan,
and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, and their seed, whether
they were of Israel:
- 60 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six
hundred fifty and two.
- 61 And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz,
the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the
Gileadite, and was called after their name:
- 62 These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but
they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.
- 63 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy
things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.
- 64 The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and
threescore,
- 65 Beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three
hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men
and singing women.
- 66 Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty
and five;
- 67 Their camels, four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand seven
hundred and twenty.
- 68 And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD
which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place:

- 69 They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments.
- 70 So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.
-

Chapter 3

The Altar Rebuilt

- 1 And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.
 - 2 Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God.
 - 3 And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening.
 - 4 They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;
 - 5 And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD.
 - 6 From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.
-

Rebuilding the Temple Begins

- 7 They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.
- 8 Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD.
- 9 Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites.

Opposition to the Rebuilding

- 10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.
- 11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.
- 12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:
- 13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.
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Chapter 4

Enemies Oppose the Rebuilding

- 1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;
 - 2 Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.
 - 3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.
 - 4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,
 - 5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.
-

Later Opposition Under Xerxes and Artaxerxes

- 6 And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.
- 7 And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.
- 8 Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort:
- 9 Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites,
- 10 And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time.
- 11 This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time.

- 12 Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.
- 13 Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.
- 14 Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king;
- 15 That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.
- 16 We certify the king that, if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.
- 17 Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.
- 18 The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.
- 19 And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein.
- 20 There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them.
- 21 Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me.
- 22 Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?
- 23 Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.
- 24 Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.
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Chapter 5

The Rebuilding Resumed

- 1 Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.
 - 2 Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.
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Tattenai's Letter to Darius

- 3 At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?
- 4 Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?
- 5 But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter.
- 6 The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king:
- 7 They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace.
- 8 Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands.
- 9 Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?
- 10 We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them.
- 11 And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up.

- 12 But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon.
- 13 But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God.
- 14 And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor;
- 15 And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place.
- 16 Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished.
- 17 Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.
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Chapter 6

The Decree of Darius

- 1 Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.
- 2 And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written:
- 3 In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits;
- 4 With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house:
- 5 And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God.
- 6 Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence:
- 7 Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.
- 8 Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.
- 9 And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail:
- 10 That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.
- 11 Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this.

- 12 And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.
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The Temple Completed

- 13 Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shethar-boznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.
- 14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.
- 15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.
- 16 And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy,
- 17 And offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.
- 18 And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.
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The Passover Celebrated

- 19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.
- 20 For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.
- 21 And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat,
- 22 And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.
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Chapter 7

Ezra Comes to Jerusalem

- 1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,
- 2 The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,
- 3 The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,
- 4 The son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,
- 5 The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest:
- 6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.
- 7 And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.
- 8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.
- 9 For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.
- 10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Artaxerxes' Letter to Ezra

- 11 Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel.
- 12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time.
- 13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

- 14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand;
- 15 And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem,
- 16 And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem:
- 17 That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem.
- 18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God.
- 19 The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem.
- 20 And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house.
- 21 And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily,
- 22 Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much.
- 23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?
- 24 Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.
- 25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not.
- 26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

Ezra Praises God

- 27 Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem:
- 28 And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.
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Chapter 8

The List of Those Returning with Ezra

- 1 These are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king.
- 2 Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush.
- 3 Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males an hundred and fifty.
- 4 Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males.
- 5 Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males.
- 6 Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males.
- 7 And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males.
- 8 And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males.
- 9 Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males.
- 10 And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males.
- 11 And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males.
- 12 And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males.
- 13 And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males.
- 14 Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males.
- 15 And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi.
- 16 Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding.

- 17 And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God.
- 18 And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen;
- 19 And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty;
- 20 Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name.
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Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem

- 21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.
- 22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.
- 23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.
- 24 Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them,
- 25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered:
- 26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents;
- 27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.
- 28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers.
- 29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD.

- 30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.
- 31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.
- 32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.
- 33 Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites;
- 34 By number and by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time.
- 35 Also the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he goats for a sin offering: all this was a burnt offering unto the LORD.
- 36 And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God.
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Chapter 9

Ezra's Prayer About Intermarriage

- 1 Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.
- 2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.
- 3 And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.
- 4 Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.
- 5 And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God,
- 6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.
- 7 Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day.
- 8 And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.
- 9 For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.
- 10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments,

- 11 Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness.
- 12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever.
- 13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this;
- 14 Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?
- 15 O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.
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Chapter 10

The People's Response

- 1 Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.
- 2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.
- 3 Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.
- 4 Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.
- 5 Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware.
- 6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.
- 7 And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem;
- 8 And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.

The Assembly

- 9 Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain.
- 10 And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel.

- 11 Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.
- 12 Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do.
- 13 But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing.
- 14 Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us.
- 15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.
- 16 And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.
- 17 And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.
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Those Guilty of Intermarriage

- 18 And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: namely, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah.
- 19 And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass.
- 20 And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah.
- 21 And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziah.
- 22 And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasah.
- 23 Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (the same is Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.
- 24 Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri.

- 25 Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah.
- 26 And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah.
- 27 And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza.
- 28 Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.
- 29 And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth.
- 30 And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh.
- 31 And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,
- 32 Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah.
- 33 Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei.
- 34 Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel,
- 35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh,
- 36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,
- 37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau,
- 38 And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei,
- 39 And Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah,
- 40 Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,
- 41 Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah,
- 42 Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.
- 43 Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah.
- 44 All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.