**A Study Outline of Ezra**

**Introduction**

* **Who he was** – A scribe, priest, and an expert in the commandments of God (7:11).
* **When he lived and wrote** – The text states (1:1) that the events written about occurred in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia. Approximately 536 BC. He was a contemporary of Nehemiah (2:2), Haggai, and Zechariah (6:14).
* **What his book records** – The return of God’s people from Babylon (1:5-2:70), restore worship at Jerusalem (3:1-7), rebuild the temple (3:8-6:22). Ezra himself did not return to Jerusalem until approximately 458 BC (7:1). The temple was completed in the 6th year of Darius (6:15) which was approximately 515 BC. There are about 57 years of silence that are passed over from 6:22 to 7:1.
* **Two divisions of the book**:
  + 1-6 – Records Israel’s return from Babylonian captivity. During this time Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah are doing their work among the returners.
  + 7-10 – Records Ezra’s work among the people in Jerusalem as their teacher.

**Chapter 1** – The Letter of Permission Written by Cyrus, king of Persia.

* 1:1-4 references the prophecy written by Jeremiah (25:12; 29:10-14) and Isaiah (44:24-28) concerning Judah’s return to Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity.
* 1:5-6 states that the people were encouraging one another to return to Jerusalem. How did God “stir their spirits?” Through the written words of a prophet (Jer. 29:1-14).
* 1:7-11 shows that Persia helped to finance the return to Jerusalem.

**Chapter 2** – Those who Returned from Babylon

* 49, 897 returned (2:64-65).
* Those who returned contributed to the work of the temple (2:68-69).
* “All Israel dwelt in their cities” (2:70). The Jews have already received the Promised Land – twice (Jos. 21:43-45).

**Chapter 3**

3:1-7 – In the 7th month after their return from Babylonian captivity, they began sacrificing on the altar and observing the feast of tabernacles (Lev. 23:33-43).

3:8-13 – Construction on the new temple begins. The reaction of the older people of Israel is interesting (v. 12).

**Chapter 4**

4:1-5 – An attempt is made by “adversaries” of God’s people to stop the building of the temple. This is a reference to the Samaritans who had been sent to the area by the Assyrains (2 Kg. 17:24-33). The time span referred to in verse 5 is about 16 years.

4:6-24 – Further delays in rebuilding. Haggai 1:1-11 refers to this period of time. Accusations against the Jews:

* Building a rebellious city (v. 12).
* Won’t pay taxes (v. 13).
* Previous sedition (v. 15).

The king responds to the accusations by bringing the work to an end (v. 23-24).

**Chapter 5**

5:1-2 – Haggai and Zechariah prophesy and also help the people in the work of reconstruction.

5:3-17 – Further inquiries are made into whether or not the Jews had been permitted to rebuild Jerusalem. Tatnai’s letter was an accurate description of what was happening.

**Chapter 6**

6:1-12 – King Darius found the decree that had been written by Cyrus which gave the Jews permission for the work. Verses 8-10 are significant! Verses 11-12 record a punishment for anyone who tried to hinder their work.

6:13-18 – The temple was finished after about 21 years of work and resistance.

6:19-22 – The Passover was celebrated. Verse 22 shows the providence of God throughout this period of time.

**Chapter 7**

7:1-10 – Ezra’s 4 month, 500 mile journey from Babylon to Jerusalem (v. 6, 9). Notice the emphasis in verses 6, 9, and 28.

7:11-26 – A letter from Artaxerxes approving of Ezra’s return and the work in Jerusalem. Notice the emphasis on God in the letter (v. 12, 14-21, 23-26).

**Chapter 8**

8:1-14 – 1,496 heads of those families who returned to Jerusalem.

8:15-20 – 258 servants return for service in the temple.

8:21-23 – Fasting and prayer for the journey.

8:24-30 – Silver and gold returned to Jerusalem.

8:31-36 – The return to Jerusalem. Notice the emphasis in verse 31.

**Chapter 9**

The problem of intermarriage with the Gentiles is now addressed.

9:1-4 – A recognition that Israel, particularly her leaders, had transgressed God’s commands. Deuteronomy 7:1-4. Others who respected God’s law rallied around Ezra in his grief (v. 4).

9:5-15 – Ezra’s public prayer of national confession.

* Verses 6-7 – the multiplication of sin.
* Verses 8-9 – God’s grace in spite of their sin.
* Verses 10-12 – the specific sin confessed.
* Verses 13-15 – God’s mercy (compassion) in spite of their sin.

**Chapter 10**

10:1-4 – a realization of hope.

10:5-11 – the source of hope was found in obedience to God’s law.

10:12-17 – an examination of the situation.

10:18-44 – action taken by the people.