

LOOK AT THE BOOK EZRA

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AUTHOR AND DATE

Artaxerxes, king of Persia (465-23 B.C.), named Ezra as minister in charge of Jewish affairs.

- He led a group of about 2,000 Jews back to the land.
- This was a difficult journey of about 875 miles.

Ezra was bearing a decree which allowed him to require obedience from everyone in the territory on any matter having to do with the Jewish people.

He could use funds from the official treasury of the Persian Empire.

Artaxerxes believed Ezra could strengthen the people morally and spiritually.

Ezra returned to the land to bring about the spiritual transformation of his people.

The book traces the history of the reconstruction from Cyrus' decree (539 B.C.) until Ezra's mission (457 B.C.) = 82 years.

It was written by Ezra (about 457-44 B.C.) previous to Nehemiah's time because there is no mention of him in the book.

BACKGROUND

606-536 Captivity

539 Cyrus took over the empire and issues a decree to let them go back and rebuild the temple

536 Zerubbabel led about 50,000 people back to the land.

They began reconstruction but local opposition stopped them.

520 Haggai and Zechariah got it going again-completed in 515

58 years passed in silence-in the land (Esther occurred in this time)

Kings ruling over Persia

CYRUS (539-30) - Cambyes (530-22) - Pseudo-Smerdis (522)

DARIUS I (522-486)

XERXES (Ahasuerus) (486-65)

ARTAXERXES (465-23)

Under Artaxerxes-Jews were discouraged.

He was sympathetic.

He named Ezra as Minister of Jewish Affairs.

457 Return under Ezra

444 Return under Nehemiah

THEME AND PURPOSE

Historically, the book describes Ezra's attempt to bring about the restoration of the nation.

It describes the period from the end of 2 Chronicles until the restoration in the land.

Theologically, it communicates several important messages God's people need to learn:

1. God controls history. He even used pagan rulers to achieve His purposes.
2. God demands holiness. Therefore He sent Ezra to bring needed reforms.
3. There is hope for God's people, even in the midst of discouraging circumstances.
They were discouraged because they were still living in the midst of the ruins.
God's covenants and promises still guaranteed blessing for Israel.
If they want to enjoy these blessings, they must turn back to Yahweh.

Ezra calls the people to turn back to Yahweh and to trust Him.

EZRA

The Restoration of God's People in the Land

Ralph Porter

Physical Rebuilding of God's Temple			Spiritual Rebuilding of God's People		
		1-6			7-10
Preparation for Rebuilding of God's Temple	Participants in Rebuilding of God's Temple	Progress in Rebuilding of God's Temple	Preparation for Rebuilding of God's People	Participants in Rebuilding of God's People	Progress in Rebuilding of God's People
1	2	3-6	7	8	9-10
Decree of Cyrus	Leaders	Inception of Temple	Qualifications of Ezra	Their Families and Numbers	Sin of the People
1:1-4	2:1-2	3	7:1-10	8:1-14	9:1-2
	Men of Israel	Altar and sacrifices begun			Prayer for the People
	2:3-20	3:1-6			9:3-15
	Men of Bethlehem	Foundation laid	His priestly family		Preparation
	2:21-35	3:7-13	7:1-5		9:3-5
Disposition of Participants	Priests	Opposition to Temple		Their Representatives from the Levites	Confession of sinfulness
1:5	2:36-39	4		8:15-20	9:6-7
	Levites	Methods of opposition	His teaching ministry		Gratitude for God's faithfulness
	2:40-42	4:1-16	7:6-10		9:8-9
	Temple Servants	Compromise		Decree of Artaxerxes	Conviction of guilt
Donations for Project	2:43-54	4:1-3	7:11-28	Their Fasting and Consecration	9:10-15
1:6-11	Descendants of Solomon	Discouragement		8:21-30	10:1-44
	2:55-58	4:4-5			Their grief
Gifts from neighbors	Unverifiable Descendants	Accusations			10:1
1:6	2:59-63	4:6-16			10:2-5
	Summary of Participants	Results of opposition		Their Arrival in Jerusalem	His fasting
Inventory from temple	2:64-70	4:17-24		8:31-36	10:6
1:7-10		5-6			10:7-11
		Completion of Temple			10:12-44
Summary		Work resumed			
1:11		5:1-2			
		Work challenged			
		5:3-6:12			
		Work completed			
		6:13-15			
		Dedication of Temple			
		6:16-22			
		Dedication celebration			
		6:16-18			
		Passover celebration			
		6:19-22			