

Shalom! Welcome once again as we continue learning the Bible.

This is a continuation of our study of the books of the Bible.

Today, we move forward to the next book: Ezra.

In the earlier books, such as Kings and Chronicles, we saw how God dealt with the nation of Israel through its kings. Many of these kings misled the people by ruling according to their own desires, rather than God's commands. This led Israel into deep spiritual and national trouble.

Take King Solomon, for example. Though he was anointed by God, he imposed heavy burdens on the people of Israel (see 1 Kings 12:4). This was never God's original intention for His people, as we read in 1 Samuel 8:11-18, where God warned that appointing a king would come with harsh consequences. Solomon also played a key role in the division of the kingdom into northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) territories again, something that was not God's perfect plan.

Subsequent kings such as Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh continued this downward spiral. They led the people into idolatry, causing Israel to abandon the worship of the true God.

For instance, King Manasseh didn't just build altars to foreign gods he defiled the Temple itself by placing altars to idols within it. He even offered his own son as a burnt sacrifice, practiced witchcraft, sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. His evil surpassed even that of the pagan nations who did not know the God of Israel (see 2 Kings 21).

Because of these repeated rebellions, God's anger burned against Israel, and He promised to send them into exile. This prophecy came to pass: the ten tribes of the northern kingdom were taken into Assyrian captivity, and Judah was exiled to Babylon, where they remained for 70 years, as foretold by the prophet Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 25:11-12).

Introduction to the Book of Ezra

The Book of Ezra begins after those 70 years of Babylonian captivity had ended. For better historical flow, one might expect the book of Daniel to come before Ezra, since Daniel lived during the exile. But in the canonical arrangement of the Bible, Ezra comes first.

Ezra himself is believed to have authored this book.

Who Was Ezra?

The Bible describes Ezra as:

“...a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given”

Ezra 7:6 (ESV)

To be a “*skilled scribe*” meant that Ezra was deeply committed and ready to act he didn’t hesitate in applying God’s Word.

In Jewish tradition, a *scribe* was similar to a legal expert or a lawyer someone who knew the Law of Moses thoroughly. In the New Testament, Jesus often refers to scribes (see Matthew 17:10, Matthew 20:18, Matthew 23:2, etc.). These individuals not only interpreted and taught the law, but also *copied it by hand*, since printing did not exist at the time.

The scribes had strict guidelines for copying the Torah:

- They had to pronounce each word aloud before writing it.

- Whenever they encountered the holy name of God (YHWH/“Yehovah”), they would bathe themselves, clean their pens, and then write it with deep reverence.
- Once a scroll was complete, it was reviewed for 30 days. If more than 2 or 3 errors were found, the entire manuscript was discarded and rewritten from scratch.
- They also counted every word and letter to ensure accuracy.

This made the scribe’s work both sacred and highly respected. Ezra stood out among them as “*a ready scribe*” someone who served with passion and excellence.

Ezra’s Mission

Ezra was not just a scholar. He was also a spiritual leader. He wrote not only the book of Ezra, but is also credited with compiling or writing 1 and 2 Chronicles.

The book of Ezra documents the return of the Jewish people to their homeland in two major waves:

1. The first group, led by Zerubbabel, returned after King Cyrus of Persia issued a decree allowing the Jews to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple (see Ezra 1-2).
2. Ezra himself led the second group several years later, as recorded in Ezra 7.

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”Ezra 7:10 (ESV)

When Ezra returned, he found that the people had already fallen back into sin, such as intermarrying with foreign women, which had led Solomon to sin and caused division in Israel in the past (see Ezra 9-10).

Ezra, being well versed in the Law, confronted these sins and helped lead the people back to repentance and obedience.

Why Was Ezra Honored by God?

Ezra was not a prophet. He did not receive visions or supernatural encounters like Daniel or Ezekiel. But he had a sincere heart, a deep love for God’s Law, and a passion to teach and restore God’s people.

His name “Ezra” means “help” and indeed, he became a great

help to the Jewish people, bringing spiritual reformation and restoring proper worship.

Because of his faithfulness, God honored him, and we continue to read about him today. His story is a reminder that God greatly values those who serve others and stand for righteousness even if they aren't in the spotlight.

The Book of Ezra is a rich and powerful account of restoration, leadership, and spiritual reform. It teaches us the importance of:

- Knowing God's Word
- Obeying it personally
- Teaching it to others

Take time to read the book of Ezra for yourself you'll discover many insights you may not have known before.

"The hand of the Lord my God was upon me." Ezra 7:28 (ESV)

God bless you.

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