

Ezra

"Return and Revival"

Background Information

Ezra is named after its principle character, who has also been long believed to be the author, though his name does not appear until 7:1

Ezra was a scribe (7:6), and his name means "Jehovah helps."

Ezra is one of the handful of books from which New Testament writers never quote.

Originally, Ezra and Nehemiah were one volume, and the first verses of Ezra (1:1-3a) are identical to the concluding verses of 2 Chronicles (36:22-23).

He led the 2nd return from Persia (about 458 BC), and tradition says that he founded the "Great Synagogue," where the complete Old Testament canon was formally recognized.

Time Covered and Outline

The events of Ezra cover about 60 years, and the book was likely written very soon after the completion of the events.

Ezra divides easily into two halves, which are the two "returns" of the people from captivity:

- I. 1st Return, Led by Zerubbabel (1-6)
 - A. Cyrus' decree (1:1-4)
 - B. Temple to be rebuilt, treasures given (1:5-11)
 - C. List of those who returned (2)
 - D. Temple constructed (3-6)
- II. 2nd Return, Led by Ezra (7-10)
 - A. Ezra's arrival (7-8)
 - B. Ezra leads the people in a revival (9-10)

Major Themes

God's sovereignty
Central place of worship
Importance of the Law
Revival

Ezra's Example

"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"
(7:10)

God's Character in Ezra

Providence (1-6)

Wisdom (7:25)

Goodness (8:18)

Powerful (8:22)

Wrathful (8:22)

Righteous (9:15)

Jesus in Ezra

God allowing the people to return to their land pictures the perfect forgiveness offered by Jesus Christ.

Key Words in Ezra

Remnant (Hebrew *sha'ar*) "to remain"; 9:8; 9:15

Jews (Hebrew *yehudi*); 4:12; 4:23; 5:1; 5:5; 6:7; 6:8; 6:14

Elsewhere in the World...

The first Peloponnesian War is fought (460-445 BC)

The construction of both the Acropolis and Parthenon begin in Athens (447 BC).

Elsewhere in Scripture...

The work of two prophets deals with the rebuilding of the temple.

Most scholars place the writings of Haggai and Zechariah between Ezra 5 and 6.