

# IMPACT

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A Weekly Publication of the Metropolitan Bible Baptist Church Containing  
Life-Changing Sunday School Lessons and BMA's Preaching Materials

## VERSE TO MEMORIZE:

*"..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*

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE**

### **Lesson 12: EZRA**

**TITLE:** The book, named after its principal character, originally formed one work with the books of Nehemiah and Chronicles. Although Ezra is not mentioned in the book as its author, he most likely did write the book using various documents (e.g., 4:7-16), genealogies (e.g., 2:1-70), and personal memoirs (e.g., 7:27-9:15) as his sources. In the Vulgate (Latin Bible), Ezra and Nehemiah are titled 1 and 2 Esdras, while the apocryphal book called 1 Esdras in the English text is 3 Esdras in the Vulgate.

**AUTHORSHIP:** Not stated but probably Ezra.

**DATE OF EZRA:** 450 B.C., recording events from about 538-450B.C.; possibly begun earlier in Babylon and finished in Jerusalem.

#### **KEY WORDS & THEMES:**

*"Return"; "Rededicate."* From bondage, God's people are now ready to "return" to their land, their worship and their God. They have to "rededicate" themselves to rebuilding all they have lost: the altar, temple, and their faith in God and His Word.

**KEY VERSES:** 6:21, 22

#### **HISTORICAL SETTING:**

Ezra continues from the exact place to where 2 Chronicles ends: Cyrus, king of Persia, issues a decree which permits the Jews of his kingdom to return to Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity. The exodus of Israel from Egypt included some 3 million people, but fewer than 50,000 people take advantage of this "second exodus" of 900 miles from Babylonia back to Jerusalem. At least parts of this period coincide with the time with these historical figures: Confucius in China; Gautama Buddha in India; Socrates in Greece (followed by his pupil, Plato); and Pericles in Athens (erecting the Parthenon).

After Cyrus' edict, Zerubbabel leads the first return of God's people to rebuild the ruins of Jerusalem

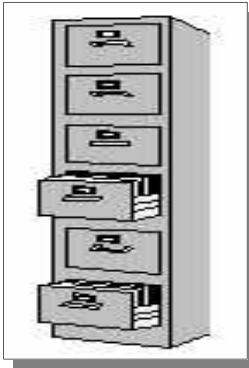
and the temple that have been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The work is repeatedly hampered by shortages of resources and external opposition. These discouragements bring all work to a halt until God sends the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people, who then enthusiastically rebuild the altar and the temple of God. Some years later, Ezra leads a return of priests from captivity to Jerusalem. Ezra's effective ministry includes: teaching the Word of God, initiating reforms, restoring worship and leading spiritual revival in Jerusalem.

**STRAIGHT FROM THE  
PASTOR'S HEART  
DR. BENNY M. ABANTE, JR.**

#### **OUTLINE OF EZRA:**

- A. The Return Under Zerubbabel, 1:1-6:22**
  - 1. The Decree of Cyrus, 1:1-11**
  - 2. The Census of the People, 2:1-70**
  - 3. The Construction of the Temple Begun, 3:1-13**
    - Sacrifices begun, 3:1-6
    - Foundation begun, 3:7-13
  - 4. The Opposition, 4:1-24**
    - Compromise, 4:1-3
    - Campaign, 4:4-5
    - Climax, 4:6-24
  - 5. The Construction Renewed, 5:1-6:12**
    - The Preaching of the Prophets, 5:1-2
    - The Protest of Tatnai, 5:3-17
    - The Decree of Darius, 6:1-12
  - 6. The Temple Completed, 6:13-22**
    - The completion, 6:13-15
    - The dedication, 6:16-18
    - The Passover, 6:19-22

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# The BMA ARCHIVES

Dr. Benny M. Abante, Jr.'s  
PREACHING MATERIALS

## B. The Return Under Ezra, 7:1-10:44

1. **The Return to Jerusalem, 7:1-8:36**
  - The leader, Ezra, 7:1-10
  - The letter of Artaxerxes, 7:11-28
  - The journey, 8:1-36
2. **The Revival of Jerusalem, 9:1-10:44**
  - The condition of the people, 9:1-4
  - The confession of Ezra, 9:5-15
  - The covenant of the people, 10:1-8
  - The cleansing of the people, 10:9-44

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

Finally given the chance to return to their homeland, the people, started to rebuild the Temple, only to be stopped by opposition from their enemies. God's work in the world is not without opposition. We must not get discouraged and quit, as the returning people did at first, but continue on boldly in the face of difficulties, as they did later with encouragement from the prophets.

**Ezra** returned to Jerusalem almost 80 years after **Zerubbabel** only to discover that the people had married pagan or foreign spouses. This polluted the religious purity of the people and endangered the future of the nation. Believers today must be careful not to threaten their walk with God by taking on the practices of the unbelievers.—*Ryrie Study Bible/Life Application Study Bible/Rainbow Study Bible/ BMA's Messages 03/22/09*



**ZERUBBABEL:** Led the first group of Jewish exiles back to Jerusalem from Babylon; Completed the rebuilding of God's Temple; Demonstrated wisdom in the help he accepted and refused; Started his building project with worship as the focal point.

**EZRA:** Committed to study, follow and teach God's Word; Led the second group of exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem; May have written 1 and 2 Chronicles; Worked alongside Nehemiah during the last spiritual awakening recorded in the Old Testament.—*Life Application Study Bible Application Study Bible*

**NOTHING SHALL OUR MOUTH SPEAK  
BUT THE BLESSING OF THE WORD  
AND THE GLORY OF GOD.**



**THROUGH THE BIBLE  
IN A YEAR**

### CHAPTERS TO READ THIS WEEK:

<b>MARCH 22</b>	<b>1 SAMUEL 1-4</b>
<b>MARCH 23</b>	<b>1 SAMUEL 5-8</b>
<b>MARCH 24</b>	<b>1 SAMUEL 9-13</b>
<b>MARCH 25</b>	<b>1 SAMUEL 14-18</b>
<b>MARCH 26</b>	<b>1 SAMUEL 19-23</b>
<b>MARCH 27</b>	<b>1 SAMUEL 24-28</b>
<b>MARCH 28</b>	<b>1 SAMUEL 29-31</b>

To memorize one (1) verse in every chapter, tokens shall be awarded to those who can recite all memory verses after every book.



A tiny, 7th century BCE silver scroll found in Jerusalem, contains the priestly benediction: *"The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and*



*give thee peace."* (Numbers 6:24-26)  
Following a decree by the Persian King Cyrus (539 BCE), 50,000 Jews set out on the First Return to the Land of Israel.



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EXPOSITION,  
WITH PRACTICAL  
OBSERVATIONS,  
OF THE BOOK OF EZRA  
-MATTHEW HENRY-

*The Jewish church puts on quite another face in this book from what it had appeared with; its state much better, and more pleasant, than it was of late in Babylon, and yet far inferior to what it had been formerly. The dry bones here live again, but in the form of a servant; the yoke of their captivity is taken off, but the marks of it in their galled necks remain. Kings we hear no more of; the crown has fallen from their heads. Prophets they are blessed with, to direct them in their re-establishment, but, after a while, prophecy ceases among them, till the great prophet appears, and his forerunner. The history of this book is the accomplishment of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the return of the Jews out of Babylon at the end of seventy years, and a type of the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Apocalypse concerning the deliverance of the gospel church out of the New-Testament Babylon. Ezra preserved the records of that great revolution and transmitted them to the church in this book. His name signifies a helper; and so he was to that people. A particular account concerning him we shall meet with, [ch. vii.](#), where he himself enters upon the stage of action. The book gives us an account, I. Of the Jews' return out of their captivity, [ch. i., ii.](#) II. Of the building of the temple, the opposition it met with, and yet the perfecting of it at last, [ch. iii.-vi.](#) III. Of Ezra's coming to Jerusalem, [ch. vii., viii.](#) IV. Of the good service he did there, in obliging those that had married strange wives to put them away, [ch. ix., x.](#) This beginning again of the Jewish nation was small, yet its latter end greatly increased.*

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**Seal bearing the inscription to  
Shema, servant of Jeroboam,  
from Megiddo (Israel Antiquities  
Authority)**