

I. Ezra

- a. Purpose: We will look at the authorship, purpose and other aspects of the book of Ezra so we would be more familiar with this part of the Bible and yearn to study it for ourselves.
- b. Similar to what we saw earlier with **1 and 2 Chronicles** most scholars and books surveying the Old Testament group **Ezra and Nehemiah** together. Why? Historically the Jews grouped the two books together under the title "**Ezra Nehemiah**" and/or 1 and 2 Ezra in the case of the Greek Septuagint.¹
- c. Authorship
 - i. According to Jewish Tradition that was recorded in the Talmud: "Ezra wrote his own book and the genealogy of the book of Chronicles until his period." (Baba Bathra 15a)²→We see here that **Ezra** being attributed to Jeremiah's authorship.
 - ii. There are other considerations in support of the Jewish tradition:
 1. In **Ezra 7:27-9:15** there is a lot of first person singular "I" speaking that in the context of **Ezra 7** is Ezra.
 - a. Note Ezra is described in the third person as the focus of the chapter in **Ezra 7:1, 6, 10-12**.
 - b. Note also Ezra being addressed in the second person by the King in **Ezra 7:21, 25**.
 2. Ezra is described as a priest and scribe in **Ezra 7:21** and would therefore had access to documents that informed him in writing out the history found in **Ezra 1-6**.³ This makes it probable that Ezra is the author.
- d. Purpose
 - i. According to Keith Essex the purpose of **Ezra and Nehemiah** is the following: "Although Yahweh sovereignly reestablished the theocracy under godly leadership during the time of Gentile oversight and oppression, the sons of Israel failed to follow Yahweh."⁴
 - ii. According to Andrew Hill and John Walton on **Ezra and Nehemiah**: "The purpose of the books Ezra and Nehemiah is to show the numerous ways that God was faithfully at work in restoring the people of Israel to their land after the Babylonian exile."⁵
 - iii. According to John Martin the purpose of **Ezra** is the following: "Ezra wrote to encourage the remnant to be involved in true temple worship and to remind them to fulfill their covenantal obligations because of God's mercy."⁶

¹ Eugene Merrill, "The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 12228.

² Source: https://www.sefaria.org/Bava_Batra.15a.8?lang=bi.

³ John A. Martin, "Ezra" in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor), 651.

⁴ Keith Essex, *OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES I Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published Thesis for The Master's Seminary), 44.

⁵ Andrew Hill and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 329.

⁶ John A. Martin, "Ezra" in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor), 652.

- iv. According to Richard Mayhue: “The return from Babylon, reconstruction of the temple and reform of the people”⁷
 - v. In my own words: The book of Ezra shows God’s faithfulness in restoring the Temple for the remnant who returned back to Jerusalem from the exile yet the people failed in their covenantal obedience to God.
- e. Structure
- i. There are different ways people have outlined the book.
 - ii. The most easiest to remember is Richard Mayhue’s outline⁸
 - 1. The Return and Reconstruction under Zerubbabel (**Ezra 1-6**)
 - a. Restoration of the exiles (**Ezra 1-2**)
 - b. Reconstruction of the Temple (**Ezra 3-6**)
 - 2. The Return and Reform under Ezra (**Ezra 7-10**)
 - a. Return under Ezra (**Ezra 7-8**)
 - b. Reformation under Ezra (**Ezra 9-10**)
- f. Key chapters in **Ezra**⁹
- i. **1** The decree of Cyrus allowing the return; many Israelites prepare.
 - ii. **3** The foundation of the Temple completed with much ceremony.
 - iii. **7-9** The return under Ezra, including his prayer (9).
 - iv. **10** Repentance of the people who had married into paganism.
- g. Key characters in **Ezra**¹⁰
- i. Cyrus: Persian King who allowed the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple. 538 530 B.C.
 - ii. Ezra: Priest, Scribe, Great Reformer and expert in the Law. Under his spiritual leadership the children of Israel put away their foreign wives.
 - iii. Joshua: The High Priest, who returned with and aided Zerubbabel in rebuilding the altar and the Temple.
- h. Closer look at **Ezra**
- i. The return of the Exile
 - 1. Ezra begins where Chronicles ends— with **Ezra 1:1-4** restating **2 Chronicles 36:22-23**. Both states the edict of the Persian king Cyrus authorizing the exiled Jews to return to their homeland.¹¹
 - 2. In relations to other books it would also follow chronologically after the book of Daniel.¹²
 - 3. “The narrator then recounted the preparations for return including the amassing of precious metals Ezra (**1:5-11**). Next follows a list

⁷ Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 67.

⁸ What follows below is quoted verbatim from Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 67.

⁹ Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 67.

¹⁰ Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 67.

¹¹ Eugene Merrill, “The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 12246.

¹² Keith Essex, *OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES I Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published Thesis for The Master’s Seminary), 43.

of the returnees (**chap. 2**), the total number of which was 42,360 (**2:64**).”¹³

ii. Building of the Temple

1. An incredible verse in Israel’s history in **Ezra 3:8**: *“Now in the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers the priests and the Levites, and all who came from the captivity to Jerusalem, began the work and appointed the Levites from twenty years and older to oversee the work of the house of the Lord.”*
 - a. A very long verse!
 - b. Here the Temple is beginning to be rebuilt.
 - c. The rest of the paragraph of **Ezra 3:8-13** shows the start of rebuilding.
2. There is opposition by neighboring people in **Ezra 4**. Nevertheless God’s people continue with the building though the enemies write to King Darius in **Ezra 5**. Thus the letter from Cyrus is found and the Temple completed in **Ezra 6**.

iii. Ezra’s entourage returning back to the Promise land and ministry is described from **Ezra 7** onwards.

1. There is a profound recording of prayers by Ezra.
2. Also there is the issue of sin of intermarriage in **Ezra 9** which Ezra prayed about. Drastic actions are taken in **Ezra 10**.

i. Place of this book in the Canon

i. Echoes of previous revelation

1. “In his great intercessory prayer Ezra rehearsed that long, sordid history of betrayal (**Ezra 9: 6– 15**), comparing his own generation to those of bygone days (**9: 7,10– 11,13**). While he prayed before the temple, the people overheard and, smitten with remorse and repentance, pledged to do whatever was necessary to achieve God’s forgiveness and an opportunity for a new beginning (**Ezra 10: 1– 4**).”¹⁴
2. Parallel with the Exodus?
 - a. King allowing Jews to go to promise land.
 - b. Goods from neighbors of the Jews were provided before departing for Promise Land.
 - c. Opposition from neighbors near the Promise Land.
 - d. God’s protection to the people in the Promise Land.
 - e. People’s sins despite God’s grace.

ii. Danger to the “Seed”

1. **Ezra 9:2** is incredible: *“For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the*

¹³ Eugene Merrill, “The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Locations 12248-12250.

¹⁴ Eugene Merrill, “The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Locations 12460-12463.

holy [a]race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness.””

- a. Literally race is “Seed.”
- b. There is threat to the Seed and Messianic Line.
- c. But God saved it because through events in **Ezra 10** in which the people put away their foreign wives.
- d. The Messianic line has always been attacked and attempted to be polluted through the schemes of Satan ever since Genesis 5. But here we see God’s providentially bringing the people to repent which thereby protect the Messianic lineage.