

Union Chapel M.B. Church

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February 7, 2024

“Ezra”

(Study Material from Through The Bible: A Complete Old & New Testament Bible Study)

The most striking outcome of the seventy-year Babylonian captivity is never again will Israel be guilty of idolatry! God’s punishment may have seemed severe, but it was absolutely necessary to rid Israel of idolatry once and for all and to pave the way for the coming Messiah, Deu 30:1-6.

Why did the Israel unite? 1 Sam 8:4-9; 10:24

Why did the Israel divide? 1 Kings 11:1-8; 29-39

What caused Israel to return to Jerusalem? Jer 25:11-12; 29:10-14; Isa 44:28; 45:1

I. The Rebuilding of the Temple

- a. **Chapter 1:** The providence of God stirred Cyrus to issue a decree that permitted the exiled Jews to return to their land and rebuild their temple, city, and community. The first return (50,000) of the Jews from captivity was led by Zerubbabel, 1:1-4.
 - i. The Lord God is faithful to His Covenant, Gen 12:1-3
 - ii. The Lord God is faithful to His Word, Jer 21:7-10.
 - iii. The Lord God is control of the nations, 2 Chron 20:6.
- b. **Chapter 2:** the exiles who return saw the rubbish of the temple and brought freewill offerings to the site of the temple, 2:68-70.
 - i. When it comes to giving, Paul says we ought to demonstrate this attitude, 1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8:3-4; 2 Cor 9:6-7.
 - ii. This is a membership list of God’s people who are willing to work to accomplish His will.
- c. **Chapter 3:** begins in the seventh month, in which is significant to the Jews as religious festivals are celebrated. They build an altar before they begin working on the temple, 3:3-4.
- d. **Chapter 4-6:** As temple constructions continues under Zerubbabel, the Jews face opposition from enemies, who set out to discourage them and to frustrate their plans, 4:1-5. They stopped building for eighteen years and resumed again through the word of the prophets, Haggai 1:1-15; Zech 8:9. The rebuilding of the temple was completed.

II. The Rebuilding of the People

- a. **Chapter 7:** Ezra leads the second return of the Jews back to Jerusalem. Ezra was a man devoted to the word of God and committed to studying

God's law, obeying God's law, and teaching Israel's God's law, 7:6, 10, 25-26.

- b. **Chapter 8:** The 900-mile journey to Jerusalem consisted of priestly families and descendants of David and a much smaller group than the first return. They humbled themselves and fasted for the Lord's protection and He granted them safe travels, 8:21-23, 31-32. Ezra also committed the offering to trustworthy priests to rise above suspicion of selfish gain, 8:24-30.
- c. **Chapter 9:** Upon Ezra's return to Jerusalem, he finds that people (from the first return) have not separated themselves from the surrounding people and their practices, intermarried with their pagan neighbors (strictly forbidden in the law of Moses, Deu 7:1-6), and leaders and officials had taken the lead in this unfaithfulness. Ezra mourns over this sin and offers his prayer for forgiveness (9:5-15).
 - i. We as the church (members of the body, 1 Cor 12:12-31) are not just to look after ourselves but are to practice the '*one anothers*' of Scripture, John 15.12; Gal 6.2; Eph 4.32; 1 Thess 5.11.
- d. **Chapter 10:** The exiles join in Ezra's repentance and proclaims a meeting to address the sin, 10:10-11. Anyone guilty who does not attend will forfeit his possessions and be excommunicated from the assembly. Only when the priests, Levites, singers, and gatekeepers (these leaders who were responsible for overseeing the temple and leading Israel to worship the LORD) dealt with their sin could the whole assembly move forward under God's blessing.

III. **Application**

- a. The return of the Israelites to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple are repeated in the life of every Christian who returns from the captivity of sin and rebellion against God. He is ready to forgive us and receive us back into His family, 1 John 1:9.
- b. He is willing to show us how to rebuild our lives, through repentance and obedience to His word. As with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, God superintends the work of renovating and rededicating our lives to His service, Phil 2:13.

Notes: