

The Book of Ezra

AN INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

3.

- How does the information provided by the prophet Isaiah in Isa. 41:2; 44: 26-28; 45:1, 4-5, 12, 13 contribute to the record of Cyrus' edict (vv. 2-3)?

- What other elements are included in Cyrus' edict to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy (vv.3-4)?

4.

- Which Israelite tribes participated in the return to Jerusalem, and why was this (v.5; I Kings 12; Dan. 1:1)?

- Contrast the Israelites who returned to Jerusalem with those who did not (vv.5-6).

7. Record any interesting parallels you notice while reading Ezra 1 and the Exodus passages (v.11; cf. Ezra 6:5; Ex. 33:1-3).

8. In chapter two, Ezra records a list of groups of people who returned to *the province*. Using a word or two, describe each group:

- vv. 1-2a:

- vv. 2b-35:

- vv. 36-39:

- vv. 40-42:

- vv. 43-54:

- vv. 55-58:

- vv. 59-60:

- vv. 61-63:

- vv. 64-65:

9. Read the last portion of chapter two (vv. 64-70) and summarize the status quo of the Israelites at the commencement of their return.

10. Why do you think so few Israelites returned to the Land?

- Why do you think the Israelites were terrified by the people of the land (v.3; cf. Jer. 40-41)?

4. Describe the fixed festivals and their purpose (vv.4-5), that take place in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar.

- Lev. 23:24; Num. 29:1-6:

- Leviticus 23:26-32:

- Leviticus 23:34-36; v.4:

5. What was the purpose of the burnt offering (vv.5-6; cf. Lev. 1-17; 6:8-13)?

6.

- Although formal worship had begun, what important element was missing (v.6)?

- Why is it significant that the Israelites had begun the worship of God without the temple (cf. Jer. 7:1-11)?

7.

- How do the Israelites begin the work of rebuilding the temple (v.7; cf. 2 Chron. 2:16)?

- When does this begin (v.8)?

8. Why is it important to understand who oversaw the work of rebuilding the temple (vv. 8-9; cf. Num. 3)?

9. Contrast the two responses of the Israelites after the foundation of the Temple was completed.

- vv. 10-11:
- vv. 12-13:

10. Explain the elements of worship recorded in chapter three, and what we can learn about proper worship from this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Summarize the events of chapter three, paying special attention to the closing verses, and any additional insights you may have.

2.

- Who were the enemies of Judah and Benjamin (vv. 1-2, 10; cf. 9:1-2; 2 Kings 17:24)?

- What request do they make (v.2)?

- How do the Jewish leaders respond (v.3)?

- Compare and analyze the objectives of each of these two groups (vv.1-3; cf. 2 Kings 17:24-34; Ex. 20:3; Ex. 33:16; Lev. 20:24; Isa. 52:11; 2 Cor. 6:17; Luke 6:22).

3.

- How do the enemies react to the Jewish rejection (vv.4-5)?

- What does this indicate about their motive?

- According to verse five, when was the work resumed?

6.
 - What warning do the authors offer to King Artaxerxes (vv.6-13; cf. 2 Kings 18:7; 24:2)?
 - What concern is feigned by the *people of the land* (v.14)?
 - What suggestion is made to bolster their argument (v.15-16)?
7.
 - What discovery is made by the king (vv. 17-20)?
 - How does he react to this information (vv. 21-22)?
8. Describe the result of this letter writing campaign by Shimshai and his colleagues (v.23).
9. Consider these two accounts and offer an explanation of why Ezra interrupted his temple-building narration to include this discontinuous account (vv. 7-23)?
10. Record any additional points of similarity you notice between these two events (v.24)?

- What effect did these prophets have on Israel (v.2)?

4.

- What consequences did the Israelites immediately experience after harkening to the voice of the prophets (vv.3-4; cf. 4:4-5, 6)?

5.

- How could the prophecies of Zechariah cause concern for Tattenai, *the governor of the province* (Jer. 23:5-6; Zech. 3:8; Zech. 6:9-15)?

- Explain your understanding of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Zechariah (cf. 2 Sam. 23:5; Ps. 132:17; Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 31:31-34; 33:15-16)

6.

- How did God work on behalf of His people (v.5)?
- What was God's expectation of His chosen people, and explain why this was difficult.

7. Summarize the contents of the letter written to King Darius.

- vv. 7-10:
- vv. 11-16:
- v. 17:

8.

- Compare the tone and contents of Tattenai's letter with that of Rehum and Shimshai in 4:11-16.
- What could account for these differences in tone and motive?

CHAPTER SIX

1. Review the events of 4:1-5 and 5:1-5, 7-10, 17 and offer context to the events in chapter six.

2.

- How does Darius respond to the letter of Tattenai (v.1)?

- Where were the historical documents found that recorded the events in question (vv. 1-2)?

3.

- What information is recounted concerning the temple, its foundation, and temple instruments (vv.3-5)?

- Who was to fund the project (v.4)?

4.

- Upon reading the historical record what directives does Darius order (vv.6-7)?

- How were the *provinces beyond the river* to assist in this work (vv.8-9)?

5.

- What request does Darius make (v.10)?
- Describe the penalty implemented for disobedience (v.11).
- Finally, what proclamation does Darius make (v.12)?

6. What elements do you think exemplify the providence of God, through this rebuilding process (vv.13-15; cf. 6:7; 4:1a, 4-5; Haggai 3-4, 7-8; Jer. 29:10)?

7.

- How do the children of Israel celebrate the completion of the temple (v.16)?
- What elements are involved in the dedication ceremony (v.17; cf. I Kings 8:63)?
- How do they ensure the sacrificial system will continue (v.18; cf. Num. 3:5-9; 8:5-22)?

8.

- What feast do the Israelites observe first, in the newly dedicated temple (v. 19)?

- Describe the historical and spiritual purpose of the Passover feast (vv. 20-21; Exodus 12:1-13; John 1:29; I Cor. 5:7; Rev. 5:12).

9.

- What is the source of joy among the Israelites (v.22)?
- How can this understanding help ground us today (Acts 5:41; 16:22-31)?

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Summarize the major theme/s of Ezra chapters 1-6.

2.

- How does the phrase *after these things* help us understand the context?

- Who is ruling the Persian empire, beginning in chapter seven?

3.

- Explain the lineage of Ezra, and why it was necessary to be included (vv.1-5, 12; Neh. 8:2; cf. Phil. 3:3-6)?

- What was the purpose/role of a scribe (v.6, 10; cf. 2 Sam. 8:17; 2 Kings 22:3-13; Jer. 8:8)?

4.

- Who returns to Jerusalem, and how long did the journey take (vv. 7-9)?
- What role did Artaxerxes play in the second wave of Jewish exiles returning to Jerusalem (v.11; cf. 1:1-2)?

5. Explain the three general provisions Artaxerxes includes in his decree:

- v.13 (cf. 1:3):

- vv. 14-20 (cf. 1:4-11):

- vv. 21-24 (cf. 2:68)

6.

- What is Artaxerxes concerned with, and why might this be (v.23; cf. 6:10)?

- What appears to be Artaxerxes position on taxing houses of worship (v.24)?

5.

- Can you think of any possible explanations of why Levites did not initially join the returnees (cf. 2:40; Deut. 18:1-2)?

- Why was the presence of Levites so critical to Ezra's plan (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 33:10)?

- How does Ezra solve this problem (vv.16-20)?

6.

- What was the purpose of the fast that Ezra implemented (v.21-23; cf. 2 Chron. 20:3; Esth. 4:16)?

- What were the Levites and priests to do with the valuable goods (vv.29-30)?

8.

- In what ways did God answer the prayers of His people (vv. 31-34)?

- How do they recognize and worship God upon their arrival to Jerusalem (v.35)?

9.

- Summarize the contents of the King's edict (v.36; 7:11-26).

- To whom was the edict directed, and how do they respond (v.36)?

CHAPTER NINE

1.

- What does the author mean when he says, *when these things had been completed*?

- How much time has elapsed since Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem (cf. 7:9; 10:9)?

2.

- What report was delivered to Ezra (vv.1-2)?

- Who is named as the chief offender (v.2)?

3.

- Why was intermarriage with foreigners forbidden in the Law (Exod. 34:11-16; Deut. 7:1-4; 20:10-18; cf. Ps. 106:35; I Kings 11:3-5)?

4. How does Ezra respond to this discouraging report (vv.3-4; cf. Numb. 14:6; Josh. 7:6; Es. 4:1)?

5. Examine the posture and attitude of Ezra as he comes before the Lord (vv.5-6; cf. I Kings 8:54; Psalm 95:6; I Tim.2:8).

6.

- What acknowledgment does Ezra make in his prayer (v.7a)?
- What was the consequence of their behavior (v.7b cf. Deut. 29:24-28)?

7. Despite the rebellion and disobedience of the Israelites, how has God provided for them (vv.8-9)?

8.

- Explain the principle of a being a *remnant* (v.8; Jer. 42:2).

- How will God deal with the *remnant* of Israel yet future (Deut. 30:3-5; Jer. 23:3; Zech. 8:1-8; 10:8-12)?

9. Disregarding the punishment of God in the past, and God's grace shown to them, what have the Israelites begun to do (vv.10-14)?

10. What consequence of this current disobedience does Ezra foresee (v.14b-15)?

4. Contrast this solution with I Corinthians 7:15-16, written by the Apostle Paul for New Testament believers.

5.

- Upon whom did the decision ultimately fall (v.4; cf. Josh.1:7)?
- What requirement does Ezra demand of the leaders of Israel (v.5)?
- How would you describe the seriousness with which Ezra took this decision (v.6)?

6.

- Explain the proclamation delivered to the Israelites (vv.7-9).
- What was the penalty for disregarding the proclamation (v.8; cf. 7:25-26)

7.

- What does Ezra demand of the people and how do they respond (vv.10-12)?

- How extensive was the problem of mixed marriages among the people (v.13)?

8.

- Describe the practical method they suggested to carry out the directive of Ezra (vv.14-15).

- Explain the process and how long it took (vv.16-17).

9. Consider the impact of this directive by Ezra on the following groups:

- The nation of Israel:

- The faithful men of Israel:

- The unfaithful men of Israel:

- The women and children who were abandoned:

10. How are these principles relevant in the life of a believer today?