

Purpose

To show God's faithfulness; He kept His promise to restore His people to their land

Meaning of Name

Ezra literally means "helper"

Date Written

Around 450 BC, recording events from about 538-450 BC (omitting 516-458 BC); possibly begun in Babylon and finished in Jerusalem
Ezra follows *2 Chronicles* as a history of the Jewish people, recording their return to the land after the captivity

Key People

Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Haggai, Zechariah, Artaxerxes I, Samaritans, and Ezra

Key Places

Babylon and Jerusalem

Key Verse

"There was great joy throughout the land because the Lord had changed the attitude of the King of Assyria towards them, so that he helped them to rebuild the Temple of God..."

Ezra 6:22

Special Feature

Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book

An Overview (10 Chapters)

- The Return Led by Zerubbabel (1:1-6:22)
- The Return Led by Ezra (7:1-10:44)

Major Themes

- *The Return*: God shows His mercy to every generation. He compassionately restores His people. No matter how difficult our present "captivity," we are never far from His love and mercy. He restores us when we return to Him.
- *Rededication*: In rededicating the altar, the people were recommitting themselves to God and His service. To grow spiritually, our commitment must be reviewed and renewed often. As we rededicate ourselves to God, our lives become altars to Him.
- *Opposition*: There will always be adversaries who oppose God's work. The life of faith is never easy. But God can overrule all opposition to His service. When we face opposition, we must not falter or withdraw, but keep active and patient.
- *God's Word*: All of us need the encouragement and direction of God's Word. We must make it the basis for our faith and actions to finish God's work and fulfill our obligations. We must never waver in our commitment to hear and obey His Word.