

Lesson 1, EZRA, CHAPTERS 1 – 10 OVERVIEW

The book of Ezra is a historical account of the return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon which had taken place 70 years prior to the events in this book. It can also be viewed as a lesson in how God moves to restore His people who have fallen away. If you read through the accounts of 1 and 2 Chronicles, you see a pattern emerging in the history of the Jewish people. The Jews were settled in the Promised Land but over time would become complacent and turn to idolatry and other pagan practices while forgetting the God of Abraham. Then hardships would happen, and they would plead to God for restoration. God would restore them because of his mercy and promises to Abraham. Then again, the Jews would become complacent. This yoyo syndrome came to an end with the conquering of the Hebrews by the Assyrians and then by the Babylonians.

1. Read 2 Chronicles 36:11-23. What are the conditions prevalent in Jerusalem and the surrounding land of Judah that Zedekiah ruled? Has there been a time in your life when you were “stiff necked and hardened in heart and would not turn to the Lord”? What was the condition of your heart at that time? _____

2. In Ezra 1:1 and Ezra 1:5, who do you see is taking the initiative? When have you felt God take the steps to draw you back to himself?

3. According to Ezra 3:2-7, the first order of business for the returning Jews was to build an altar to the Lord amidst the ruins. Why do you think an altar was the first item built? What does the altar of God mean in your life? (see also 1 Peter 1:18,19)

4. Ezra 3:7-11 describes the laying of the foundation of the Temple. What does Luke 6:46-49 say about foundations? See also 1 Corinthians 3:11.

5. Ezra chapters 4-6 record the opposition that arose from the surrounding pagan people. It would require the intervention of two prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the leaders and help them rebuild the temple of God. At times in our faith walk when we have turned from following the Lord, we face opposition when we are being restored. How does John 16:33 encourage you?

6. Read Ezra 6:15,22. Compare this to 2 Corinthians 6:16-18.

Application: Where are you in your walk of faith? Are you distanced from God and need a reboot? Are you dedicated to God but need more of him in your daily life? Write down what you feel is the condition of your heart. As God leads you, begin to restore or enlarge your emotional and spiritual altar to God, dedicating your life to him. Ask God to help you identify “worldly” opposition. Trust that you are a temple of the Living God.

Prayer: God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we thank you that you did not leave their descendants in the wilderness but restored them to the land promised to Abraham. We praise you that you do the same for each of us by drawing us back to you and restoring us to a vibrant and exciting life of worship, praise and faith. We stand on the sure foundation of your Son, Jesus. Amen.