

**“REBUILDING BROKEN PLACES”**  
**STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND HAGGAI**  
**Ezra 1:1-3:13**  
**“Foundations of Faith”**

**Introduction:** Ezra and Nehemiah continue the historical narrative of 1-2 Chronicles. The main topic is the Israelites return from Babylon to Judah. They cover about 107 years of history. These books document a transition into the post-exilic period in the history of Israel.

**SECTION I: FROM PROPHECY TO POLITICAL POLICY (Ezra 1:1-5).**

- A. Prophecy of Jeremiah fulfilled (Jeremiah 25:1-14). Cyrus declared God had given him all the kingdoms of the earth. When it was time for the rebuilding of the temple God commanded the most powerful human political leader of the time to get it done. Cyrus used his political power to issue the order and called for God’s people to step up. God will provide everything we need to do what He wants done.
- B. Heads of fathers’ houses are community leaders (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-25; Ephesians 6:1-2). These community leaders took initiative and responsibility. The Levites and priests represent religious leaders. **Contemporary application:** We are being built up into a holy temple (1 Peter 2:5). We must take responsibility for our community.

**SECTION II: PROVISION FOR THE MISSION (Ezra 1:6-2:70)**

- A. OFFERINGS FROM THE PEOPLE. When we invite people to support the ministry financially, we are giving them an opportunity to exercise the gift of giving. You don’t have to wait until you get rich to give.
- B. RETURN OF CONFISCATED TEMPLE ITEMS. Cyrus restored what was taken from the temple. God preserved the articles in Babylon and had them returned. Sheshbazzar was the first governor of Judah. He will eventually be replaced by Zerubbabel. Pay attention to the material resources God blessed you with (Luke 16:10).
- C. MAJOR GROUP DIVISIONS. This is a detailed record of people returning to Judah from captivity. 37 cities/towns are named. Zerubbabel (descendant or seed of Babel/Babylon) is the 2<sup>nd</sup> governor of the Persian province of Judah named in Ezra. He is a descendant of King Jehoiachin, King David, and Christ Jesus (Matthew 1:12). Several different groups are documented in the groups returning to Judah – men of Israel, priests, Levites, singers, sons of the gatekeepers, Nethinim (slaves assigned menial tasks in the temple such as the Gibeonites- Psalm 84:10), sons of Solomons servants.
- D. SOME PEOPLE COULD NOT PROVE THEY WERE ISRAELITES. This is a group of 652 people who could not prove their ethnicity by genealogical records. There are people today claiming to be Israelites (Romans 3:9).
- E. SOME PEOPLE COULD NOT PROVE THEY WERE LEVITES. This group could not prove their connection to Levi and were excluded from the priesthood. According to the Law of Moses a priest had to be physically born into the tribe of Levi. According to the New Covenant through Christ Jesus you must be spiritually born again to function as a New Testament priest (1 Peter 1:23, 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6). Urim and Thummim was method used to discern the will of God (Exodus 28:30, Numbers 27:21). Through Christ we have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18).
- F. OFFERINGS FROM THE LEADERS. Community leaders/elders gave financial support for building the temple: 61,000 gold coins, 6,250 pounds of silver, 100 priestly garments.

### **SECTION III: REBUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR WORSHIP (Ezra 3:1).**

- A. Joshua, priests, Zerubbabel, and his brethren built the altar of God to reinstate sacrifices in accordance with the Law of Moses. They pushed through fear to set up the altar. Sometimes we have to establish worship in a hostile environment.
- B. Restarted pattern of morning and evening sacrifice. The Feast of Tabernacles memorialized wilderness wanderings. The New Moon is a monthly worship time. The offerings restarted on the New Moon of the 7<sup>th</sup> month.
- C. The community hired builders and purchased materials for the temple. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year they began work and appointed Levites to supervise work on the temple. Joshua oversaw the work on the temple.
- D. Priests, Levites, sons of Asaph ready to praise the Lord when the foundation of the temple is laid. They sang a song similar to the dedication of Solomons temple.
- E. Some old men who saw the first temple wept while other people shouted for joy. Weeping and shouting could not be distinguished. There was loud praise because they hit a prophetic milestone! How would you respond if you witnessed fulfillment of prophecy?

**HOW IS GOD STIRRING YOU UP TO PARTICIPATE IN HIS MISSION? DON'T BE LIKE THE GROUP WHOSE NAMES WERE NOT ON RECORD AS BEING PART OF THE PRIESTHOOD. YOU MUST BE BORN OF THE SPIRIT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT CHRIST JESUS DIED FOR SIN AND ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND YOU WILL BE ADDED TO THE FAMILY OF GOD.**

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