



EZRA

▶▶ THE RETURN

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Ezra 6: "Return to God's Word"

Success/change the world for good. → **What does success look like?** → **Ezra 7:1-28**

We pursue success & add God. We SHOULD be pursuing God & letting Him add success. And He does! ...there is a reason we believe the spiritual journey STARTS w, KNOWING GOD, FF, DP, & MD.

1-10 → **Ezra DETERMINED to study, obey, & teach God's Law.** → Ezra, a scribe, from Aaron/High Priest...

- God's HOUSE = God's rules. Do you have rules in your home? → In our home we don't say stupid...
- What exactly is God's Law? → 613 Commands / Torah "The Law" → The "terms of the covenant" with God. → Graph
 - **Ceremonial** = ceremonies/sacrifices for uncleanness/sin, feasts/festivals, diet/clothing → MESSIAH!
 - **Judicial/civil** = daily living to guide conduct → God's character
 - **Moral law** = justice/judgement → Reveal God! → Promote welfare, foundational for society → 10 Commandments
- Are Christians required to obey the Law? → Yes & no → Lk. 22:20 → ...but we still follow some of it?! → Jn. 13:34-35
- How is "The Law" & "God's Word" different? → "the Torah" = first 5 books of the Bible, Jewish "terms of the covenant..."
 - The written Scriptures reveal God's BIG story of saving, delivering, redeeming, & making us His people.
 - As we read the Bible it reads us... & the HS uses it like a chisel carving out a masterpiece. → Mt. 7:23-25
- Learn it. Live it. Teach it! → Knowing ABOUT God vs. KNOWING God? → Rick Francis. Matt Noble.
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 - As we read the Bible... the Bible reads us... and the HS uses it like a chisel carving out a masterpiece.
 - *"There are many ways to lose God's Word. The results are always tragic. Whenever a critical # of people abandon the Bible & stop applying it in their personal lives, that nation begins to destroy itself."* - Cunningham
- My Bible. Family. Muetschler → Learn it, live it & teach it! → Plans, apps, websites... groups, church → Then what?

11-26 → **God graces those who determine to KNOW Him.** → "The Gracious Hand of God was upon me..."

- Recognize grace. → Grace = When God gives us what we don't deserve.
- Ezra = Investigate, recruit, take resources, tax exempt, appoint leaders, punish law breakers... GOVERNMENT!
- God strategically places people to influence spheres of society. → Fam, Government, Economics (science, tech, business), Religion, Education, Media, Celebration (arts, entertainment, sports) → Cunningham, Bright, Shaeffer...
- What sphere is God growing you into partnership w/Him? → A wonderful marriage, kids, a calling, i DON'T DESERVE!
- When we understand we DON'T deserve something, we treat it like that! → What does it look like?

27-28 → **The proof is PRAISE...not pride!** → Ezra praises God...recognizing...ITS ALL GOD!!

- Humble people give, praise, serve, love easier than those are entitled, puffed up w/pride, or think they deserved it.
- Pride places us in the center. Praise places God in the center.: Francis Chan Quote
- A life of praise is a life of testifying to what God has done.: I am grateful! God helped me. God got me through that.
- Do i consistently give praise & give God credit for what he has done? → Give HIM the credit.

→ **We'll never change our world for good, until we can see our world through God.**

→ **PRAYER: "Father, transform me through your Word so i can change my world for good."**

TALK ABOUT IT - Questions to GROW through with family, friends, & myself.

1. What does success in life look like for me? How can I change the world?
2. How well do i know God's Word? Why is it important to learn & live God's Word?
3. What spiritual disciplines do I practice to learn God's Word?
4. Where in my life have i seen the grace of God? Do I consistently give God credit for what He has done?
5. **PRAYER:** "Father, transform me through your Word so i can my world for good."

Chronology of Ezra

| Event | Year | Reference |
|---|-------------|--|
| Cyrus king of Persia captures Babylon | 539 B.C. | Dan. 5:30-31 |
| First year of King Cyrus; issues proclamation freeing Jewish exiles to return | 538- 537 | Ezra 1:1-4 |
| Jewish exiles, led by Sheshbazzar, return from Babylon to Jerusalem | 537? | Ezra 1:11 |
| Altar rebuilt | 537 | Ezra 3:1-2 |
| Temple rebuilding begins | 536 | Ezra 3:8 |
| Adversaries oppose the rebuilding | 536- 530 | Ezra 4:1-5 |
| Temple rebuilding ceases | 530- 520 | Ezra 4:24 |
| Temple rebuilding resumes (2nd year of Darius) | 520 | Ezra 5:2 ; compare Hag. 1:14 |
| Temple construction completed (6th year of Darius) | 516 | Ezra 6:15 |
| Ezra departs from Babylon to Jerusalem (arrives in 7th year of Artaxerxes) | 458 | Ezra 7:6-9 |
| Men of Judah and Benjamin assemble at Jerusalem | 458 | Ezra 10:9 |
| Officials conduct three-month investigation | 458- 457 | Ezra 10:16-17 |

Chronology of Nehemiah

| Event | Month/Day | Year | Reference |
|--|-----------|------------------|---|
| Hanani brings Nehemiah a report from Jerusalem (20th year of Artaxerxes I) | | 445- 444 B.C. | 1:1 |
| Nehemiah before King Artaxerxes | 1 | 445 | 2:1 |
| Nehemiah arrives to inspect Jerusalem walls | | 445 | 2:11 |
| Wall is finished | 6/25 | 445 | 6:15 |
| People of Israel gather | 7 | 445 | 7:73-8:1 |
| People of Israel celebrate Feast of Booths | 7/15-22 | 445 | 8:14 |
| People of Israel fast and confess sins | 7/24 | 445 | 9:1 |
| Nehemiah returns to Susa (32nd year of Artaxerxes I) | | 433 | 5:14 ; 13:6 |

LINKS / RESOURCES:

- Bible Project Ezra Video: <https://youtu.be/MkETkRv9tG8>
- Article On the Law: <https://www.gotquestions.org/ceremonial-law.html>
- Article On the Law: https://www.olivetree.com/blog/old_testament_law_still_apply/
- Bible Project on the Law: https://youtu.be/3BGO9Mmd_cU
“In this video, we explore the importance of the ancient laws in the Old Testament. Why are they in the Bible, and what do they say to followers of Jesus? We explore how they fulfilled a strategic purpose in one key phase of the biblical story, leading up to Jesus who fulfilled the law and summarized it in the call to love God and love your neighbor as yourself.”
- Bible Project on Reading the Law: <https://youtu.be/Sew1kBlE-W0>
“Have you ever wondered why there are so many ancient biblical laws in the first books of the Bible? What are modern readers supposed to do with them, and why are some of them so odd? In this video, we explore why the laws were given to ancient Israel and how they fit into the overall storyline of the Bible.”
- YWAM on “Spheres of Influence”: <https://www.ywamvinnitsa.com/7-social-spheres-of-influence/#1455009217268-29e3deb3-8a33>
- Lorn Cunningham, YWAM Founder on “Spheres of Influence”: <https://ywampodcast.net/shows/teaching/the-seven-spheres-of-influence-loren-cunningham/>

| Law | Context | Purpose | Revelation |
|------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Ceremonial | Worship | Holiness | Messiah |
| Civil | Daily Living | Guide conduct | God's character |
| Moral | Eternal | Promote life | God's character |

QUOTES / SONGS / Definitions:

“There are many ways to lose God's Word. The results are always tragic. Whenever a critical number of people abandon the Bible and stop applying it in their personal lives, that nation begins to destroy itself.” - [Lorn Cunningham, The Book that Transformed Nations](#)

Ceremonial Law: This type of law related to Israel's worship. (Lev 1:1-13) The laws pointed forward to Jesus Christ and were no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection. Though we are no longer bound to them, the principles behind the ceremonial laws, to worship and love God, still apply.

Civil Law: This law dictated Israel's daily living (Deut 24:10-11); but modern society and culture are so radically different that some of these guidelines cannot be followed specifically. The principles behind the commands are to guide our conduct.

Moral Law: The moral laws are direct commands of God. A good example is the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17). The moral laws reveal the nature and will of God, and still apply to us today. We do not obey this moral law as a way to obtain salvation, but to live in ways pleasing to God.

- https://www.olivetree.com/blog/old_testament_law_still_apply/

“It all began with a vision. In June of 1956, Loren Cunningham, a 20-year-old student from the United States, spent a part of his summer break in Nassau, Bahamas touring with a singing group.

One night after a busy day, Loren had an unusual experience. “I lay down on the bed,” he recalled, “doubled the pillow under my head and opened my Bible, routinely asking God to speak into my mind. What happened next was far from routine.

“Suddenly, I was looking up at a map of the world. Only the map was alive, moving! I sat up. I shook my head, rubbed my eyes. It was a mental movie. I could see all the continents. Waves were crashing onto the shores. Each went onto a continent, then receded, then came up further until it covered the continent completely.

“I caught my breath. Then, as I watched, the scene changed. The waves became young people—kids my age and even younger—covering the continents. They were talking to people on the street corners and outside bars. They were going house to house. They were preaching.

"Was that really you, Lord? I wondered, still staring at the wall, amazed. Young people—kids really—going out as missionaries! What an idea! And I thought 'Why did God give me this vision?'" - Loren Cunningham

"I didn't like worship today."

That is ok, we weren't worshipping you." - Francis Chan

SCRIPTURES: New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

Ezra 7:1-28

Ezra Arrives in Jerusalem

7 Many years later, during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, there was a man named Ezra. He was the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, 2 son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, 3 son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, 4 son of Zerariah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, 5 son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the high priest. 6 **This Ezra was a scribe who was well versed in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given to the people of Israel.** He came up to Jerusalem from Babylon, and the king gave him everything he asked for, **because the gracious hand of the Lord his God was on him.** 7 Some of the people of Israel, as well as some of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and Temple servants, traveled up to Jerusalem with him in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes' reign.

8 Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in August of that year. 9 He had arranged to leave Babylon on April 8, the first day of the new year, and he arrived at Jerusalem on August 4, **for the gracious hand of his God was on him.** 10 **This was because Ezra had determined to study and obey the Law of the Lord and to teach those decrees and regulations to the people of Israel.**

11 King Artaxerxes had given a copy of the following letter to Ezra, the priest and scribe who studied and taught the commands and decrees of the Lord to Israel:

12 "From Artaxerxes, the king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the teacher of the law of the God of heaven. Greetings.

13 "I decree that any of the people of Israel in my kingdom, including the priests and Levites, may volunteer to return to Jerusalem with you. 14 I and my council of seven hereby instruct you to conduct an inquiry into the situation in Judah and Jerusalem, based on your God's law, which is in your hand. 15 We also commission you to take with you silver and gold, which we are freely presenting as an offering to the God of Israel who lives in Jerusalem.

16 "Furthermore, you are to take any silver and gold that you may obtain from the province of Babylon, as well as the voluntary offerings of the people and the priests that are presented for the Temple of their God in Jerusalem. 17 These donations are to be used specifically for the purchase of bulls, rams, male lambs, and the appropriate grain offerings and liquid offerings, all of which will be offered on the altar of the Temple of your God in Jerusalem. 18 Any silver and gold that is left over may be used in whatever way you and your colleagues feel is the will of your God.

19 "But as for the cups we are entrusting to you for the service of the Temple of your God, deliver them all to the God of Jerusalem. 20 If you need anything else for your God's Temple or for any similar needs, you may take it from the royal treasury.

21 "I, Artaxerxes the king, hereby send this decree to all the treasurers in the province west of the Euphrates River: 'You are to give Ezra, the priest and teacher of the law of the God of heaven, whatever he requests of you. 22 You are to give him up to 7,500 pounds of silver, 500 bushels of wheat, 550 gallons of wine, 550 gallons of olive oil, and an unlimited supply of salt. 23 Be careful to provide whatever the God of heaven demands for his Temple, for why should we risk bringing God's anger against the realm of the king and his sons? 24 I also decree that no priest, Levite, singer, gatekeeper, Temple servant, or other worker in this Temple of God will be required to pay tribute, customs, or tolls of any kind.'

25 "And you, Ezra, are to use the wisdom your God has given you to appoint magistrates and judges who know your God's laws to govern all the people in the province west of the Euphrates River. Teach the law to anyone who does not know it. 26 Anyone who refuses to obey the law of your God and the law of the king will be punished immediately, either by death, banishment, confiscation of goods, or imprisonment."

27 Praise the Lord, the God of our ancestors, who made the king want to beautify the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem!
28 And praise him for demonstrating such unflinching love to me by honoring me before the king, his council, and all his mighty nobles! I felt encouraged because **the gracious hand of the Lord my God was on me.** And I gathered some of the leaders of Israel to return with me to Jerusalem.

Exodus 20:1-17

20 Then God gave the people all these instructions:

2 **"I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.**

3 "You must not have any other god but me.

4 "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. 5 You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. 6 But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.

7 "You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

8 "Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 You have six days each week for your ordinary work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

12 "Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

13 "You must not murder.

14 "You must not commit adultery.

15 "You must not steal.

16 "You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.

17 "You must not covet your neighbor's house. You must not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor."

Luke 22:20

20 After supper he took another cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.

Romans 8:1-4

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. 2 And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. 3 The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. 4 He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

John 13:34-35

34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

Matthew 7:23-25

23 But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

24 "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. 25 Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock.

1 Peter 2:4-5 & 9

4 You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor. 5 And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.

9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

