

STUDY GUIDE

# E Z R A

*Freedom from Exile*



WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH RODRIGUEZ, STEF DOWD  
& ROBIN HALL



**THEREFORE, AS YOU RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS THE LORD, SO WALK IN HIM, ROOTED AND BUILT UP IN HIM AND ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH, JUST AS YOU WERE TAUGHT, ABOUNDING IN THANKSGIVING. – COLOSSIANS 2:6-7**

Dear Friend,

Welcome to Morning Bible Study at Richland Creek Community Church!

One of our discipleship goals is to love God in His Word by daily growing in our obedience and submission to it. We can accomplish this goal, both corporately and individually, by

- Identifying that we are under the authority of God's Word in every area of our life.
- Understanding that to know God's Word fully, we need to study it carefully and obey it rigorously.
- Developing a regular habit of studying God's Word on our own and with other believers.

Morning Bible Study exists to glorify God by teaching women to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through the study of God's Word and through fellowship.

What a great privilege we have before us! The Bible is an intelligently designed, one-of-a-kind book. It is the Word of God written in the words of men. Within its pages, we find God's witness to Himself — composed and recorded without error — that we might know Him. Be intentional as you spend time reading, listening, studying, and discussing the Scriptures. May God teach us much about Himself in the weeks to come. Seek Him with all of your heart.

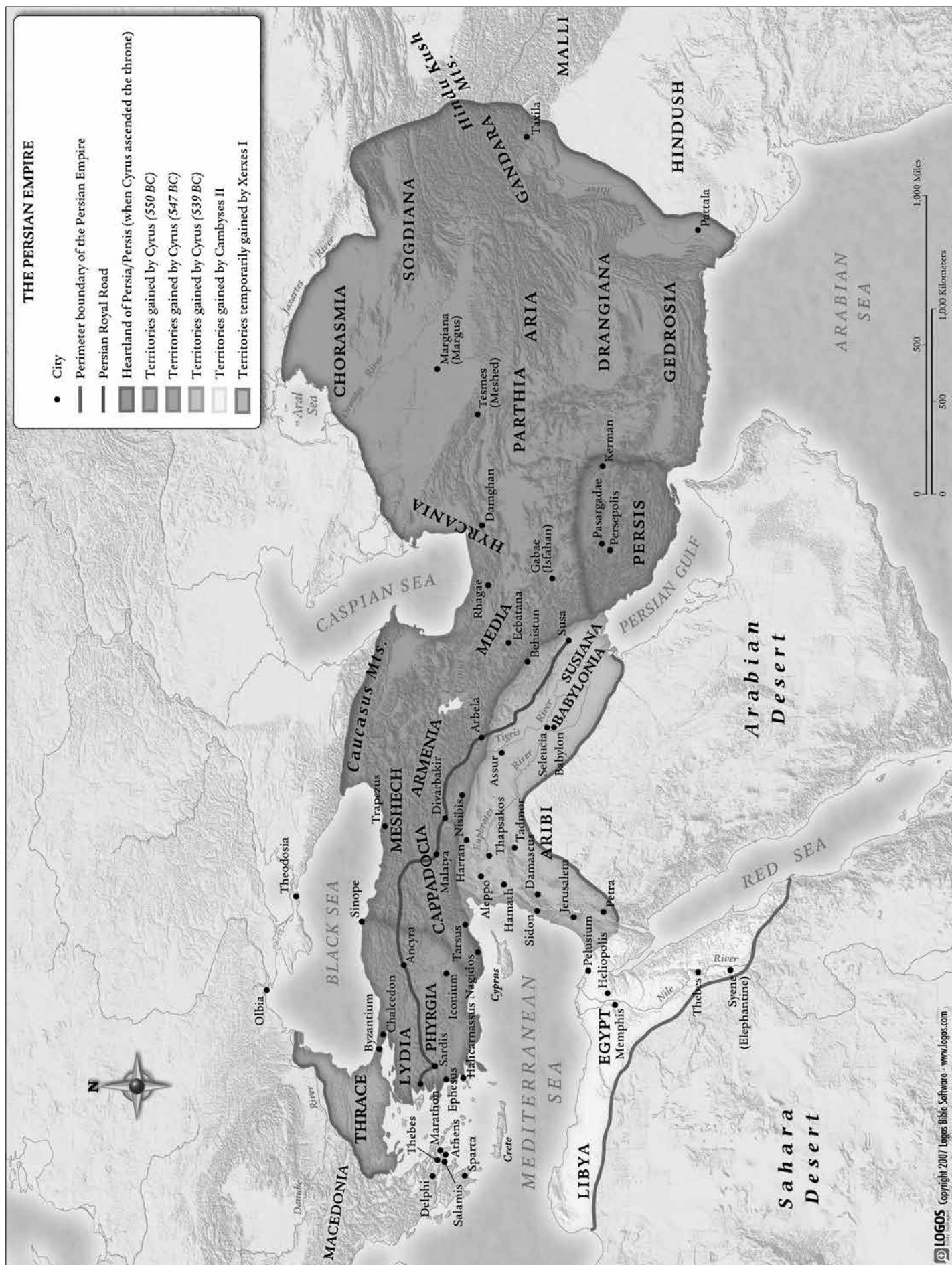
This is my prayer for you as we study God's Word together:

*"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." (Ephesians 1:17-21)*

Love in Christ,



Lead Teacher, Morning Bible Study



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# *How to Study the Bible*

AND

# *How to Use This Study Guide*

## **THE PURPOSE**

The purpose of Bible study is to know God and to be transformed into His image.

*"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18*

The purpose of this study guide is to lead you through the following Bible study process as you study in relationship with other believers at Richland Creek.

## **THE PROCESS**

### ***Pray Continually - Read Repeatedly***

Pray throughout your study time. Approach God in humility, realizing that the Bible is a spiritual book and cannot be understood apart from the Spirit of God.

*"Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name." Psalm 86:11*

The study guide will prompt you to read through our chosen text repeatedly. At the beginning of each week, we will zoom out, reading or listening to (on a Bible app or audio book) the whole chapter or a large section in one sitting, in order to understand the main points and context. Then we will zoom in to focus on details. At the end of the week, we will have the opportunity to zoom back out and reflect on the passage as a whole.

### ***Observation – What does the text say?***

The first step to understanding a passage is basic observation. At this point the main goal is comprehension of the passage. What is the author communicating? After listening to or reading the week's passage as a whole, we will encourage you to write a brief list of the main points or events (you can use your Bible's section titles for help). To get at what the text specifically says, we will then look at many of the details and how each detail contributes to the whole of the passage. As you continue to pray and read, the study guide will lead you to answer basic questions. Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? As you do this, continue to pay attention to the context. How does this verse relate to the ones before it, to the ones after it, to the book as a whole, and to other passages in the Bible? There will be opportunities to note things that are repeated, compared, or contrasted. Feel free to jot down additional things that you notice as you go. The majority of the study guide is devoted to this stage of the process.

### ***Interpretation – What does the text mean?***

After you have made observations and have a basic comprehension of the passage, the next goal in Bible study is interpretation – to understand the author’s message. Jesus would often say after he taught,

*“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Matthew 11:15*

Clearly, the crowd had heard his words, but did they understand his message? Similarly, we must dig further to make sure that we understand the author’s intended purpose for the passage. How does the author tell his story or build his argument? How does this story or teaching fit into the overarching story of God’s work of salvation? What was the significance to the original audience? This is a good time to check cross-references (these found in the margin or at the bottom of Bibles that have cross-references). They will help you find other passages in the Bible that utilize the same words or themes. If you are looking at an unclear passage, often a more clear passage on the same topic will help you gain understanding. This study guide will include some of these cross-references, but look at others from your Bible as well. Pray for spiritual ears to hear God’s message.

While there are some questions focused on this stage in the study guide, understanding the meaning of the message will be the primary focus of the teaching time each Wednesday. One quick note of encouragement: We strongly recommend that you focus your study time at home on the study of the Bible passage without the aid of commentaries or study Bible notes. While these tools are helpful, they are not God’s infallible Word. And they often prevent you from the joy of growing in personal Bible study skills. If you do want to consult these helps, the best time to do that is after your personal study time and the group time.

### ***Application – What do I do with what I’ve learned?***

All Scripture is useful and beneficial for daily life and doctrine, according to 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

*“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” 2 Peter 1:3*

It is through the knowledge of God and His words that we will be equipped for life. But study alone is not enough. We are to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only (James 1:22). Scripture is not truly understood until it is obeyed. Every passage requires that we apply what we have learned by responding to God and His message. We should ask ourselves, “What have I learned about God? How, then, should I change the way I think or speak or act?” We should consider what specific steps are needed to trust, worship, and obey God more faithfully.

There are some application and response type questions sprinkled throughout the study guide, as you reflect and pray personally at home. Also, the group discussion time will not only review what you have learned throughout the week, but also focus on what our response to the message should be. Obedience is more attainable when we can encourage each other in godliness.

# LESSON ONE

## *The Grand Narrative*

The Bible is the Word of God. Within its pages, we find God's witness to Himself — composed and recorded without error. Together, the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament tell one story. This grand narrative is the redeeming work of God in Jesus Christ.

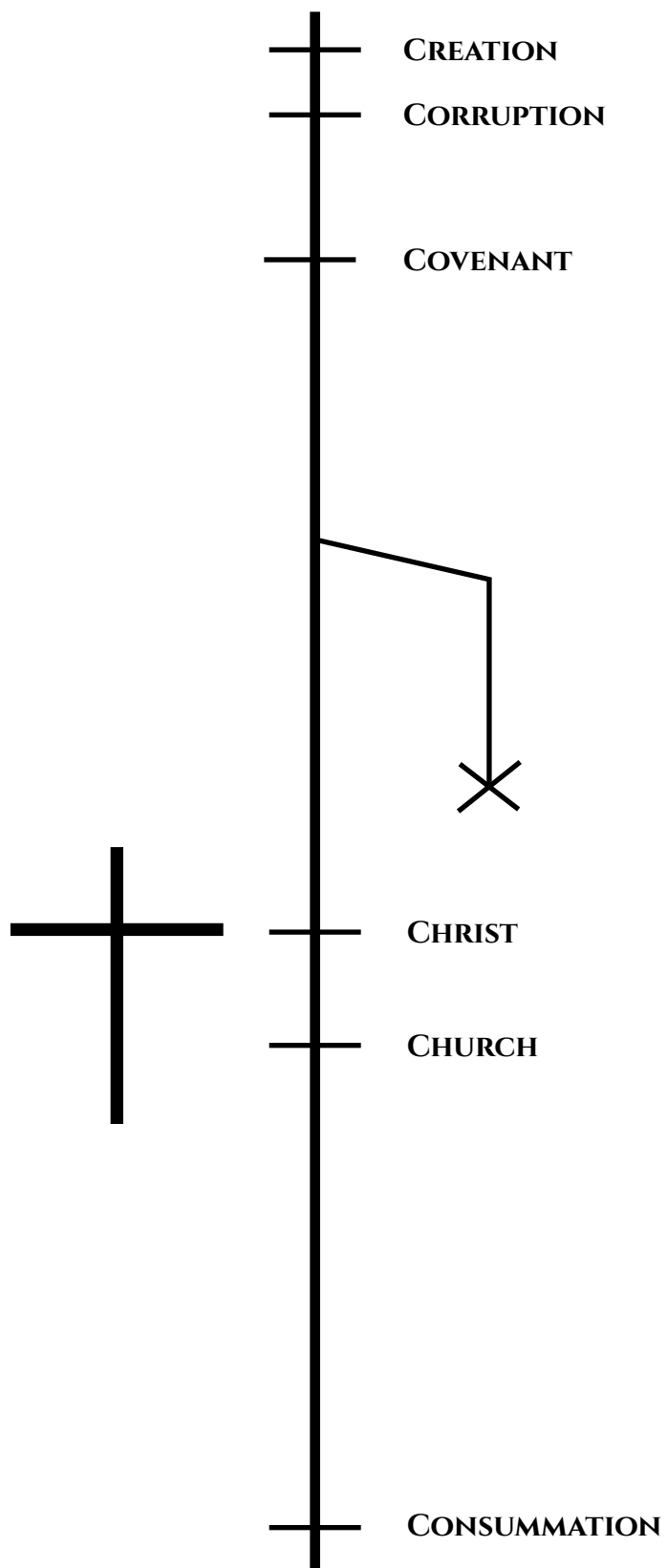
*"In the beginning, God created... And God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:1, 31)*

Soon after, man enters the story and the consequences of sin cause a ripple effect like a rock cast into still water.

*"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous... but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:18-21)*

All was not lost. By grace, God intervened. From Genesis to Revelation, we see God at work in Jesus Christ, reconciling humanity back to Himself. There is no story grander than that!





Lecture Notes

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. In the bottom-left corner, there is a small, faint illustration of a metal chain link.

## *For Personal Reflection*

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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



# LESSON TWO

## *Context*

The Book of Ezra isn't just a story — it is history, chronicling the lives of real people and real events. Before we dive into our study, we will gather information to establish the context. Context shapes the meaning and sets the framework for our understanding of Scripture.

All 66 books of the Bible are written to a specific audience to convey a particular message at a unique time and place in history. If we impose our framework on the text — viewing it solely through the eyes of a woman living in the present-day United States of America — we might misinterpret what the Bible says. To avoid this mistake, we will spend this week studying the context for the book of Ezra. Though not written directly to us, all of God's Word is for us. Let's lean in, seeking to understand and rightly apply the timeless truth the Divine Author intended both for them then and for us now.

## Day One

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### FOR REVIEW

What six words can we use to summarize the “big story” of the Bible?

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In the earliest manuscripts, and in the Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah are one unified work. Though the main focus of this semester’s study in Ezra, we will spend time in Nehemiah both this first week of study and the last week of study.

Our goal this week is to collect information. What we glean will help us see the book of Ezra through the eyes of the original audience. This lesson will set the foundation as we determine the literary context (the words around the text), historical context (the world around the text), and biblical context (how the rest of God’s Word connects to the text). Studying Ezra through these three “lenses” will magnify God and bring the author’s intended meaning into focus. Remember, we must understand what the text meant to them, then, before we can rightly apply the timeless message for us, now.

### LITERARY CONTEXT

What book of the Bible comes before Ezra?

Read or listen to the final chapter of the book you named above (the chapter that immediately precedes Ezra 1). What major events occur in the passage?

What book of the Bible comes after Ezra?

Read or listen to the first chapter of the book you named above (the chapter that immediately follows Ezra 10). What major event occurs in the passage?

## **HISTORICAL AND BIBLICAL CONTEXT**

We will spend the rest of this week studying the passages you just read. Both passages provide significant details that will help us better understand the historical events that led to the exile and the return of God's people.

## *Day Two*

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**READ 2 CHRONICLES 36, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-14 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

2 Chronicles 36 describes the end of the Hebrew monarchy. Who are the last four kings over Judah? How long did each reign in Jerusalem?

King David captured Jerusalem and established it as the capital of Israel (1 Chronicles 11:4-9). Read 2 Chronicles 6:1-11 and Psalm 132. What else do you learn about Jerusalem from these passages? What makes this city special?

What repeated phrase summarizes the reign of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah in verses 5, 9, and 12?

What additional words and phrases in this passage describe the acts of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, kings of Judah?

It wasn't just the kings. According to verse 14, what other leaders were "exceedingly unfaithful?" What did they do? Read Deuteronomy 33:8-10 and Leviticus 10:10-11. What covenantal responsibility did God call these leaders to fulfill?

## APPLICATION

Personal fidelity to God matters — especially in the life of a leader. We are all leaders in some respect. Who are you leading (or setting an example for) in your daily life? How are you leading them? Are you an example of holiness or hypocrisy? In what way?

Let's be honest. We all have room to grow! Praise God, His mercies are new every morning. What is one area of your life you can focus on this week? Pray about it. Ask the Lord to help you grow in your faithfulness to Him and His commands.

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Obedience to the Lord yields divine blessing. Disobedience results in divine judgment. Read Deuteronomy 28 and / or Leviticus 26. List some of the blessings and curses you find in these passages.

*Blessings*

*Curses*

## *Day Three*

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**READ 2 CHRONICLES 36, FOCUSING ON VERSES 15-21 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

God's people were set apart — to be holy, as He is holy. Instead, they demonstrated a pattern of disobedience and ungodly behavior. How did the Lord respond to the unfaithfulness of His people? Who did He send? Why?

According to verse 16, what did God's people do in response?

As a direct result, what becomes of Jerusalem? Read Lamentations 1:1-18.



What king did the Lord bring up against Judah to carry His people away? What king did the Lord stir up to bring His people back?

Compare 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 to Ezra 1:1-3. What do you notice about these passages? What word(s) would you use to describe King Cyrus' response to the Lord? Contrast this pagan king's response with the response of Judah's kings in verses 1-14.

*Cyrus, King of Persia*

*Kings of Judah*

Taking all of 2 Chronicles 36 into account, what does this teach us about God? (Use Appendix 1 for help.)

## APPLICATION

Sin is costly. They were to be a people set apart — holy to the Lord. The sins of Judah cost them God's presence, their identity as God's people, God's place (both the land of promise and the temple — their place of worship), the lives of countless people, the monarchy, and countless blessings. These are devastating consequences, but what is the true cost of sin? What price did God pay for our redemption, according to 1 Peter 1:18-19?

The situation wasn't completely hopeless for those sent into exile. Likewise, there is hope for us. Read Romans 3:21-26, Romans 10:9-13, and Ephesians 1:7-10. Praise God for the indescribable gift we have in Christ. Consider the words of this beautiful refrain written by Elvina M. Hall:

*Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.*

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Throughout the New Testament, the theme of Jesus Christ as "King," "Ruler," and "Lord" is evident from start to finish. What passages of Scripture come to mind when you think of these themes? Below are just a few to get you started; think of others and write them in the blanks. How does each passage remind us that Jesus is the promised King?

John 12:12-19

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

Colossians 1:13, 18

Revelation 19:16

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## *Day Four*

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**READ NEHEMIAH 1, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-3 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Both the northern kingdom of Israel (721 BC) and the southern kingdom of Judah (586 BC) were destroyed. We know that God's sovereign plan was always for a remnant of Judah's people to return to Jerusalem. They knew it, too. Read Jeremiah 29:1-14. What instructions did the Lord give to those in exile?

Susa was the capital of the Persian Empire and the winter residence of the Persian monarchs. Locate Susa on your map and draw a castle. Then, read Nehemiah 1:11-2:1. Who was king of Persia at this time? What was Nehemiah's position?

Who came to Nehemiah? Where did they come from?

What did Nehemiah want to know?

What news did Nehemiah receive? How does the state of God's people compare to the state of the city and its wall?

The first wave of Judah's exiled remnant tried to rebuild the wall when they returned to Jerusalem decades earlier. Read Ezra 4:4-21. Why were they unsuccessful?

#### **APPLICATION**

Jeremiah 29:11 is a verse you have likely seen printed on wall signs, shirts, or even jewelry. Write the verse out below.

Before today, had you ever read verse 11 within the context of Jeremiah 29? In what way has this week's study impacted how you understand Jeremiah 29:11 and/or how you see God? Will this in any way change what you think of when you see it, or how you apply it to your life, going forward?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Locate Jerusalem on your map and draw a crown. The Midrash (Jewish interpretation and commentary on the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) says there are at least 70 different names for Jerusalem. List the names you find next to the corresponding verses below.

2 Samuel 6:12

Psalms 48:1

Psalms 48:2

Psalms 48:8

Isaiah 1:25

Isaiah 1:26

Isaiah 29:1

Isaiah 48:2

Jeremiah 23:6

Jeremiah 31:22

Ezekiel 48:35

Zechariah 8:3

### *Day Five*

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**READ NEHEMIAH 1, FOCUSING ON VERSES 4-11 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Read Psalm 137:1-6. Now, look back at Nehemiah 1:3. Nehemiah's body was in Persia, but his heart was in Jerusalem. What was his response, as soon as he heard the news? What did he do?

Nehemiah begins his prayer with adoration and worship — seeking the Lord, “God of heaven.” What does he say about who God is? What does he say regarding what God has done for the people of Israel?

What else do you notice about this prayer? What word(s) would you use to describe the attitude of Nehemiah’s heart as he prays? Which verse(s) or phrase(s) from the text support your description? (Hint: Focus on verses 6, 7, and 11.)

Nehemiah prays for God to remember His promises. Read Deuteronomy 30. What did God say He would do?

What did Nehemiah purpose in his heart to do? According to verse 10, when did he plan to do it?

### **APPLICATION**

David Guzik wrote, “God was going to use Nehemiah to do something about this situation.

But first, God did something in Nehemiah. Any great work of God begins with God doing a great work in somebody."

Is there a particular area in which God has done a great work in you? What burdens your heart? Does your heart break over the things of God and/or the state of a particular person or people group? What might God want to do in and through you? Write your thoughts below. Pray for the courage to, as Dr. John Ewart said, "Request to engage in the mission!"

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Read Psalm 106. What did God's people not remember? What did they not do? What did God remember? What did God do?

*God's People:*

*God:*

What lessons can we learn from this psalm?

## *For Personal Reflection*

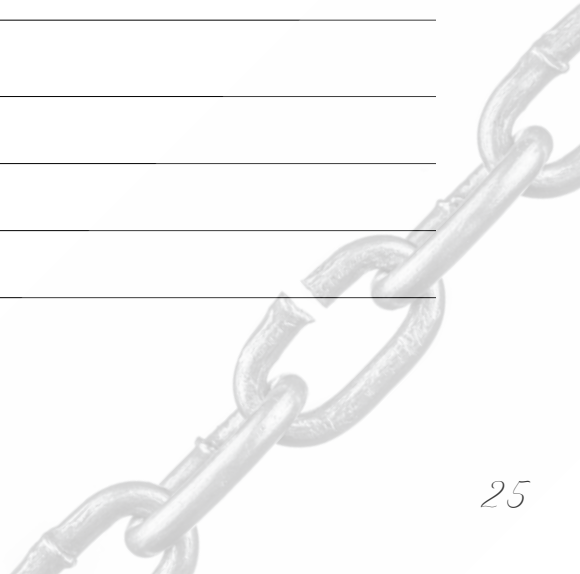
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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



Lecture Notes

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## *Group Time*

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### WARM UP QUESTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our lives in many ways. What plans have you had to change as a result? What are you most looking forward to when life becomes a bit more “normal?”

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)

Michael D. Williams wrote, “It was the king who set the pattern of life for good or ill.” Read Jeremiah 3:15. How does this apply to godly leadership — especially in the church?

Personal faithfulness to God matters — especially in the life of a leader. We are all leaders in some respect. Who are you leading (or setting an example for) in your daily life? How are you leading them? Are you an example of holiness or hypocrisy? In what way?

What tools has God provided to help us overcome our selfish desires and live a life marked by faith?

This week, you read about pagan kings and the kings God called to lead His people. Our hope does not rest on human leaders. The day is coming when every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). He is the King of Kings! Though the kingship of Christ is assured in the future, in what way is it also a present reality?

As you studied this week, what one aspect of God’s character stood out above all? Why?

The sins of Judah cost them God’s presence, their identity as God’s people, God’s place (both the land of promise and the temple — their place of worship), the lives of countless people, the monarchy, and countless blessings. These are devastating consequences, but what is the true cost of sin? What price did God pay for our redemption, according to 1 Peter 1:18-19?

In what way has this week’s study impacted how you understand Jeremiah 29:11 and/or how you see God? Will this in any way change what you think of when you see it, or how you apply it to your life, going forward?

Is there a particular area in which God has done a great work in you? What burdens your heart? Does your heart break over the things of God and/or the state of a particular person or people group? What might God want to do in and through you?

Read Galatians 5:22-25. Which fruit of the Spirit is most evident in your life? Is there one in which you hope to grow this semester? What impact do you think this change will have?



# LESSON THREE

*Ezra 1 and 2*

The exile ends as God promised, according to His word by the mouth of Jeremiah the prophet. God's people return to Jerusalem in three separate waves to rebuild the temple, the community, and the city walls. God stirs the spirit of a Persian king (Cyrus the Great) and godly leaders (Zerubbabel and Jeshua) who will return with the first wave of survivors to rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel, in Jerusalem. By His grace, they do not return from captivity empty-handed. In addition to silver, gold, goods, beasts, and freewill offerings, Cyrus brings out the vessels of the house of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon) had carried away from Jerusalem.

## *Day One*

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### **FOR REVIEW (CONTEXT)**

What did you glean from studying the context for the book of Ezra? What specific details will be most helpful to recall every time you open your Bible to study this semester? (Hint: Your goal is to view the text through the eyes of the original audience.)

Read or listen to Ezra 1-5. Note below the major topics in this passage (Hint: The bold headings in your Bible will help with this).

## *Day Two*

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### **READ EZRA 1, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-4 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Read Jeremiah 25:1-14 (the prophecy referred to here in verse 1). What king and nation did God use to discipline Judah for her sins? How many years was Judah to be in exile?

Look at your map (page 4) and outline the borders of the expansive Persian empire.

Who was Cyrus and what did he do, according to these verses?

Who prompted Cyrus to do this? When? Why? (Verse 1)

*WHO?*

*WHEN?*

*WHY?*

Look at Cyrus's proclamation (verses 2-4) and note below all of the titles that Cyrus gives for God.

According to Cyrus, what had God given him? What did God charge Cyrus to do?

*God gave Cyrus...*

*God charged Cyrus...*

To fulfill this charge, Cyrus encouraged the people of the God of Israel to do what (verse 3)?

Read Isaiah 44:28-45:1. List below what Isaiah prophesied about who Cyrus would be and what God would do through him:

*Who Cyrus Would Be*

*What God Would Do Through Cyrus*

### **APPLICATION**

God promised in Jeremiah 16:14-15 (and in other prophecies) that He would bring His people back from exile. Then in Ezra 1, verses 1 and 5, we see God stir up the spirit of Cyrus and the spirits of the exiles to return and rebuild in fulfillment of these prophecies. What does this teach us about God?

In what way is God stirring your spirit to walk in obedience to His Word?

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Read the following passages and note the different ways over the centuries that God has directed kings' hearts to accomplish His will (Prov. 21:1).

Exodus 7:3, 9:12 -

Deuteronomy 2:30 -

Daniel 5:18-20 -

Ezra 1:1 -

## Day Three

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**READ EZRA 1, FOCUSING ON VERSES 5-11 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

According to verse 5, who responded to Cyrus's decree to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem?

Which three Israelite tribes are specifically mentioned?

J\_\_\_\_\_

B\_\_\_\_\_

L\_\_\_\_\_

According to verses 6-11, how did God provide the supplies for the temple that would be rebuilt? Who contributed and what was given?

Who contributed

What was given

Cyrus gave Sheshbazzar the responsibility of bringing the temple items from the city of Babylon back to Jerusalem. On your map (page 4), draw an arrow from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Read Ezra 5:14 and write below what official office Sheshbazzar held.

Read Exodus 3:21-22 and 12:35-36. Note below the similarities between the way the Lord



provided for the Israelites during the Exodus from Egypt and the way He provided for them during the return from Babylonian exile.

### **APPLICATION**

It is often said that God always “funds what He requires,” meaning that He will always supply what is needed to accomplish what He desires. What area of your life has God called you to a difficult obedience that seems beyond your reach? What can you learn from today’s verses?

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Read Jeremiah 27:16-22 (or the whole chapter to have a better idea of context). This prophecy was written in 597 B.C., about 10 years before Jerusalem was sacked. By this point, some of the temple items had been taken to Babylon (who had already begun to oppress Judah), but some had been left. What did God say would happen to the rest of the vessels of the temple? How does today’s passage in Ezra relate to this prophecy?

## *Day Four*

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**READ EZRA 2:1-58 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Even though you likely know what they mean, take a minute to look up and define the two words below and think about their meanings in relation to these verses:

*Captivity:*

*Exile:*

Read 2 Kings 24:14-16 and Lamentations 1:1-5 to remind yourself of what this captivity looked like. Note below any words or images from Lamentations that stand out to you as it describes the desolation of the city.

Now consider the heart cry of the captives as they return back to their homeland 70 years later. Read Psalm 107:1-3 and Isaiah 48:17-21 and note below what the exiles say about God and His work and their response to God.

*God and His Work:*

*Their response:*

Some of the key leaders during this time of return and rebuilding are listed in verse 2. Draw a line to match the following verses to the correct leader, then jot down a few facts that you learn about each in the space provided.

Zechariah 3:6—8

Zerubbabel

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Matthew 1:12-16

Jeshua (also spelled “Joshua”)

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Look again at verses 2-58, which list the number of exiles that returned by families (or, in some cases, by land to which they belonged). Note below the categories into which this list is divided (the first two are done for you).

Verse 2b-35

People of Israel

Verses 36-39

Priests

Verses 40-42

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Verses 43-54

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Verses 55-57

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*\*Why would the last 4 classifications of people be important? Hint: Think about the purpose for which the exiles have been sent back to Jerusalem.*

### APPLICATION

According to Romans 6:17-18, we were once enslaved to sin, but are now set free through faith in Christ. In Isaiah 35:8-10, the prophet looked forward to this redemption in Christ, using the word picture of exiles returning to Zion. Read this passage and write your own prayer of praise to God your Redeemer.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL TWO-DAY STUDY - DAY ONE OF TWO)**

Go back and read all of Psalm 107, a psalm of praise from the redeemed exiles. Just looking at the list of names and numbers of the exiles can seem impersonal. But in this psalm you will discover four stories of what it feels like to be in exile. Note below the circumstances of each story, how the Lord delivered them, and how the redeemed exiles praised the Lord. Finally, note any connections you find between the physical exile of the Israelites and the spiritual exile of all people captive to sin. Focus today on the first two stories.

Story 1 (verses 4-9)

Circumstances:

Deliverance:

Praise:

Story 2 (verses 10-16)

Circumstances:

Deliverance:

Praise:

Connections between physical and spiritual exile:

## Day Five

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**READ EZRA 2:59-70 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

What challenge did some of the Jews have, including some of the sons of the priests (verses 59-62)?

For the priests who had this dilemma, what temporary decision was made (verses 62-63)?

What would have been the consequence of someone serving as priest of the temple who was not truly from the correct lineage of Aaron? Read Numbers 3:10.

Verse 63 references the Urim and Thummim, which the priest was later to consult regarding this matter. Read the following verses to find out more about the Urim and Thummim and write what you learn below: Exodus 28:29-30, Numbers 27:18-21

What was the total number of the assembly of exiles that came to Jerusalem and Judah at this time?

- A. 450,623
- B. 42,360
- C. 4,145
- D. 462

What did some of the heads of families do when they finally came to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem?

### APPLICATION

In verses 68-69 we see that the people gave freewill offerings for the temple “according to their ability.” We find this same principle of giving in 2 Corinthians 8, when Paul collected contributions to give to the persecuted church in Jerusalem. He first mentioned that the Macedonian churches gave “according to their means...and beyond their means...” (verse 3), and then exhorted the Corinthians to also give “according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have” (verse 12). Pray and ask God to show you the ways that He has blessed you and how He might lead you to give to help others or to help in the furtherance of His kingdom work. Write below your plan of action.

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL TWO-DAY STUDY - DAY TWO OF TWO)

Story 3 (verses 17-22)

Circumstances:

Deliverance:

Praise:

Story 4 (verses 23-32)

Circumstances:

Deliverance:

Praise:

Connections between physical and spiritual exile:

## *For Personal Reflection*

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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



Lecture Notes

[illegible]



## *Group Time*

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### **WARM UP QUESTION**

Dorothy famously said, "There's no place like home!" What is your favorite thing about home, especially when you return from a long trip?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)**

What characteristics of God do you see in the first two chapters of Ezra (for example: faithfulness)? Give the characteristic as well as the verse(s) in which you see it. Hint: these traits may be directly stated or inferred from God's actions or words.

How should the truths that we learn about God from Ezra 1 and 2 change the way we live our lives on a daily basis?

We saw in Ezra 1:1 and 1:5 that God "stirred up" the spirit of Cyrus and certain Israelites to accomplish His plan of rebuilding the temple. Can you think of a time when God stirred up your spirit toward a new step of faith in obedience to His Word?

We saw this week the amazing way in which God used a pagan king, Cyrus, to accomplish His plan of rebuilding the temple. What implications does this historical event have for our individual lives or our nation?

The temple is consistently called the "house of God" or the "house of the Lord" in these chapters. What does this phrase mean? And where does God "live" today? (Some verses to consider: Acts 17:24-28, 2 Chronicles 6:18-21, 1 Corinthians 3:16)

Have you ever felt like God was asking too much from you, or that you didn't have the inner strength to obey? What can we learn from God's provision for the temple in 1:4-11? Do you believe that God can "fund what He requires" for you too?

Look back at your answers to Day 4, questions 2 and 3. What contrast do you see between the images of exile from Lamentations 1 and the images of return from Psalm 107 and Isaiah 48?

There is good evidence to support the idea of this return from Babylon as being the "second exodus" (with the return from Egypt under Moses being the "first exodus"). What similarities do you see in this story in Ezra with the story in the book of Exodus? How do both of these exoduses point forward to Jesus?

According to Romans 6:17-18, we were once enslaved to sin, but are now set free through faith in Christ. In Isaiah 35:8-10, the prophet looked forward to this redemption in Christ, using the word picture of exiles returning to Zion. Have you ever thought of yourself as a captive that has been set free? What words (from these passages or other words) would you use to describe the freedom you have found in Christ?

# LESSON FOUR

*Ezra 3*

The first physical structure the people rebuild is the altar of the God of Israel. Upon this altar, the people of Judah will offer burnt offerings to the Lord, demonstrating obedience and reestablishing worship according to what was written in the Law of Moses. Next, together with their kinsmen, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua, son of Jozadak, appointed the Levites to supervise the work of the house of the Lord. The builders lay the foundation, and the people's response rang out far and wide. "For [the Lord] is good, for his steadfast love endures forever..." (Ezra 3:11)

## Day One

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### FOR REVIEW (EZRA 1 AND 2)

From Ezra 1 and 2, list several ways that God worked to bring about the fulfillment of His plans to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and return the exiles to their homeland.

Read or listen to Ezra 6-10. Note below the major topics in this passage (Hint: The bold headings in your Bible will help with this).

## Day Two

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### READ EZRA 3, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-3 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

How did the people of Israel gather when they came to Jerusalem? What does this show about their resolve to obey (verse 1)?

What was the first task completed by the priests (verse 2)?

- ☐ offer sacrifices
- ☐ put protection in place
- ☐ read the Law
- ☐ build an altar

Read Genesis 8:20-21, the biblical record of the first altar. Who built it? When and why was it built?

Where was the priests' instruction on building the altar found (verse 2)?

the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

What are ththos instructions? Read Deuteronomy 12:5-6 for the answer.

How did the peoples around the Israelites respond to their return and the building of the altar (verse 3)?

### APPLICATION

Sacrifices and offerings to the Lord were a central piece of Israel's identity. Throughout the Law of Moses, specific instructions were given for each offering (Read Exodus 29:38-42). In verse 3, when the people begin regular sacrifices, it is an act of obedience and worship, but also a return to who God had called them to be. What we sacrifice for is what we worship. What we worship indicates who we are.

What do you worship? What does that reveal about you?

Are there any sacrifices or changes necessary in order for your worship to reflect who you are in Christ?

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

In verse 1, the Israelites come to Jerusalem in “the seventh month.” The ritual of Israel’s great Day of Atonement, a day of rest, fasting, and reflection for the entire nation, was celebrated in the seventh month.

Read Leviticus 23:26-32 and Ezra 3:1-7. Meditate on the significance of God bringing Israel to this place at this time. Record your thoughts.

## *Day Three*

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**READ EZRA 3, FOCUSING ON VERSES 4-7 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

According to these verses, the priests and Israelites were quite intentional in their worship. List some of what their worship entailed.

kept the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

offered \_\_\_\_\_ burnt \_\_\_\_\_

regular \_\_\_\_\_

offerings at the new \_\_\_\_\_

all \_\_\_\_\_ feasts of the \_\_\_\_\_

What feast is mentioned in verse 4? Read Leviticus 23:39-43 and record what this feast commemorates.

When these offerings, required and freewill, were taking place, had construction on the temple begun (verse 6)?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

Read verse 7. Who took action, giving money and goods?

### APPLICATION

God's people had been in exile far away from Jerusalem, the site of the original Temple. When the Jews returned to Jerusalem, their acts of worship were being performed as "one person", but with an altar only. It is a common thought that worship is reserved for or can take place only in a church building. In this passage we see this is not so.

How have you confined worship to being at the church building only?

Where can worship take place? How should this understanding of true worship impact your life?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Worship happens in various places throughout the Bible. Read these passages noticing who is worshipping and where their worship takes place.

WHO

WHERE

Job 1:20-21

Genesis 22:5-14

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 16:25-26

## *Day Four*

---

**READ EZRA 3, FOCUSING ON VERSES 7-9 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

How long had the Jews been in Jerusalem before work on the Temple began? What month did it begin (verse 8)?

Read 1 Kings 6:1 and 2 Chronicles 3:1-2. Why would these dates have a significant meaning for the Israelites?

Despite the lack of a Temple or foundation, the placement of the altar in Jerusalem allowed it be called what (verses 8-9)?

The Israelites were unified in their dedication to rebuild the Temple. List some of the names/people and their jobs/positions in verses 8-9 who “made a beginning together...to supervise the work of the house of the Lord.”

What was the common bond or shared experience among this diversity of these people and positions (verse 8)?

What were the two requirements for those appointed to supervise the work of the house of the Lord (verse 8)?

The circumstances and construction of this Temple is similar to that of the first Temple. Read 2 Chronicles 2. Write out the similarities and differences between the two temples.

*Similarities*

Ezra 3

2 Chronicles 2

Cedar from Lebanon

Blessing of a king

Supplies sent through Joppa

*Differences*

Ezra 3

2 Chronicles 2

Israel controls Jerusalem

Time of wealth and peace

Israel has an earthly king

**APPLICATION**

In the physical building of the Temple, these unified, single-minded Jews were declaring a spiritual truth that theirs would be a God-centered people. It is still the church's call to declare the spiritual truth of the Gospel in a unified way.

Have you been a promotor of unity or disunity among the church? How can you train yourself for single-mindedness with brothers and sisters in Christ? Read Ephesians 4:1-3.

How are your actions distinctly promoting the Gospel?



### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Parts of the Bible are easy to skim or skip because they seem irrelevant. Yet, we know all of the Bible is meant to reveal God and draw us closer to Him. The origin story of the Levites seems to lack application, but must not be skipped. Use the following passages to trace the emergence of this passionate group of Jewish leaders. Write their response to or responsibilities in the midst of these circumstances.

#### *Circumstance*

#### *Response/Responsibilities*

Exodus 32:25-29

Numbers 1:47-54

Deuteronomy 10:5-9

2 Chronicles 17:7-9

Nehemiah 8:9-12

## *Day Five*

---

### READ 1 CHRONICLES 6 AND EZRA 3:10-13 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

Whose directions steered the foundation-laying ceremony seen in verse 10?

\_\_\_\_\_ Moses  
\_\_\_\_\_ Ezra

\_\_\_\_\_ David  
\_\_\_\_\_ Solomon

Read verses 10-11. List all involved and their job within in this celebratory ceremony.

1 Chronicles 6 is a record of the celebration and thanksgiving of King David as he prepared the very place where the Israelites are in this passage, for his son, King Solomon to build the original Temple. The same phrase used in 1 Chronicles 6 to describe God is also seen in Ezra 3. Write the phrase that describes His love below.

Meditate on verses 12-13. Picture this emotional crowd. Whom did it include? What was their response? How far-reaching was their response? Draw a picture of or record any words/descriptions that come to mind on their responses to the laying of the foundation of Temple.

At the beginning this chapter the Jews come together as “one man”. What significant progress was made throughout this chapter? Despite this progress, are they still one? How is it clear in this chapter?

What is it that unifies or divides them?

### APPLICATION

Those Israelites who remembered the original Temple wept at the building of the new Temple, because they knew their sin was why the Temple had been destroyed and why God had exiled them.

Has there been a point in your Christian walk when you genuinely mourned over your past mistakes? Accept the forgiveness extended to you through Jesus and rejoice!

The younger Israelites were joyful at the building of the Temple, because it represented that God was with them. They were no longer exiled from Him. Was there a point this week when you have rejoiced because you are in God’s presence, no longer exiled from Him? Write a prayer of praise and thanksgiving because of your salvation!

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

The steadfast love of God is declared and seen throughout the Bible. Read aloud or listen to Psalm 136. Describe “the steadfast love of God” from these verses. How long does it last? When is it seen? What is our appropriate response? Record your thoughts below.



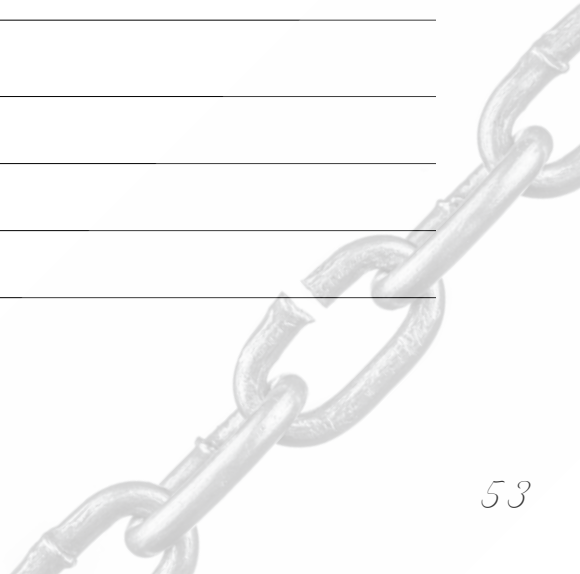
## *For Personal Reflection*

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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.

Lecture Notes

[illegible]

## *Group Time*

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### **WARM UP QUESTION**

After working hard and facing intimidation, the Israelites completed the altar and celebrated! What difficulties (big or small) have you worked through and been able to celebrate on the other side?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)**

What characteristics of God do you see in this chapter? Give the characteristic as well as the verse(s) in which you see it. Hint: these traits may be directly stated or inferred from God's actions or words. Use Appendix 1 for further help.

What does "gathered as one man" mean in verse 1? Should the church have that mindset? If so, what would that look like? Why does it matter?

What we sacrifice for is what we worship. What we worship indicates who we are. What do you worship and what does that reveal about you? Are there any changes you need to make? Hint: one of your answers from Day 2 may help with this answer.

The Temple was the center of Israel's identity. It was where they met with God. Assembling with believers to meet with God (the church) ought to be central in a Christian's identity. What is the central part of your identity? Have you made church a priority in your life?

In this passage, the Temple foundation was laid in spite of the Israelites' fear of the peoples around them. Is there a fear of people in your life keeping you from obedience? What truths and instruction can you take from chapter 3?

Verse 2, shows the Israelites taking the "Law of Moses the man of God" seriously, strictly following its instructions for rebuilding the Temple. How did the Israelites view Moses? Read Hebrews 6:1-6. How should we view Moses?

When the Israelites saw the new Temple, many began to weep at the reminder of their disobedience, which led to exile. Yet, their existence as a people, meant there was hope! Has there ever been a time when hope was right in front of you, yet you felt hopeless?

Many Jews saw coming out of exile as a new exodus for Israel. Do you remember when God brought you out of spiritual exile by extending His favor to you? In verse 8, the leaders "made a new beginning." What did your new beginning look like? Briefly share your testimony.



# LESSON FIVE

*Ezra 4*

With success comes opposition. Adversaries hear of the returned exiles rebuilding the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel. They come seeking to join them in their work, but Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the heads of fathers' houses turn them away. Hostility rises, and the people of the land set out to discourage and frustrate the purpose of God's people through fear, bribery, and manipulation — going as far as writing letters of complaint to the Persian kings! As a result, work on the house of God temporarily ceases.



## *Day One*

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### **FOR REVIEW (EZRA 3)**

Record the actions of the Israelites that unified them throughout Ezra 3.

Flip to Appendix 2. Read (or listen to) Ezra 1-5, circling every occurrence of the word “God” on the printed copy of the text.

## *Day Two*

---

### **READ EZRA 4, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-5 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

What word does the author of Ezra use in verse 1 to describe the people who approached Zerubbabel to help build?

What did these people give as their reasoning for wanting to help build (verse 2)?

What was Zerubbabel’s (and the other leaders’) response to this offer of help?

- A. Sure, we can use the extra help!
- B. No thank you, we wouldn’t want to put you out.
- C. You have nothing to do with us! We alone will build.

Look at verses 1-5 again. List below evidence that you see that these people wanted to help. Then list evidence that you find that these people wanted to hinder the work.

*Evidence that They Wanted to Help*

*Evidence that They Wanted to Hinder*

How long did the exiles' adversaries seek to frustrate the building project? Look at the list of Persian kings in Appendix 3 to give you an idea of this time frame.

### APPLICATION

We see in our study today an example to avoid. The exiles' adversaries said one thing ("We want to help build!") but their actions revealed something different. Read Proverbs 26:23-26. How do these proverbs shed light on these adversaries and the example we should avoid?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Fast-forward a few years to the time of Nehemiah, and another rebuilding effort - the walls of Jerusalem. Read Nehemiah 2 (especially verses 17-20). What similarities do you see between this chapter and Ezra 3-4? What are the people doing? What are their enemies doing? How was Nehemiah's response to the enemies similar to Zerubbabel's?

## Day Three

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**REREAD EZRA 4:1-5, THEN READ 2 KINGS 17 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

In 2 Kings 17 we see the history behind the “adversaries” of Ezra 4, who had lived in the land of Israel “since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria” (Ezra 4:2). According to Ezra 4:2 and 2 Kings 17:24, how did these people end up in Israel? Where did they come from?

What happened to the people when they first began to dwell in Israel, and why?

- A. Lions attacked and killed them because they did not fear the Lord
- B. A famine plagued them because the Lord brought a drought on the land
- C. The giants of the neighboring land attacked because of the fruitfulness of the land

What did the king of Assyria do to try to help the people (2 Kings 17:27-28)?

What was the result? Read verses 29-33 and list below all of the new inhabitants’ beliefs and religious practices.

How do these practices and beliefs contrast with what God had taught the Israelites, who lived in the land before them (verses 35-39)?

Read 2 Kings 17:41, which summarizes the beliefs of these peoples. Then look back at Ezra 4:1-5. Based on what you now know of these peoples, why did Zerubbabel and the leaders consider them “adversaries” and refuse to let them take part in the work?

### APPLICATION

The leaders of the exiles knew that to do the work of God according to His will, they needed to separate themselves from the idolaters around them. These adversaries were not interested in converting but rather controlling and sabotaging the work of God. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-16. Are there any voices in your life that may seem helpful on the surface, but are really trying to sabotage the work that God is doing in and through you? What choices do you need to make to be holy, set apart?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Read Psalm 1. What choices should the person of God make daily to walk in the way of righteousness? What things must we do? What things must we not do?

## *Day Four*

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### READ EZRA 4, FOCUSING ON VERSES 6-16 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

Note the Persian rulers referenced in verses 4-7 and 24. The author uses these references to alert his audience that he is jumping forward in time two different times as he lists multiple instances of opposition that the exiles faced. Then, in verse 24, he comes back to his current story of opposition and the effect it had on the temple construction project. Based on these verses and the list of Persian kings in Appendix 3, fill in the following summary chart.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>During the Reign of Which Ruler(s)</i>	<i>Approx. Time Period</i>
Ezra 4:1-5	Cyrus / Darius	~538-516 BC
Ezra 4:6		
Ezra 4:7-23		
Ezra 4:24		

What did the returned exiles' adversaries do in verse 6 and then again in verse 7 in opposition to the exiles and their work of rebuilding?

Read verses 9-10, then list all of the people who wrote or supported the letter that is referenced in verses 7-16. What does this long list tell you about the breadth of the opposition?

Read through the letter that was written to the king. The authors of the letter clearly want to show a distinction between themselves and the Jews in their loyalty to the king. Contrast below the words they use to describe the Jews and their work versus the words they use to describe themselves.

*Jews*

*Authors of Letter*

What do the authors of the letter suggest that the king should do to verify their accusations against the Jews (verse 15)?

Is it true that the kings of Jerusalem had been rebellious to previous emperors who had demanded tribute? Is it true that this is why the city of Jerusalem was destroyed? Read for example 2 Kings 18:1-7 and 24:1-4.

### **APPLICATION**

The letter from the passage today is probably best described as a mix of truths, exaggerations and untruths - much like the conversations and news that we hear or read on a regular basis. How can you better filter what you hear to judge truth from error? How can you better filter what you say to be sure you speak only what is truthful and edifying?

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Read Psalm 123. Why is the author asking for mercy? What circumstance is he facing? Where does he choose to keep his eyes focused? And for how long?

How is this similar to Colossians 3:1-4?

## Day Five

---

**READ EZRA 4, FOCUSING ON VERSES 17-24 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Look back up in verses 12-13. By the time of this letter, the people of Israel had moved on from building the temple to another construction project. What were they working to rebuild at the time of this letter?

After the king read the letter, he searched the records and found that Jerusalem had indeed at times rebelled against paying tribute to kings in their past. He also discovered that mighty kings had once lived in Jerusalem who themselves had ruled a large area and to whom tribute had been paid. Look up 1 Kings 4:21-24 and write below the name of the king in this passage and the lands over which he had dominion.

Notice the repeated phrase in verse 20 and back in verse 13. Write the phrase below. (Hint: The repetition of this phrase is likely a good clue from the author as to what the king and his officials cared about most.)

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_

What decision did the king make in this matter? Why did he make this decision (specifically, what did the king fear)? (Verses 21-22)

***Decision:***

***King feared:***

What did Rehum, Shimshai and their associates do after receiving the king's response? What words from the text describe the manner in which they performed this action?

Notice again that verse 23 is the final verse in the story of opposition that takes place during the reign of Artaxerxes. Verse 24 jumps back in time to the events surrounding the building of the temple. Go back and read Ezra 4:1-5 and then read verse 24, which summarizes the effects of the opposition. Then write below what became of the work on the temple amid the opposition.

### APPLICATION

This week we have seen the people of God move from being determined to do the work of God in the right way to discouraged from performing the work at all. What people or things in your life tend to distract or discourage you from fulfilling the Lord's purposes for you?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Read 1 Peter 5:6-11. As you walk through life watchful of the ways that Satan would try to distract and discourage you, note below what you are responsible to do and what God promises to do for you:

*My responsibility*

*God's promises toward me*



## *For Personal Reflection*

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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



Lecture Notes

[illegible]

## *Group Time*

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### **WARM UP QUESTION**

Can you think of a project or book that you started and never finished? What stopped you from finishing?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)**

We saw in Day 2 an example to avoid. The exiles' adversaries said one thing ("We want to help build!") but their actions revealed something different. Read together Proverbs 26:23-26. How do these proverbs shed light on these adversaries and the example we should avoid?

The adversaries of Ezra 4 who initially offered to help had a syncretistic religion, meaning that they had attempted to mix worship of the One True God with the worship of many false gods. What kind of syncretism (mixing of different religions or world views) can we see in our nation today? How can we avoid falling prey to syncretism?

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-16. How can we the church (as individuals and the collective church) protect ourselves from voices that seemingly offer help but are actually attempting to pollute or sabotage the work and worship of God? What steps must we take to be holy, set apart?

Why would an enemy of God offer to help God's cause? When someone helps a cause do they then gain the right to influence that cause?

How important is sincerity when we offer to help others? How can we prove our sincerity to someone who may not trust us? Read James 3:17, 2 Corinthians 2:17 and/or 1 Timothy 1:5.

The letter from this week's passage is a mix of truths, exaggerations and untruths - much like the conversations and news that we hear on a regular basis. How can we better filter what we hear to judge truth from error?

How can we better filter what we say to be sure we speak only what is truthful and edifying?

What would an idolater from Old Testament times need to do to truly become a worshipper of Yahweh? Read Ezra 6:21.

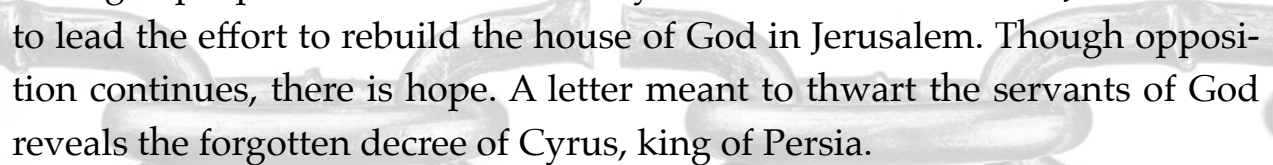
This week we have seen the people of God move from being determined to do the work of God in the right way to discouraged from performing the work at all. What people or things in our lives tend to distract or discourage us from fulfilling the Lord's purposes for us?

Read 1 Peter 5:6-11 together. Discuss things that we are responsible to do and what God promises to do for us as we face distraction or discouragement.

# LESSON SIX

*Ezra 5*

The prophets of God (Haggai and Zechariah) prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem. In the name of the God of Israel, they prompt His discouraged people to continue what they started. Zerubbabel and Jeshua arise to lead the effort to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. Though opposition continues, there is hope. A letter meant to thwart the servants of God reveals the forgotten decree of Cyrus, king of Persia.



## *Day One*

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### **FOR REVIEW (EZRA 4)**

What opposition did the Israelites face in last week's passage? What was their response to the opposition?

Flip to Appendix 2. Read (or listen to) Ezra 6-10, circling every occurrence of the word "God" on the printed copy of the text.

## *Day Two*

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### **READ EZRA 5, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-2 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

What are the names and occupation of the individuals in verse 1?

To whom did Haggai and Zechariah prophesy? Where were they living?

Who were Zerubbabel and Jeshua? Why were they significant? What had they been called to do? Read 3:1-2.

Observing the message and behavior of Haggai and Zechariah in verses 1-2, give three characteristics or responsibilities of a prophet.

1.

2.

3.

The *Holman Bible Dictionary* states that prophets were called by God, received a message from God, spoke the word of God, and relayed messages from God. Keeping this definition in mind, why would the presence of the prophets of God have been important and encouraging to the Israelites?

#### APPLICATION

Chapter 4 ends with the Israelites being forced to stop working on the temple. So, it may seem that Zerubbabel and Jeshua go against authority at the beginning of chapter 5. They were, however, continuing work King Cyrus had commissioned. They (and the people with them) were willing to risk their lives because they had heard a word from God through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Today, we hear from God through the Word of God, namely, the Bible.

Are you ready to quickly obey and risk the comforts of your life (or perhaps your life itself) for God and His Word? How can you be ready?

In what areas of your life are you prone to be hesitant to sacrifice for obedience to God?

*"To risk all with Jesus, is to end all risk."* - Charles Spurgeon

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL FOUR-DAY STUDY - DAY ONE OF FOUR)**

Go to the end of the Old Testament and read the book of Haggai — a book that is two chapters long. God used this old prophet to deliver four sermons to the leaders and people of Israel, commanding them to push forward in making sacrifices for the rebuilding of the Temple. Read the passage below. Record the recipients of the sermon, the reason for / subject of the sermon, the response to the sermon, and the results of the response.

*Sermon 1, Haggai 1:1-12*

Recipients:

Reason / Subject:

Response:

Result:

*Day Three*

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**READ EZRA 5, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-5 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Since Haggai and Zechariah were prophets, who was their message from? What was that message? Who actually commissioned the rebuilding of the Temple? (verses 1-2)

Verse 2 spotlights Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel. Read Haggai 1:1 and Matthew 1:12-16. Why was Zerubbabel important in God's redemptive plan?

There has been and always will be opposition to God's work. What kind of power opposes God's work in verses 3-4?

\_\_\_\_\_ religious

\_\_\_\_\_ monetary

\_\_\_\_\_ government

\_\_\_\_\_ social status

In verse 5, the courage of the elders' obedience is obvious. Why were they able to courageously obey in the face of opposition? Fill in the blanks.

"The \_\_\_\_\_ of their \_\_\_\_\_ was on them,"

### APPLICATION

No amount of positive thinking or self-esteem could spur the elders of the Jews to continual obedience. They knew they had to trust and obey. God blessed their obedience by physically protecting them. Most often, we do not find ourselves in a state of obedience, which means we are not experiencing God's fullest blessings.

Read Psalm 112. According to this psalm, how can you stay in a state of continual obedience and blessing? What does a life of obedience and blessing look like?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL FOUR-DAY STUDY - DAY TWO OF FOUR)

*Sermon 2, Haggai 1:13-15*

Recipients:

Reason/Subject:

Response:

Result:



## Day Four

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**READ EZRA 5, FOCUSING ON VERSES 6-17 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

In chapter 4:11-16, we read a letter to King Artaxerxes. The letter found in this passage is written to King Darius, but is similar in content and tone. Compare the two letters. What words, titles, ideas, or phrases do they have common?

### *Chapter 4*

### *Chapter 5*

What do these commonalities prove? Was the task and opposition of the people of God anything new?

How did these Jews describe themselves (verse 11)? Using your study so far as a reference, do you think they would have had described themselves this way throughout the book of Ezra?

Israelite history is laid out very straightforwardly in chapter 5. In fact, verses 11-12 have been referred to as a summary of all the prophets as well as 1 and 2 Kings! Write Ezra 5:11-12 below.

While verses 11-12 spoke of the exile, verses 13-15 speak of a returning of sorts. What word or words in these verses sound exilic? What word or words sound like a returning?

*Exilic Words from verses 11-12*

*Returning Words from verses 13-15*

Were the officials in this passage being completely truthful with King Darius? Read chapter 3:8-10.

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

### APPLICATION

In this passage, indeed throughout this book, obedience to God is met with opposition. While opposition stopped obedience for a time, it did not stop God's plan from moving forward. God leaves the decision to obey or disobey His Word to each individual. Are there any areas in your life in which you have grown comfortable in disobedience?

When the choice is made to obey God's Word, opposition is to be expected. Have you experienced opposition in your obedience to God? How can you prepare for future opposition?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL FOUR-DAY STUDY - DAY THREE OF FOUR)

*Sermon 3, Haggai 2:1-9*

Recipients:

Reason/Subject:

Response:

Result:

## Day Five

---

**READ THE SPECIFIED PASSAGES FROM HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Read Haggai 1:12-14. What are the Israelites doing? List the leaders' names.

Is there a phrase repeated in these verses that is in Ezra? See Ezra chapter 1:14? Write it below.

Read Haggai 2:1-5. According to these verses, why could the Israelites have courage to build the Temple? Who was with them? How had God proven Himself in the past? (verse 5)

In Zechariah 4:6-10, the Lord speaks to someone who has had a major role in Israel during the time of Ezra. Who is he? What is his role? What hope does God give him in these verses?

Who \_\_\_\_\_

Role \_\_\_\_\_

Hope \_\_\_\_\_

Zechariah 6:9-15 looks ahead to the completion of the temple and includes the crowning of a leader. Who is he? What is his role? What hope does God give Israel in these verses?

Who \_\_\_\_\_

Role \_\_\_\_\_

Hope \_\_\_\_\_

### APPLICATION

Haggai's message was, "Rebuild the Temple! Worship God properly! Know God is with you!" Worship with fellow believers most often takes place at church. The Bible expressly instructs Christians to worship together, knowing God will be in their midst.

*"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I (Jesus) among them"*  
Matthew 18:20

Do you worship with other Christians on a regular basis? Are you actively involved in church? If not, pray for courage to change your priorities. Below, write a plan for that change.

If so, do you prepare your heart for worship (confessing sin, meditating on Scripture, praying for other believers), so you can commune with God during your time with brothers and sisters in Christ? Below, write a prayer that would prepare your heart for worship.

Zechariah's message was, "Truly repent! Return to God for spiritual renewal! Obey Him because the Messiah is coming!" Repentance, or turning away from sin, is necessary for spiritual renewal. Today, both are possible because Jesus, the Messiah, has come! We are to proclaim that truth to the world!

*"And He (Jesus) said to them, 'Thus it is written that the Christ will suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations.'"*

Luke 24:46-47

Have you truly repented of your sin? Have you received forgiveness leading to salvation? If not, tell God about your sin, ask for forgiveness, and record this moment!

If so, are you praying for daily spiritual renewal? When was the last time you shared the the Gospel? Ask God to renew your heart and mind and to give you confidence to share the Gospel when given the opportunity — record your thoughts!

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL FOUR-DAY STUDY - DAY FOUR OF FOUR)**

*Sermon 4, Haggai 2:20-23*

Recipients:

Reason/Subject:

Response:

Result:

## *For Personal Reflection*

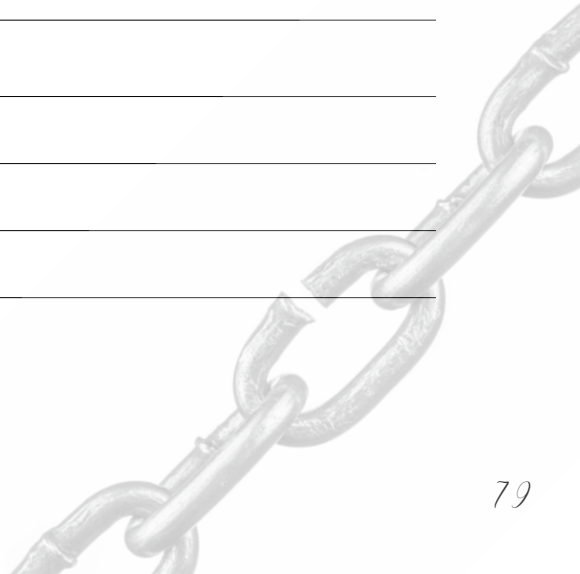
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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



Lecture Notes

[illegible]

## *Group Time*

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### **WARM UP QUESTION**

God used Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the Israelite leaders to obey in difficulty and opposition. Who has God used in your life to encourage you when life was difficult?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)**

What characteristics of God do you see in this chapter? Give the characteristic as well as the verse(s) in which you see it. Hint: these traits may be directly stated or inferred from God's actions or words. Use Appendix 1 for further help.

Have you been called to a specific task and resisted obedience? What was the outcome?

Did anything in Ezra 5 remind you of the relationship between the church and her pastor? In what ways?

In verse 5, the builders did not stop because "the eye of their God was on them." What do you think that means? Is "God's eye" on His people today? If so, in what ways?

Those who opposed the rebuilding of the Temple wound up being those who funded it. Has God ever used bad circumstances like this for good in your life?

When the choice is made to obey God's Word, opposition is to be expected. Have you experienced opposition in your obedience to God? How can you prepare for future opposition? See Day 4 for possible help.

How do you define worship? Is worshipping with other Christians on a regular basis important? Why or why not? See Day 5 for possible help.

What does it mean to prepare your heart for worship? How do you prepare your heart for worship? Why is this important? See Day 5 for possible help.

God asks the Israelites to "consider their ways," or carefully think about their past actions and the results from those actions at least five times in the book of Haggai. Why would this have been important? Is this something we ought to continue today?

Are there any similarities between the opposition these Israelites faced and opposition the church faces today? What can we learn from their response?

How can we pray for spiritual renewal daily? What should this renewal prompt us to do? See Day 5 for possible help.





# LESSON SEVEN

*Ezra 6*

King Darius orders a search of the royal archives in Babylon. In the citadel of Media, they discover a scroll that contains the decree King Cyrus issued concerning the house of the God of Israel at Jerusalem. In response, King Darius issues an edict. All authorities in the province Beyond the River must let the work on the house of God continue. These authorities (who sought to stop the rebuilding effort) must now pay tribute and provide the Jews with whatever they need to finish the house of God. The Lord turned the heart of the king and aided them in completing this work.

## Day One

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### FOR REVIEW (EZRA 5)

List the ways God's providence or "His eye being on the Israelites" is evident in Ezra 5.

Flip to Appendix 2. Read (or listen to) Ezra 1-5, double-underlining every occurrence of the word "king" on the printed copy of the text.

## Day Two

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### READ EZRA 6, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-5 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

Go back and read Ezra 5:17-6:2. Where did Darius search? What did he find and where did he find it?

*Searched:*

*Found:*

Go back and read the verbal proclamation of Cyrus from Ezra 1:2-4 and compare it to the written record found here in Ezra 6:3-4. What information is the same in both accounts? What new information do we find?

*Same Information*

*New Information*

How will this new temple compare in size to the temple originally built by Solomon? How will the layers of material compare? Read verses 3-4 and 1 Kings 6:2, 36.

*New Temple*

*Solomon's Temple*

*Size*

*Layers*

According to verse 4, how does the record specify that the costs of the temple rebuilding be paid?

How do Darius's findings compare to the Israelites' claims from Ezra 5:13-15? Were their claims true or false?

\_\_\_\_\_ True

\_\_\_\_\_ False

**APPLICATION**

Truth will always prevail in the end. Read Proverbs 12:19 and 23:23. How can you pursue truth today? Write down one specific goal.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Notice in today's verses that God provided the costs of the temple. We saw this theme back in Ezra 1 as well. Here are a few more verses that show that God Himself provides what is needed for His people and His work. Note beside each verse what God provided.

Genesis 22:8, 13-14

1 Samuel 16:1

2 Chronicles 29:31, 35-36

Isaiah 59:15-16

1 Corinthians 10:13

1 Timothy 6:17

*Day Three*

---

**READ EZRA 6, FOCUSING ON VERSES 6-12 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Read verses 6-7 again and list below the instructions that Darius gave to Tattenai and his associates regarding the rebuilding of the temple.

According to verses 8 and 9, how were Tattenai and his associates required to help the Jews? Fill in the blanks below with the specifics of how they were to help.

How much of the cost was to be paid from the royal revenue? \_\_\_\_\_

When was this cost to be paid (verse 8)? \_\_\_\_\_

What items were they required to provide for the priests and offerings? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How often were these supplies to be given (verse 9)? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did Darius want these supplies to be provided, according to verse 10?

What would be the penalty for failing to comply with this edict? (No illustration required!)

What statement does Darius make about God and His name in verse 12? How does this wording compare with verses like Deuteronomy 12:10-11 and 1 Kings 9:3?

#### **APPLICATION**

In what ways did God turn the opposition against the Jews into something that would bless them instead? Can you think of other stories or verses in the Bible that teach this same truth about God?

How should this truth about God change the way we view opposition or adversity?

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Read 2 Chronicles 6:18-21, 36-40, sections from Solomon's prayer of dedication for the first temple. What seems to be the connection(s) between God's name, the temple in Jerusalem, the people's repentance, and the Lord's forgiveness?

How do these truths ultimately point to Jesus (see John 2:18-22)?

## *Day Four*

---

**READ EZRA 6, FOCUSING ON VERSES 13-18 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

How did Tattenai and his associates respond to the king's decree (and strong motivation!)?

- A. They rebelled against the decree
- B. They delayed to comply
- C. They obeyed with all diligence

List below all of the people and the decrees that supported the completion of the building project (Verse 14). Put a star by the names that emphasize the Lord's help and oversight of the work.

Why might the author have mentioned Artaxerxes in verse 14, even though the building of the temple was completed before he came to power? (Hint: fast forward to Ezra 7:11-23)

*[The month of Adar (February/March) was the last month of the year, and the dedication of the temple falls fittingly in it, just before the celebrations of the new year that would follow. The sixth year of the reign of Darius was 515 BC, almost exactly 70 years after the destruction of the first temple (586), thus fulfilling the prophecy of 70 years of exile. - ESV Study Bible]*

In verse 17 we see the offerings that were given at the dedication of the new temple. List below the numbers of each type of offering.

\_\_\_\_\_ bulls

\_\_\_\_\_ rams

\_\_\_\_\_ lambs

\_\_\_\_\_ male goats (sin offering for 12 tribes)

\*How do these numbers compare with the number of offerings offered at the dedication of the first temple? See 2 Chronicles 7:4. (This is likely a reflection of the size and abundance of the group of people sacrificing)

What was the purpose of the sin offering? See Leviticus 4:13-21.

### APPLICATION

As the Israelites obeyed the Lord in the completion and dedication of the temple, we read that they “prospered” (verse 14) and were filled with “joy” (verse 16). Read Psalm 5:11-12 and write a prayer below rejoicing in the Lord who leads you in paths of righteousness.



### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

The author mentions in verse 18 the “divisions” of the priests and Levites for the temple service. For more on this division of responsibility, read Numbers 3:5-10 (the original organization in the Law of Moses for service in the tabernacle) and 1 Chronicles 23 and 24 (the restructuring of responsibilities for the first temple). What did you learn from these passages?

## Day Five

---

### READ EZRA 6, FOCUSING ON VERSES 19-22 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

In today’s passage, the returned exiles keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Let’s journey back to the first Passover to learn more about the institution of this feast. *Read Exodus 12:1-27 and answer the following questions:*

What were the Israelites instructed to do on the 10th day of the first month? What were they to do on the 14th day of the first month?

10th:

14th:

What kind of lamb were they supposed to choose?

How were they to eat the lamb? Several specifics are mentioned.

What event did the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread memorialize?

Look back at today's passage in Ezra. Who all celebrated the Passover (verse 21)?

Read Exodus 12:47-49. What would the sojourners have been required to do to "separate" themselves from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land?

In verse 22 we again see the joyful obedience of the people (like we saw in verse 16). What was the source of this joy, according to verse 22?

#### **APPLICATION**

Go back and underline (or note below) all of the action verbs from verses 14-22 that note the action of the Israelite exiles. Pick a couple of those words and write below what it might look like today for you to follow the exiles' example of obedience related to those two words.

#### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 where Paul uses the symbols of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread to represent spiritual realities. Note below what each symbol represents.

Leaven:

Unleavened:

Passover lamb:

Festival (this one isn't clearly stated, so you will have to infer what meaning is intended):

## *For Personal Reflection*

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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



Lecture Notes

[illegible]

## *Group Time*

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### **WARM UP QUESTION**

What is your favorite holiday tradition? Why?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)**

Truth will always prevail in the end. What did you learn about truth from Proverbs 12:19 and 23:23? How can we pursue truth today? Give specific examples.

In what ways did God turn the opposition against the Jews into something that would bless them instead? Can you think of other stories or verses in the Bible that teach this same truth about God?

God works all things together for good. How should this change the way we view or respond to opposition and adversity? See, for example, James 1:2-4.

What are some specific verses from this week that speak to God's sovereignty over the rebuilding of the temple and worship of God? How can these truths encourage us about God's current activity in the world and in His church?

What have you learned this week about God as provider? When you feel empty, what verses can you memorize to encourage you that God Himself provides what is needed?

Delays can be frustrating! But we discovered that, despite the difficulties and delays, the temple was finished at exactly the time that God had determined that it would be completed. What can we learn from this about God and about ourselves?

Think back in your life and compare times when you delayed to obey or disobeyed the Lord and His Word versus times when you obeyed. How do seasons of disobedience and seasons of obedience affect our emotional and mental health? How do they affect others?

Discuss some specific parts of the story this week that point to Jesus - His person and His mission.

Despite the people's obedience, joy and prosperity in these verses, they still required a sin offering. What does that tell us about our own nature and needs?

On Day 5, we learned that those who desired to join the Israelites in worship of God had to separate themselves from the people of the land. How can we separate ourselves for the Lord? What is required? Read 2 Timothy 2:21-24 or 1 Peter 1:13-22.

Read Matthew 26:17-29 and discuss how Jesus celebrated the Passover in a new way - a way that pointed to Himself as the fulfillment of it.

# LESSON EIGHT

*Ezra 7*

This chapter marks the beginning of a new building project (of sorts). Ezra the priest, and scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, leads the return of the second wave of exiles. Sent by Artaxerxes, king of Persia, he will appoint magistrates and judges to judge all the people. Ezra will also reestablish the community of God under the teaching of the Torah (the Law of Moses). “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.” (Ezra 7:10)

## *Day One*

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### **FOR REVIEW (EZRA 6)**

In last week's passage, how did God use the opposition and delays experienced by the returned exiles for His glory and the people's good?

Flip to Appendix 2. Read (or listen to) Ezra 6-10, double-underlining every occurrence of the word "king" on the printed copy of the text.

## *Day Two*

---

### **READ EZRA 7, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-6 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Verses 1-5 are Ezra's genealogy. Below, write any familiar names and/or responsibilities of these individuals. See also Exodus 28:1-4 and Exodus 29:4-9.

How is Ezra described in verse 6?

In chapter 5, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah brought God's Word to His people. What would it have meant to the exiled Israelites to have a skilled scribe among them?

According to verse 1, and 6-7, when did Ezra make his journey? Where did he come from and where did he arrive?

Why did King Artaxerxes grant Ezra what was needed for the journey to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple? (Read verse 6)

#### **APPLICATION**

Just as God provided a skilled scribe to help lead and teach His people then, He continues to provide for His church today. Read Eph. 4:11-16. Who has God provided and for what purpose?

#### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

At their introduction in 1 Chronicles, the scribes' job was literally having the ability to write documents and record events. While still being responsible for copying and preserving God's Word, scribes became experts in and teachers of the Law of Moses while they had been in exile. God used them to keep Israel's identity clear while they lived among other people groups.

While their responsibilities and education remained the same, scribes (many were Pharisees) are seen quite differently in the New Testament. Read these passages, noticing the different goals/motives of Old Testament scribes versus many New Testament scribes.



***Old Testament***

*1 Chronicles 27:32:*

*Jeremiah 36:2, 10, 17-19:*

*Ezra 7:6:*

***New Testament***

*Matthew 2:3-4:*

*Luke 11:53-54:*

*Luke 19:47:*

*Day Three*

---

**READ EZRA 7, FOCUSING ON VERSES 7-10 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

List those who went up to Jerusalem, probably accompanying Ezra. (Read verse 7-8)

According to verse 9, estimate how long it took this group of Israelites to reach Jerusalem?

The description that best encapsulates Ezra the scribe and his ministry is found in verse 10. Fill

in the blanks.

"For \_\_\_\_\_ had set his \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ the Law of the Lord, and  
to \_\_\_\_\_ it, and to \_\_\_\_\_ His statutes and rules in \_\_\_\_\_."

Why had Ezra "set his heart" on these things (read verse 9)?

Put a check beside the phrase(s) that could describe "the good hand of God" being on a person in this context.

\_\_\_\_\_ finding favor with God

\_\_\_\_\_ feeling comforted

\_\_\_\_\_ receiving healing

\_\_\_\_\_ having grace in God's sight

To whom was Ezra sent? (Read verse 10)

### APPLICATION

As Christians, when we are confronted with heartaches, difficulties, and injustices our passion to change ought to kick in. At times, this passion is misplaced or fades away. We want immediate justice or deliverance! We want a specific plan for change! Ezra 7 introduces a servant of God who faced tremendous difficulties and changed the world he lived in. This change was not fast.

In verse 10, God gives the plan which brings change in our lives, our church, and our world. Three simple words: know (study), do (obey), teach (instruct/disciple). At the top of the next page, record the time(s) and the individuals with whom God gives you an opportunity to "know," "do," or "teach."

*Time(s)*

*Individuals*

*Know/Study:*

*Do/Obey:*

*Teach/Instruct/Disciple*

Are there any of these you could not fill in? Write a prayer asking God to give you courage to make a change.

#### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Throughout the Bible, the hand of God is seen on many other people. Read these verses and record how the hand of God was on the person/people mentioned.

Genesis 39:

Exodus 2:

Acts 13:4-12:

## *Day Four*

---

**READ EZRA 7, FOCUSING ON VERSES 11-24 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

How is Ezra described in verses 11-12?? In what regard did King Artaxerxes hold Ezra? What do King Artaxerxes' actions toward Ezra lead you to conclude (Read verses 12 and 21)?

Whom did Artaxerxes allow to go to Jerusalem? What did they take with them (verses 13-16)? (Hint: Don't miss the most valuable item in verse 14)

*Who:*

*What:*

In chapter 1:1, God stirred the heart of King Cyrus to begin bringing this group of Israelites back to Jerusalem. What are some specific ways we see God at work in chapter 7?

Tribute, custom, and toll are synonymous with the idea of taxation. How was the hand of God on the Israelites in verse 24?

What word is repeated in verses 18, 20, 23? Why might this be important?

Why did King Artaxerxes want to help the Israelites rebuild the temple? (Read verse 23)

### **APPLICATION**

In verse 23, King Artaxerxes obeyed decrees made “by the God of heaven” to be protected from His wrath — for self-preservation. What is your motive for obedience?

Read Philippians 2:1-11 and meditate on the motive of Jesus’ obedience.

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Verse 15 states that God’s dwelling place is in Jerusalem. However, God dwells with His people in different ways throughout the Bible. Read these verses and draw a picture of what God’s dwelling may have looked like.

*Exodus 25:8-9 and 33:7-11:*

*John 1:14:*

*1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19-20:*

## Day Five

---

**READ EZRA 7, FOCUSING ON VERSES 25-28 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

How do verses 10 and 25 align? Where are “know,” “do,” and “teach” seen here?

*Verse 10*

*Verse 25*

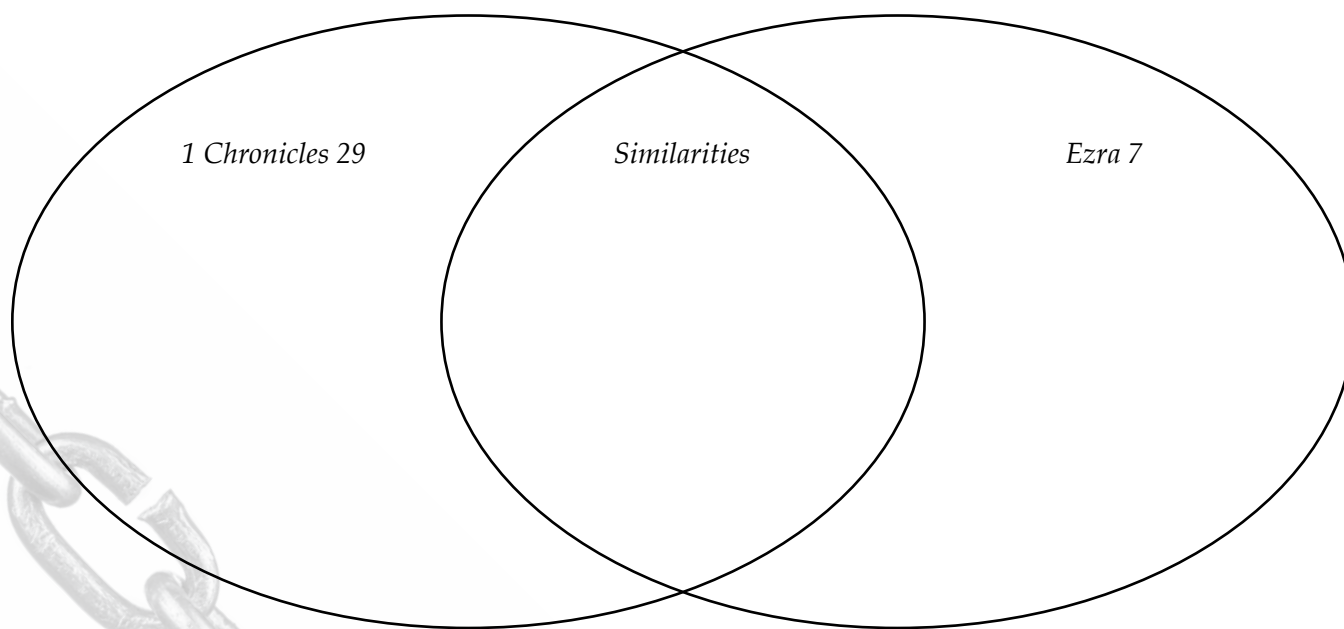
*“Know”*

*“Do”*

*“Teach”*

Throughout the exiles, God used other nations and kings to punish Israel’s disobedience. Could God, who allowed the Israelites to come back to the land and begin to rebuild the temple, punish them again through a king? (Read verse 26)

First Chronicles 29:9-10 find the Israelites’ ancestors praying a similar praise to that in verses 27-28. While the prayers have similarities, their circumstances may not. Read 1 Chronicles 29:9-10. Use the diagram below to record the similarities and differences.



Is there a phrase or idea in these verses that is seen throughout chapter 7? (Read verses 27-28)

The third time “the hand of the Lord” is seen in Ezra 7 is verse 28. What two things did Ezra do because the Lord was with him?

1.

2.

#### **APPLICATION**

God never changes. If you are a Christian, the same God who had His hand on Ezra has His hand on you, died for you, and lives in you. Meditate on the fact that God is present in and cares about every area of your life. Would your life drastically change if you embraced this truth and began to live with it in mind? If so, how?

#### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

A prophecy given in Isaiah 60:7 finds fulfillment in verse 27. Read Isaiah 60. List the prophecies we have seen already fulfilled and those not yet fulfilled.

*Already fulfilled:*

*Not yet fulfilled:*

## *For Personal Reflection*

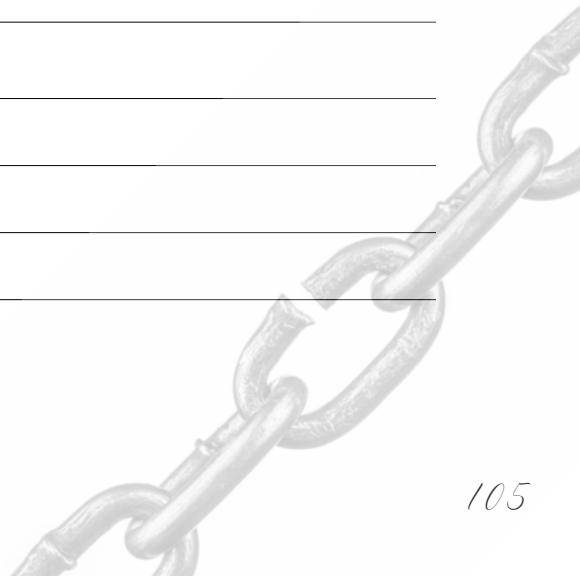
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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



Lecture Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines, typical of notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

## Group Time

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### WARM UP QUESTION

God allowed Ezra to accomplish what he had set his heart to do. What is one specific activity, hobby, ability, etc. which you have desired to do well? How have you pursued that desire?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)

What characteristics of God do you see in this chapter? Give the characteristic as well as the verse(s) in which you see it. Hint: these traits may be directly stated or inferred from God's actions or words. Use Appendix 1 for further help.

What do you think it means that God's hand was on Ezra? Do you believe that God's hand is on you? How have you experienced it? See Day 3 for possible help.

What is the connection between Ezra's skill in the Law of the Lord seen in verse 6, and his setting his heart to study the Law of the Lord as seen in verse 10? How does this encourage you in your study?

How do you handle heartaches, difficulties, and injustices in your life and in our broken world? Do you think studying the Bible would affect your response to these situations? Why or why not?

Have you ever tried to stay on "good terms" with God through obedience? Has that worked? Will that work? Why or why not? See Day 4 for possible help.

Do you believe that God can influence leaders today, the way He influenced King Artaxerxes? Why or why not? Read Proverbs 21:1.

Have you ever broken out in praise, outwardly or inwardly (or both!) because of what God has given you through salvation? Did that praise lead you to share Christ with others?

Verse 10 says that Ezra "set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach His statutes and rules." Have you ever had someone in your life who knew, or even taught, the Bible, but did not live it out? Did that change your response to their teaching?

Do you believe that God allows people to serve within the church doing what they love? Has God ever given you an opportunity like that? Did that impact your view of God?

We saw this week Ezra's reputation with the king. What kind of reputation should we have? Read 1 Peter 2:12.



# LESSON NINE

*Ezra 8*

Before leaving Babylonia, Ezra sought out “leading men from Israel” to go up with him. These men gathered together at the river to camp for three days. Yet, no Levites joined the group. Ezra sends men to find Levites willing to minister for the house of God. When they return with men of discretion, the entire group humbles themselves before God — fasting and praying for a safe journey. They arrived in Jerusalem without incident and offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel, whose hand was on them.

## Day One

---

### FOR REVIEW (EZRA 7)

What was Ezra's mission? Read verse 10.

Flip to Appendix 2. Read (or listen to) Ezra 1-5, drawing a box around every occurrence of the word "son(s)" on the printed copy of the text.

## Day Two

---

### READ EZRA 8, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-20 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

Notice in the genealogy that the first three men mentioned are descended from the sons of Phinehas, Ithamar and David, showing the priority that Ezra gives to the two priestly lines (Phinehas and Ithamar who are descended from Aaron, the first high priest) and to what other line (David's line)?

- A. Line of the judges
- B. Line of the Messiah
- C. Line of the kings of Judah
- D. Both B and C

Note the parallels between chapter 1 and chapter 7 and then again with chapter 2 and chapter 8. In both 1 and 7, a Persian king issues a decree for exiles to return. In both 2 and 8, the exiles are numbered. Look at the two lists of exiles from chapters 2 and 8. Which wave of exiles appears to be the larger group? Circle one.

*Wave 1 (listed in Ezra 2)*

*Wave 2 (listed in Ezra 8)*

Read Ezra 7:13 and 8:15. As the exiles gathered to return to Jerusalem, who was missing?

What kind of men did Ezra gather to him to help him solve this problem? (Verse 16)

Where did Ezra send these men, to what person, and for what purpose? (Verse 17)

*Place:*

*Person:*

*Purpose:*

How was this problem ultimately solved? List below the men that God provided, and the number (#) in their household. (Verses 18-19)

\_\_\_\_\_ with his sons and kinsmen # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ with Jeshaiiah, with his kinsmen and sons # \_\_\_\_\_

Also # \_\_\_\_\_ temple servants

### **APPLICATION**

In about a week's time the hand of God provided a "man of discretion" along with hundreds of other Levites and temple servants to accompany the second group of exiles - all packed and ready to relocate! Is there anything that you need that your God cannot provide?

Pray for God to provide leaders of discretion to lead our church. Then pray for the Lord to make you a person of discretion, able to lead those in your area of influence.

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

It may not seem like a big deal to us that the group of exiles was missing Levites. But Ezra, a priest, knew the importance of these servants. Read 2 Chronicles 35:1-19 and note below all the ways that the Levites helped to keep this particular Passover in a way that "No passover like it had been kept..."

## *Day Three*

---

**READ EZRA 8, FOCUSING ON VERSES 21-23 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Why did Ezra proclaim a fast for the group of exiles (verse 21)?

Summarize in your own words why Ezra did not want to ask the king for a band of soldiers to protect them on their journey.

What had Ezra told the king about the Israelites' God?

List below the three words that Ezra uses for prayer in this passage (I see one in verse 21 and two in verse 23). Look up each word and write the specific meaning beside it.

What did Moses promise that God would do for the Israelites when they finally forsook their idolatry to seek the Lord with all their heart? Read Deuteronomy 4:27-31.

Did God hear their prayer (verse 23)?

### APPLICATION

In faith, Ezra bragged about God to the king. But then Ezra realized the need to back up his words with actions that proved his faith and God's faithfulness. In what way are your words about God and your actions not lining up right now in your life? What steps of faith do you need to take this week?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Fasting became a common practice during the exile as the Jewish people sought God's mercy in contrition and humility. Look up the following passages and note who was fasting, why, and the result of the fasting and prayer.

Nehemiah 1:3-11, 2:4-6

Esther 4:1-16, 8:3-8

Daniel 9:3-25

## *Day Four*

---

**READ EZRA 8, FOCUSING ON VERSES 24-30 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Who does Ezra set apart for a special task in verse 24? Where have we seen these two people before (go back up to verses 18-19)?



What special task were these men given? Note especially the specific commands in verse 29.

Where did the offering of gold and silver and vessels come from? See verse 25.

*[The ESV Study Bible notes that "The amounts of silver and gold are extraordinarily large, the silver weighing around 25 tons and the gold 3.75 tons."]*

Where were these generous offerings to be taken? To whose house? To what people?

In what ways does today's passage parallel with Ezra 1:4-11?

Look back at verse 28. Notice that Ezra surrounds the commands of what the priests and Levites are to do with an understanding of who they are and the importance of the mission. Note below what you learn about how Ezra describes the...

*Priests and Levites:*

*Vessels, Silver and Gold:*

*The Lord:*

### APPLICATION

How does knowing your identity change the way you see your mission? Read 1 Peter 2:9-12 and Ephesians 5:1-2, 7-10.

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Read the following verses, noting the words that are repeated over and over again: Numbers 1:53, 3:6-8, 3:28, 18:2-4, 31:30, and Nehemiah 13:22. How do these verses shed light on today's passage?

## *Day Five*

---

**READ EZRA 8, FOCUSING ON VERSES 31-36 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Let's review the timeline of Ezra and the exiles' journey. Read Ezra 7:9 and 8:31 to fill in the following dates.

When Ezra and the exiles began to go up from Babylon \_\_\_\_\_

When Ezra and the exiles began their journey in earnest from the river Ahava (after the delay in finding the Levites): \_\_\_\_\_

When Ezra and the exiles came to Jerusalem \_\_\_\_\_

About how long did the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem take?

What dangers did the people face along the way? Why were the people able to make it safely?

You have likely heard the phrase: “Follow the money.” That is your job for this activity. Read the following verses, then use the space below to “follow the money” charting it from the hand of the giver(s) through person to person until it reaches its destination: Ezra 7:12, 14-16, 19 and Ezra 8:24-30, 33.

What does the repetition of key words in verses 25-27 and 33-34 communicate about the manner in which the gold and silver and vessels were handled?

What else was delivered upon Ezra’s arrival? See verse 36 and look back at 7:21-22, 24. Then contrast how these instructions would have been received by the Gentile leaders and by the Jews.

*Delivered:*

*How it was received:*

### **APPLICATION**

We witnessed today the diligence with which Ezra and the other priests and Levites handled the offerings of gold, silver and vessels for the house of the Lord. Read the following verses and ask God to show you an area of your life that lacks diligence: Proverbs 13:4, 21:5 and 2 Peter 3:14. What is the first step toward diligence in this area?

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Even though only 3 of the tribes of Israel are mentioned in Ezra as taking part in the return from Babylon (see for example 1:5), notice the symbolism in the offerings that were sacrificed for all 12 tribes. Read Ezra 6:17 and 8:35. What words and numbers stand out to you that emphasize this? What were the leaders communicating in these sacrifices?



## *For Personal Reflection*

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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



Lecture Notes

[illegible]

## *Group Time*

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### **WARM UP QUESTION**

We saw this week that the Levites had a special job in the community of faith. In the church, God has gifted each believer with a spiritual gift. What is your spiritual gift, your special job in this community of faith?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)**

When Ezra was confronted with a problem, he called on men of “insight” (verse 16) to help him solve the problem. Where and to whom do you go for help when faced with a problem?

God provided for the Jewish exiles a man of “discretion” or “understanding” (verse 18) to help serve the people. What kind of discretion was especially needed in the job given to him in Ezra 8? How can we follow his example?

In seven days the Levites left everything to join Ezra in his return to Jerusalem. If God called you to leave everything to serve him, what temptations would stand in the way of your obedience?

Ezra leads the exiles to fast and pray. The Bible says he humbled himself and “implored” God. What circumstances might cause you to implore God in prayer and fasting?

Ezra chose to rely on his God to keep them safe on their journey rather than to rely on the protection of the king. What are we tempted to rely on in our journey of life rather than rely on God?

What do you learn about God from verses 22-23? How should this knowledge change the way we live?

How does knowing your identity change the way you see your mission? Read 1 Peter 2:9-12 and Ephesians 5:1-2, 7-10.

Why is it important that God’s servants be faithful with the funds of the church? Why is it important for God’s servants to be faithful with the money that God entrusts to them individually?

Ezra backed up his words that exalted God with behavior that relied on God by faith. How can we learn from this example, both in our speech and behavior toward God in front of unbelievers? Read Colossians 4:2-6 for more insight.

Malachi 3:1-3 says that the Lord’s messenger, Jesus, will purify the sons of Levi. How does Ezra function as a type of (or picture pointing forward to) Christ? See especially Ezra 8:15-20. How was Jesus greater than Ezra?

# LESSON TEN

*Ezra 9*

Those who returned with the second wave of exiles are ready for a new life, but a crisis arises. Officials approach Ezra with a report regarding the people of Israel. They, the priests, and the Levites have intermarried with the daughters of the people of the land. As an expert in the law of God, devoted to its study and practice, called to teach it to others, Ezra's response to the unfaithfulness of the returned exiles is immediate. He mourns, fasts, and prays — humbling himself before the God of Israel to confess the shame and guilt of the remnant of God's people.



## Day One

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### FOR REVIEW (EZRA 8)

In what ways did we witness the faithfulness of Ezra and the Levites in chapter 8? In what ways did we witness God's faithfulness?

Flip to Appendix 2. Read (or listen to) Ezra 6-10, drawing a box around every occurrence of the word "son(s)" on the printed copy of the text.

## Day Two

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### READ EZRA 9, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-4 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

Who had not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands? (Read verse 1)

the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

the \_\_\_\_\_

the \_\_\_\_\_

Some of "the peoples of the lands" may sound familiar. These nations were the nemesis of God's people throughout the Old Testament. Read the following passages. Draw a line to the description of these groups found in that passage.

Exodus 34:11-16

No breathing thing is to be left alive so that the Israelites would not sin against God.

Deuteronomy 7:1-4

God declares He will drive them out to protect Israel from idolatry.

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

Israel is to completely destroy them, to guard their children from serving other gods.

In verse 2, how is Israel described, as what kind of race or people?

Why was it important for the Israelite “race” or “seed” remain pure and protected? What promise or covenant was God fulfilling through Israel’s preservation? See, for example, Gen. 22:17-18.

Where was this sin of intermarrying most prominent? Whose example were the people following? (Read verse 2b)

What was the response of Ezra and the Israelites at the faithlessness of the returned exiles or remnant? (Read verses 3-4)

#### **APPLICATION**

It was important that the Israelites stay separate from the nations to protect the “holy seed,” from which the Messiah, Jesus, would come. Christians, individually and corporately (the church) are to be set apart from the world morally.

Take inventory of your social media activity, music, attitudes, and time management. If someone looked at your life, would you appear separate or set apart from the world? What can you do to better prioritize God’s Kingdom above the world’s?

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

One of the first “set apart” ones seen in the Bible is Abraham. Read the following passages for a little biography on Abraham’s “set apart” status.

Genesis 12:1-2:

Genesis 13:14-15:

Genesis 14:17-22:

Genesis 15:1-6:

Genesis 17:1-14:

Genesis 22:15-18:

Genesis 24:10-21:

## *Day Three*

---

**READ EZRA 9, FOCUSING ON VERSES 4-9 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

How long did Ezra mourn? Did he cleanse himself before he prayed? (Read verse 5)

What was Ezra’s posture of prayer? For whom did he pray?

Is there a word in verse 8 that has been in your previous study? What is another word that expresses the same idea?

f \_\_\_\_\_

g \_\_\_\_\_

Give an account of Ezra's view of Israel's sin in verse 6. Compare this view with David's view of God's love and forgiveness in Psalm 103:1-14.

*Ezra*

*David*

How had God shown His love to the Israelites? Had God's love for His people ever wavered? How is it described? (Read verses 8-9)

How had God extended His "steadfast love" and "revived" His people? (Read verse 9)

#### **APPLICATION**

Notice the intensity of Ezra's mourning and his strong words in verse 9, "For we are slaves." In what ways were the Jews still enslaved physically? In what ways were they enslaved spiritually?

Is there a sin that still enslaves you? Have you mourned over your sin? Read James 4:1-10.

Talk with or email your Discussion Group Leader for help in overcoming this sin.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Meditate on what this depiction would have looked like. Picture a real person falling on their knees, hands spread out to God in repentance. Meditate on God's response at true repentance. Read the lyrics or listen to this song and be encouraged that if you are a Christian, you are not left in your slavery to sin, but are revived by the love and mercy of the same God present in Ezra.

***His Mercy Is More***

By Matt Boswell and Matt Papa

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more  
Stronger than darkness, new every morn  
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

What love could remember, no wrongs we have done  
Omniscient all-knowing, He counts not their sum  
Thrown into a sea, without bottom or shore  
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

What patience would wait as we constantly roam  
What Father so tender is calling us home  
He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor  
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

What riches of kindness He lavished on us  
His blood was the payment, His life was the cost  
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford  
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more  
Stronger than darkness, new every morn  
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

## *Day Four*

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**READ EZRA 9, FOCUSING ON VERSES 10-15 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

What commandments had the Israelites broken? What prophets had they ignored?

Verses 10-12 are direct quotations of many Old Testament prophets. What is Ezra confessing about Israel? Check all that apply.

- ☐ they have broken some of the Law
- ☐ they have become evil in God's sight
- ☐ they deserve forgiveness
- ☐ they have broken the entire Law

Within these verses do you see Ezra (speaking for all of Israel) expecting God's wrath or love? Why or why not? Compare verse 9 and 14-15.

There is a definition of grace & mercy in verse 13. Write out the verse and underline the definition of grace & mercy.

Ezra had not participated in the sin of Israel being confessed in these verses. Was it appropriate for him to lump himself into the need for forgiveness? Why or why not?

Does Ezra's prayer in verse 15 have a different focus? What is that focus?

### **APPLICATION**

How do you live your life in regard to God? Do you see Him as wrathful or distant? Do you seem Him as loving and near? Why?

Read Ephesians 2:1-10. How could your life be different if you lived according to these truths?

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

God is all-knowing. He knew that if the Israelites married non-Israelites, they would forsake Him for the gods of their non-Israelite wives. They were to be a people who were set apart, different, or "clean." Look up the following passages containing laws (stated or implied) of "cleanliness" and the consequences of breaking them. Keep in mind, the Israelites in the time of Ezra would have known these examples/laws.

#### ***Leviticus 7:19-21***

*Law:*

*Consequence:*

#### ***Numbers 19:11-13***

*Law:*

*Consequence:*

## *Day Five*

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### **READ EZRA 9 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

In Appendix 1, attributes, or qualities, of God are listed. One of them describes God as “just.” Write the description of “just” from Appendix 1 below.

Think through our study and the above definition. How is God’s justice displayed in this passage?

Write the description of God’s love found in Appendix 1.

Chapter 9 is a confession of Israel’s sin. How is God’s love described in this confession? Has His love changed despite Israel’s sin?

What word is repeated in verses 8, 14-15?



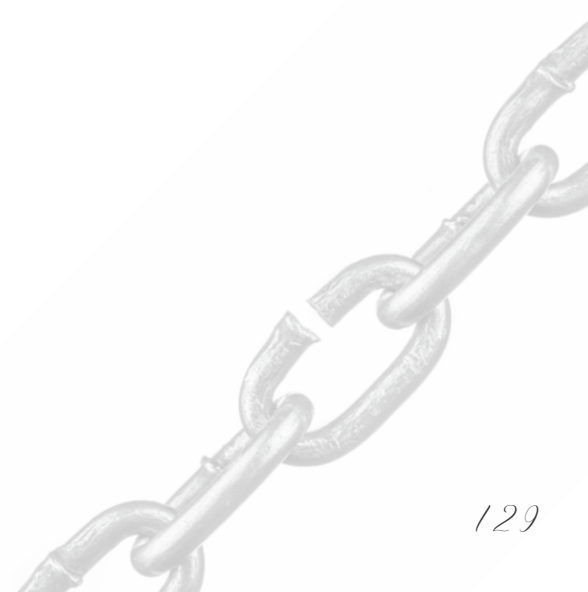
What was this remnant in danger of doing? (Read verses 13-14)

### **APPLICATION**

Are you quick to separate God into parts? The Bible says God is always all the things He says that He is. So, He is always in all situations, just. A just God would never lower His requirement for salvation. What is that requirement for salvation? Has our just God's requirement been met? How? Through Whom?

Is love another part of God to you? The Bible says that God does not simply show us love, but is love. A loving God would never leave people abandon people needing salvation. How has our loving God allowed us to escape the penalty of our guilt? Through Whom?

Write a prayer of thanksgiving for your salvation to your just and loving God.



# **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

Throughout Scripture we find the doctrine of a remnant. Although most people reject God, He always saves the few who follow Him by faith. In the Old Testament, most, but not all, of the remnant were Jews. Whether Jew or non-Jew, the remnant worshipped the God of Israel. Read the following “remnant” passages. Who was part of the remnant? What were they being saved from?

**WHO**

**WHAT**

*Genesis 7:17-24*

*Genesis 45:4-8*

*Nehemiah 1:3*

*Isaiah 10:20-22*

*Romans 9:25-33*

## *For Personal Reflection*

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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



Lecture Notes

[illegible]

## *Group Time*

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### **WARM UP QUESTION**

Ezra is grateful God extended His steadfast love to His people. Other than God's love through salvation, what is a specific time you have experienced a deep/steadfast love? How was it shown to you?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)**

What characteristics of God do you see in this chapter? Give the characteristic as well as the verse(s) in which you see it. Hint: these traits may be directly stated or inferred from God's actions or words. Use Appendix 1 for further help.

The Israelites stay separate from the nations to protect themselves from the idols of those people. As a Christian, how can we live a different life than non-believers? Which idols are prominent in our society today that we need to avoid?

During this chapter, the leaders of the Israelites are pointed out for the sin of intermarriage. We see, however, the people of Israel are guilty as well. How is the body of Christ to handle sin within (among leaders and members)? How do we see the Israelites handling their sin?

When it comes to God's wrath and love we all tend to lean one way or another when it comes to God being wrathful or loving. While we know He is both, which way do you lean? Why? See Day 5 for possible help.

How is God's justice different from the world's?

How did you see mercy and grace in this chapter? Have you or family experienced mercy and grace in a similar situation in your life? See Day 4 for possible help.

In what ways do you tremble or acknowledge the dangers of sin your life, nation, or church? How could you develop a deep grief over sin as seen in verses 3-4?

Does sin have to be widespread (nationwide or church-wide) for God to take it seriously? Other than Ezra, what examples in the Bible show how seriously God takes all sin?

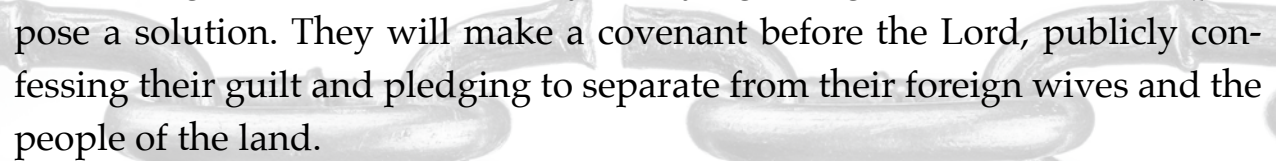
Over the years, have you tended more toward justifying or minimizing your sin, or toward wallowing in guilt over it? What can you do to better deal with your sin? Read 1 John 1:9.

In this chapter, Ezra lumps himself into the guilt of the nation although it seems that he did not participate in the sin which he is confessing. Have you ever considered yourself part of a sinful situation, although you may not have been an active participant? Why or why not?

# LESSON ELEVEN

*Ezra 10*

As Ezra prays for God's mercy, a great assembly gathers to him. Confessing to breaking faith with the Lord by marrying foreign women, the men propose a solution. They will make a covenant before the Lord, publicly confessing their guilt and pledging to separate from their foreign wives and the people of the land.



## *Day One*

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### **FOR REVIEW (EZRA 9)**

What was Ezra's first response to the sin of the Israelites? Read verse 3.

Flip to Appendix 2. Read (or listen to) Ezra 1-5, drawing parentheses around every occurrence of the word "house" on the printed copy of the text.

## *Day Two*

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### **READ EZRA 10, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-5 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

In chapter 3, the Israelites are described as coming together as "one man" to rebuild the temple. What are they coming together to do in this passage? (Read verses 1-5)

Did the assembly agree with Ezra (and God) about their sins? How can you tell?

What specific sins was this assembly confessing? What had they done? (Read verse 3)

What specific words were used to describe their sin? Fill in the blanks from verse 2:

*"We have \_\_\_\_\_ with our \_\_\_\_\_."*

Write verse 3 in your own words.

Who did God use to put before Ezra a plan for repentance? What was the plan (read verses 2-3)?

Beginning with "the leading priests and Levites and all Israel," what was Israel "made" to do (read verse 5)?

### **APPLICATION**

Looking at the oath/covenant taken in verse 5, it is clear that the Israelites' desire was to move from "broken faith" to "whole obedience." They were committed to a complete transformation of their lives (individually and nationally) to obey God.

Is there any part of your life that needs to be "transformed" to wholly obey God? Where does this transformation need to begin?



**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

God is perfectly emotional. Since we are created in His image, we are emotional beings. The assembly's emotions are displayed in verse 1; specifically, they "wept bitterly." Read these verses and describe the situations in which the weeping took place.

*Exodus 12:29-31:*

*Esther 4:1-3:*

*Luke 22:54-62:*

## *Day Three*

---

**READ EZRA 10, FOCUSING ON VERSES 6-8 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Why did Ezra withdraw from the people? (Read verse 6)

How was Ezra mourning? (Read verse 6)

neither \_\_\_\_\_ nor \_\_\_\_\_

What one word is used three times to described the Israelites in these verses?

Why would the exiles be called to Jerusalem? What was in Jerusalem?

What does this say about the nature of their situation? Was their sin only physical in nature or was there a spiritual element?

Did the Israelites have an option to come back to Jerusalem? (Read verse 8)

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

What was the consequence for choosing not to come to Jerusalem? What would happen if a foreign wife was not “put away”? (Read verse 8)

### APPLICATION

No doubt some Israelites chose not to come to Jerusalem — they knew the obedience God required of them. Obeying by “putting away” their wives and perhaps children was too much. Their choice not to “put away” their wives was sin. Sin is always easier than obedience. Is there a sin in your life that seems too precious to let go?

While you probably will not face a situation this extreme, resolve to “put away” the sin that is precious to you. Write a prayer of confession and repentance below.

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Since Jesus was fully God and fully man, He is the embodiment of God's perfect emotions. The Gospels record that several times Jesus was sorrowful, wept, fasted and withdrew from the crowds to pray. Read the follow passages. Describe the emotions and actions of Jesus in each.

*Emotion(s)*

*Action(s)*

*Matthew 11:1-11:*

*Matthew 26:36-46:*

*Luke 19:41-44:*

*John 11:*

## Day Four

---

**READ EZRA 10, FOCUSING ON VERSES 9-17 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

When was this assembly? Why were the people trembling? (Read verse 9)

What did Ezra call the people to do? (Read verse 11)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

This return to Jerusalem is a kind of exodus. Read verse 12, Exodus 19:8 and 24:3, 7. Are the Israelites' reactions similar? Write similar words or phrases found in these passages.

Do verses 13-14 seem like an attempt to stall the process of putting away their foreign wives? Why or why not?

Is there any division among the people? (Read verse 15)

How long did it take to work through the examinations of the exiles' marriages? (Read verses 16-17)

### **APPLICATION**

During a rainy season, the people may have had a valid excuse to avoid making a trek to Jerusalem. Instead, most chose to obey. When was the last time you allowed an outside circumstance to dictate your obedience?

What excuses do you use, or frequently hear, to justify the sinful habit of not coming together with fellow believers?

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

God is Creator. He has made the “lights of the heavens for signs and seasons.” The weather, for better or worse, is a product God’s creation. The passages below are a few examples of God using weather within humanity. Choose one (or more) and draw (or find) a picture depicting it.

Genesis 7:11-24 and 9:12-13

Jonah 1

1 Kings 18:43-45

Luke 23:44-46

*Day Five*

---

**READ EZRA 10, FOCUSING ON VERSES 18-44 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

Who are the first to be listed concerning the sin of intermarriage? How is the list divided?  
(Read verses 18, 23, 25-44)

verse 18

verse 23

verse 25-44

God uses all of Scripture to teach us. What can we learn from this list? What does it signify and commemorate?

Each name represents a family. In this case, a husband and wife, and possibly children. What truth does this convey about the costs of disobedience and repentance?

Shecaniah is a powerful example of the sacrifices required to obey. What family is he from?  
(Read verse 2)

the son of \_\_\_\_\_

the son of \_\_\_\_\_

Staying with Shecaniah's story, read verse 26. Write the familiar names below.

What consequences did Shecaniah's family probably suffer because of his declaration in verse 2?

### APPLICATION

Shecaniah, and all of the Israelites who confessed with him, are living examples of devotion to God taking precedence over devotion to biological family. While Christians are called to love our biological families in a way that would cause the world to be jealous, we are never to love anyone or anything more than God. Has devotion to your family and/or friends ever taken precedence to your devotion to God?

If so, what changes need to occur for your devotions to be corrected?

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

In Ezra, the sin of Israel was not caused by the nations around them, but the leaders among them. The influence and choice to sin was found within God's people more than the pressure to sin from without.

This situation is not unique to the Israelites or the Old Testament. The New Testament calls the church to be aware of sin in their midst. Read these passages. What sin is seen? What could the consequences of this sin be? Note: the consequences may be stated or implied.

*Sin*

*Consequence*

*Acts 5:1-11*

*1 Corinthians 5:1-2*

*James 4:10*

*2 Peter 2:1-2*

## *For Personal Reflection*

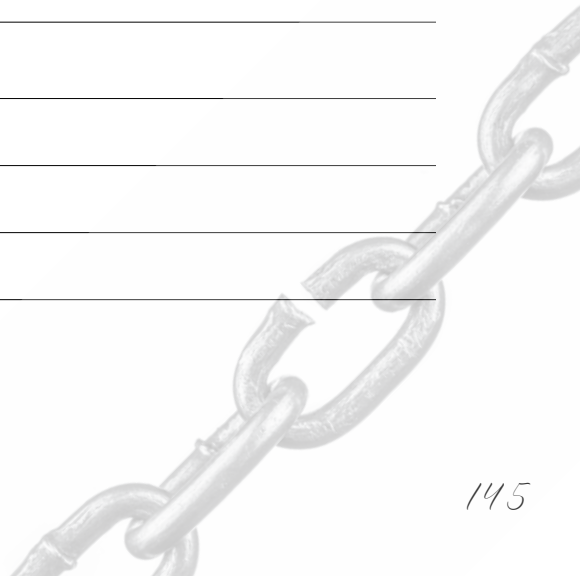
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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



Lecture Notes

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## Group Time

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### WARM UP QUESTION

Chislev (December, on our calendar) is a part of the early rains — all-day, cold rain. This weather caused the Israelite's plans to change quickly. Has there been an important event in your life (childhood or adulthood) that had to be changed due to the weather?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)

What characteristics of God do you see in this chapter? Give the characteristic as well as the verse(s) in which you see it. Hint: these traits may be directly stated or inferred from God's actions or words. Use Appendix 1 for further help.

The Israelites had every reason to be in a state of hopelessness. Has there been a time that you have struggled to hope in God's love and forgiveness? What, or who, did God use to remind you to hope in Him?

Shecaniah and the sons of Elam encouraged Ezra to "arise," "be strong," and "do" as God had called him. Has there been a time when God used someone to strongly motivate you to do something you knew you were called to or gifted to do?

Can you give examples of what would keep Christians from completely putting away their sin? How should we put away or repent of sin? See Day 3 for possible help.

Ezra displayed many emotions, so do we. Since we are a reflection of God, have you ever thought of God being emotional? Does that unsettle you at all? Why? Does that give you peace? Why? See Day 2 "For Further Study" for possible help.

The Israelites could have used the rain as an excuse to delay dealing with their sin. What excuses do you use, or frequently hear, to delay in dealing with sin? See Day 4 for possible help.

Throughout Ezra, Israel has acted as "one man," a united people. Surely personal opinions had to be put aside to achieve this. Give an example of personal opinions that would need to be put aside in the interest of being a united church?

The Israelites allowed the "Law of the Lord" to guide them in obedience. Can the Bible guide us in obedience today? How does it guide us? Why would we not accept that guidance?

What would cause someone to tremble because of their sin? Has your sin ever caused you to tremble?

Sin is no respecter of persons or status. Israelites and their leaders were guilty of the same sin. Do you think of your church leaders as less prone to sin? Does that excuse your sin at all?



# LESSON TWELVE

## *Nehemiah*

At the beginning of the semester, we noted that Ezra and Nehemiah are one unified work in the earliest manuscripts. As promised, we will spend our last week focusing on the climax of Ezra-Nehemiah (Nehemiah 7:73-9:38).

Led by Nehemiah, the third wave of exiles arrive in Jerusalem to rebuild the city wall. Following its completion, the people gathered as one man to hear Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. Their response affirms the truth of Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

## Day One

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### FOR REVIEW (EZRA 10)

How should Christians, and the Church, respond to sin?

Flip to Appendix 2. Read (or listen to) Ezra 6-10, drawing parentheses around every occurrence of the word “house” on the printed copy of the text.

## Day Two

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*Thirteen years passed between the events of Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 1. When we studied the context for Ezra, we learned that Hanani (Nehemiah’s brother) brought distressing news from Judah.*

*“The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”  
(Nehemiah 1:3)*

*More than 90 years after the first wave of exiles returned to Jerusalem, the city wall remained a heap of rubble. Burdened by the state of both the people of Israel and the city of his fathers, Nehemiah fasted and prayed to the God of heaven for mercy. King Artaxerxes allowed Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and lead the rebuilding effort. Though opposition arises, the good hand of God was upon him. Side by side, the people of God rebuilt the wall in 52 days!*

### READ NEHEMIAH 7:73-8:18, FOCUSING ON VERSES 1-12 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

Who “gathered as one man”? Who makes up this group (Hint: This information is repeated in verses 2 and 3.)

Why were they in the square? How long were they there?

What did all the people do when Ezra opened the book of the Law of God?

Ezra “blessed the Lord, the great God”. How did all the people respond? Is this an appropriate response? Why or why not? (Hint: The Hebrew translation for “Lord,” in this passage, is *Jehovah*. Read the definition in Appendix 1.)

Don’t miss this: What vital role did the Levites play, according to verses 7-9?

God did a work within His people. Why did Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites have to calm all the people? What was their initial reaction to hearing the words of the Law? For help in understanding this deeply emotional response, read Nehemiah 1:6-7 and 2 Corinthians 7:9-10.

When did this event occur, according to verse 2? Read Leviticus 23:23-25, Numbers 10:10, and Numbers 29:1-6. What is special about this day? What response does it call for, instead? Why?

## APPLICATION

More often than not, when we think of the word “blessing,” we think of an act of God toward us. Or, perhaps, we think of words we speak toward one another. Have you ever considered the word “blessing” in terms of an act or words we speak toward God in worship (as Ezra and the people did in Nehemiah 8)? Read Psalm 103. Why is the Lord worthy of our blessing? What has He helped you to understand about Him through His Word?

*“Authentic speaking about God’s goodness and greatness must come from the soul. Blessing God with the mouth without the soul would be hypocrisy. Jesus said, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me’ (Matthew 15:8). David knows that danger, and he is preaching to himself. He is telling his soul not to let this happen. ‘Come, soul, look at the greatness and goodness of God. Join my mouth, and let us bless the Lord with our whole being.’” — John Piper*

Bless the Lord, the great God, in prayer.

## FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

Nehemiah 8 isn’t the only time the people of God paid homage to Him together. Read each of the following passages and describe the occasion that moved God’s people to worship.

Exodus 4:27-31

Exodus 12:18-28

1 Chronicles 29:10-22

## *Day Three*

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**READ NEHEMIAH 7:73-8:18, FOCUSING ON VERSES 13-18 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

On the first day, “All the people gathered as one man into the square.” Who came together on the second day? Why?

What did they find written in the Law? According to verses 14 and 15, what should they do?

Read Leviticus 23:33-44, Deuteronomy 16:13-17, and Deuteronomy 31:9-13. What additional details do you learn regarding what the Lord commanded through Moses?

How did the people respond? What did they do with the information they found?



What happened on the eighth day?

### **APPLICATION**

There is a sense of spiritual renewal in Nehemiah 8. God did a work within His people. After hearing the Law of the Lord the day before, the “heads of fathers’ houses” were motivated. Their goal wasn’t to get smarter. Their goal was to demonstrate their love for God through obedience to His Word. God’s people must know and understand the Scriptures fully and obey them rigorously. Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17. What difference has studying God’s Word made in your life this semester?

What is your biggest takeaway from Nehemiah 8?

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

The statement, “From the days of Jeshua (i.e. Joshua) the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so...” in verse 17 is meant to draw a parallel between the original exodus community and this new exodus community. Read Joshua 8:30-35. What similarities do you see between that passage and Nehemiah 8?

## *Day Four*

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**READ NEHEMIAH 9:1-37 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

In verse 1, “this month” refers to the seventh month. On what day do the people of Israel assemble? What is the purpose for this gathering? Describe the scene.

How do the Levites lead the people of Israel in worship? What do they do? What do they say?

Which attributes of God are repeated throughout the prayer in verses 6-38?

This prayer summarizes the story of the Bible from creation to that very day when the people of Israel assembled before the Lord. Spend time marveling at the works of God. Notice all the “You” + verb statements in this chapter. List as many as you can below. (“You have made,” “you preserve,” “you have kept,” etc.)

The people of Israel's behavior stands in stark contrast to the Lord's. What repeated words and phrases best describe both their actions and their heart attitude toward God? What are the consequences? (Hint: Compare verses 22-25 to verses 36-37.)

God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance and renewal. In the end (verse 38), what did the people decide to do?

## APPLICATION

Verse 2 says, "And the Israelites separated themselves..." God's people were meant to be set apart. They were supposed to be a people holy to the Lord — honoring Him and reflecting His character to the nations around them. Instead, more often than not, they resembled the people of the nations.

What Nehemiah 9 reveals about the God of the Bible is still true today. He never changes. Throughout the history of the world, the divine response to human disobedience is always gracious and merciful (even in the case of divine judgment). There is nothing more gracious and merciful than what God has done for us in and through Jesus Christ.

Read Isaiah 53. What did Jesus do for us? How should this impact the way in which we view God? How should it impact the way in which we live?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)

The nation of Israel made a covenant with God and then broke it. They renewed the covenant several times, including those mentioned in the passages that follow. Identify the events that led the people to renew their covenant vows.

Exodus 24:3-8

Joshua 8:30-35

Joshua 24:14-28

1 Samuel 11:14-12:25

## *Day Five*

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**READ NEHEMIAH 10:28-11:2 TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

According to chapter 10, what did the people of God vow to do?

Why was it important for at least some of the people of God to live within the walls of Jerusalem?

In Nehemiah 12, the people of God dedicate the wall and appointed priests and Levites to minister and serve in the temple. Read Nehemiah 12:27, 31, and 43. What repeated words describe their attitude that day? Why did they respond this way?

Does it last? Do the people of God keep their promises? Read Nehemiah 13. Summarize this last chapter below. What did the people of God do? What did Nehemiah do in response?

*People of God*

*Nehemiah*

What did Nehemiah repeat over and over in verses 14, 22, and 30? What did he desire above all?

#### APPLICATION

The physical restoration is complete and the people inhabit the holy city. Though they are functioning as God's people within God's holy city, the hope of what God promised to Abraham is not yet fully realized. The land is not theirs. The king under whose rule they live is not theirs. Are their fickle hearts fully restored to right relationship with God?

Celebration quickly turns to complacency and carelessness. Are they doomed to repeat the mistakes of their fathers? How can God's people truly live a life set apart — holy to the Lord?

Consider Nehemiah 10:39, "We will not neglect the house of our God."

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Ephesians 2:19-22, and Romans 12:1-2. How does this apply to us today?

**FOR FURTHER STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

God does not give us what we deserve. What does the Bible say about His amazing grace?

John 1:14-18

Romans 3:23-25

Romans 5:12-21

1 Corinthians 15:10

Ephesians 2:1-9

## *For Personal Reflection*

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What did you learn about God this week (see Appendix 1 for a list of God's attributes)?

Write down any additional thoughts or questions you have. Then, pray about what you've learned.



Lecture Notes

[illegible]



## *Group Time*

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### **WARM UP QUESTION**

This week's lesson is all about "amazing grace". What is your favorite hymn or Christian song? Why?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CHOOSE SEVERAL)**

Are adoration and confession a regular part of your prayer life? If not, what are some ways you can begin to incorporate them? If so, what are some suggestions you can share with ladies in your group who may struggle with these aspects of prayer?

Have you ever considered the word "blessing" in terms of an act or words we speak toward God in worship (as Ezra and the people did in Nehemiah 8)? Read Psalm 103. Why is the Lord worthy of our blessing? What has He helped you to understand about Him through His Word?

God's people must know and understand the Scriptures fully and obey them rigorously. Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17. What difference has studying God's Word made in your life this semester?

Consider Nehemiah 10:39, "We will not neglect the house of our God." How does this apply to us today? (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Ephesians 2:19-22, and Romans 12:1-2)

What is your biggest takeaway from Nehemiah 8 (or 9)?

Read Hebrews 4:12. God is gracious. He will use His Word to make us aware of sin in our lives. What have you learned from this week's lesson that will help you respond rightly in those moments?

Now that you have studied this verse in context, in what way is the "joy of the Lord" our strength?

There is nothing more gracious and merciful than what God has done for us in and through Jesus Christ. According to Isaiah 53, what did Jesus do for us? How should this impact the way in which we view God? How should it impact the way in which we live?

In 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 Paul says, "...I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief... For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death." Can you think of any examples of "godly grief" and/or "worldly grief" from Scripture? How can we tell the difference?

# APPENDIX 1



Navigator  
Discipleship  
Tool

God is...

## 30 DAYS OF PRAYING the Names and Attributes of God

Though God is infinitely far above our ability to fully understand, through the Scriptures He tells us truths about Himself so that we can know Him, and be drawn to worship Him. Take a description of God and meditate on it for a day.

### ① JEHOVAH

The name of the independent, self-complete being—"I AM WHO I AM"—only belongs to Jehovah God. Our proper response to Him is to fall down in fear and awe of the One who possesses all authority. *Exodus 3:13-15*

### ② JEHOVAH-M'KADDESH

This name means "the God who sanctifies." A God separate from all that is evil requires that the people who follow Him be cleansed from all evil. *Leviticus 20:7,8*

### ③ INFINITE

God is beyond measurement—we cannot define Him by size or amount. He has no beginning, no end, and no limits. *Romans 11:33*

### ④ OMNIPOTENT

God is all-powerful. He spoke all things into being, and all things—every cell, every breath, every thought—are sustained by Him. Nothing is too difficult for Him. *Jeremiah 32:17,18, 26,27*

### ⑤ GOOD

God is the embodiment of perfect goodness, and is kind, benevolent, and full of good will toward all creation. *Psalms 119:65-72*

### ⑥ LOVE

God's love is so great that He gave His only Son to bring us into fellowship with Him. His love encompasses the world, and embraces each of us personally and intimately. *1 John 4:7-10*

### ⑦ JEHOVAH-JIREH

"The God who provides." Just as He provided yesterday, He will provide today and tomorrow. He grants deliverance from sin, the oil of joy for the ashes of sorrow, and eternal citizenship in His Kingdom for all those adopted into His household. *Genesis 22:9-14*

### ⑧ JEHOVAH-SHALOM

"The God of peace." We are meant to know the fullness of God's perfect peace, His "shalom." God's peace surpasses understanding and sustains us through difficult times. It's the product of fully being what we were created to be. *Judges 6:16-24*

### ⑨ IMMUTABLE

All that God is, He has always been. All that He has been and is, He will ever be. He is ever perfect and unchanging. *Psalms 102:25-28*

### ⑩ TRANSCENDENT

God is not simply the highest in an order of beings (this would be to grant Him eminence). He is transcendent—existing beyond and above the created universe. *Psalms 113:4,5*

### ⑪ JUST

God is righteous and holy, fair and equitable in all things. We can trust Him to always do what is right. *Psalms 75:1-7*

### ⑫ HOLY

God's holiness is not a better version of the best we know. God is utterly and supremely untainted. His holiness stands apart—unique and incomprehensible. *Revelation 4:8-11*



**THIS TOOL IS MEANT TO BE SHARED.** To download a copy visit [navlink.org/names-of-God](http://navlink.org/names-of-God)  
Sources: *The Knowledge of the Holy*, by A.W. Tozer; *Names of God*, by Nathan Stone; and *God of Glory*, by Kenneth Landon.



## Navigator Discipleship Tool

# God is...

### ⑬ JEHOVAH-ROPHE

"Jehovah heals." God alone provides the remedy for mankind's brokenness through His son, Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the physical, moral, and spiritual remedy for all people. *Exodus 15:22-26*

### ⑭ SELF-SUFFICIENT

All things are God's to give, and all that is given is given by Him. He can receive nothing that He has not already given us. *Acts 17:24-28*

### ⑮ OMNISCIENT

God is all-knowing. God's knowledge encompasses every possible thing that exists, has ever existed, or will ever exist. Nothing is a mystery to Him. *Psalms 139:1-6*

### ⑯ OMNIPRESENT

God is everywhere, in and around everything, close to everyone. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord." *Psalms 139:7-12*

### ⑰ MERCIFUL

God's merciful compassion is infinite and inexhaustible. Through Christ, He took the judgment that was rightfully ours and placed it on His own shoulders. He waits and works now for all people to turn to Him and to live under His justification. *Deuteronomy 4:29-31*

### ⑱ SOVEREIGN

God presides over every event, great or small, and He is in control of our lives. To be sovereign, He must be all-knowing and all-powerful, and by His sovereignty He rules His entire creation. *1 Chronicles 29:11-13*

### ⑲ JEHOVAH-NISSI

"God our banner." Under His banner we go from triumph to triumph and say, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). *Exodus 17:8-15*

### ⑳ WISE

All God's acts are accomplished through His infinite wisdom. He always acts for our good, which is to conform us to Christ. Our good and His glory are inextricably bound together. *Proverbs 3:19,20*

### ㉑ FAITHFUL

Out of His faithfulness God honors His covenants and fulfills His promises. Our hope for the future rests upon God's faithfulness. *Psalms 89:1-8*

### ㉒ WRATHFUL

Unlike human anger, God's wrath is never capricious, self-indulgent, or irritable. It is the right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil. *Nahum 1:2-8*

### ㉓ FULL OF GRACE

Grace is God's good pleasure that moves Him to grant merit where it is undeserved and to forgive debt that cannot be repaid. *Ephesians 1:5-8*

### ㉔ OUR COMFORTER

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the "Comforter," and the apostle Paul writes that the Lord is "the God of all comfort." *2 Corinthians 1:3,4*

### ㉕ EL-SHADDAI

"God Almighty," the God who is all-sufficient and all-bountiful, the source of all blessings. *Genesis 49:22-26*

### ㉖ FATHER

Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father" (Matthew 6:9), and the Spirit of God taught us to cry, "Abba, Father," an intimate Aramaic term similar to "Daddy." The Creator of the universe cares for each one of us. *Romans 8:15-17*

### ㉗ THE CHURCH'S HEAD

God the Son, Jesus, is the head of the Church. As the head, the part of the body that sees, hears, thinks, and decides, He gives the orders that the rest of the body lives by. *Ephesians 1:22,23*

### ㉘ OUR INTERCESSOR

Knowing our temptations, God the Son intercedes for us. He opens the doors for us to boldly ask God the Father for mercy. Thus, God is both the initiation and conclusion of true prayer. *Hebrews 4:14-16*

### ㉙ ADONAI

"Master" or "Lord." All God's people ought to acknowledge themselves as His servants, with His right to reign as Lord of our lives. *2 Samuel 7:18-20*

### ㉚ ELOHIM

"Strength" or "Power": He is transcendent, mighty and strong. This name displays His supreme power, sovereignty, and faithfulness in His covenant relationship with us. *Genesis 17:7,8*

# APPENDIX 2

## *Text of Ezra*

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**1** In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:

**2** “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. **3** Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. **4** And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.”

**5** Then rose up the heads of the fathers’ houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem. **6** And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered. **7** Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. **8** Cyrus king of Persia brought these out in the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. **9** And this was the number of them: 30 basins of gold, 1,000 basins of silver, 29 censers, **10** 30 bowls of gold, 410 bowls of silver, and 1,000 other vessels; all the vessels of gold and of silver were 5,400. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

**2** Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town. <sup>2</sup> They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

The number of the men of the people of Israel: <sup>3</sup> the sons of Parosh, 2,172. <sup>4</sup> The sons of Shephatiah, 372. <sup>5</sup> The sons of Arah, 775. <sup>6</sup> The sons of Pahath-moab, namely the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,812. <sup>7</sup> The sons of Elam, 1,254. <sup>8</sup> The sons of Zattu, 945. <sup>9</sup> The sons of Zaccai, 760. <sup>10</sup> The sons of Bani, 642. <sup>11</sup> The sons of Bebai, 623. <sup>12</sup> The sons of Azgad, 1,222. <sup>13</sup> The sons of Adonikam, 666. <sup>14</sup> The sons of Bigvai, 2,056. <sup>15</sup> The sons of Adin, 454. <sup>16</sup> The sons of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, 98. <sup>17</sup> The sons of Bezai, 323. <sup>18</sup> The sons of Jorah, 112. <sup>19</sup> The sons of Hashum, 223. <sup>20</sup> The sons of Gibbar, 95. <sup>21</sup> The sons of Bethlehem, 123. <sup>22</sup> The men of Netophah, 56. <sup>23</sup> The men of Anathoth, 128. <sup>24</sup> The sons of Azmaveth, 42. <sup>25</sup> The sons of Kiriath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, 743. <sup>26</sup> The sons of Ramah and Geba, 621. <sup>27</sup> The men of Michmas, 122. <sup>28</sup> The men of Bethel and Ai, 223. <sup>29</sup> The sons of Nebo, 52. <sup>30</sup> The sons of Magbish, 156. <sup>31</sup> The sons of the other Elam, 1,254. <sup>32</sup> The sons of Harim, 320. <sup>33</sup> The sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 725. <sup>34</sup> The sons of Jericho, 345. <sup>35</sup> The sons of Senaah, 3,630.

<sup>36</sup> The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, 973. <sup>37</sup> The sons of Immer, 1,052. <sup>38</sup> The sons of Pashhur, 1,247. <sup>39</sup> The sons of Harim, 1,017.

<sup>40</sup> The Levites: the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah, 74. <sup>41</sup> The singers: the sons of Asaph, 128. <sup>42</sup> The sons of the gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, and the sons of Shobai, in all 139.

<sup>43</sup> The temple servants: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth, <sup>44</sup> the sons of Keros, the sons of Siaha, the sons of Padon, <sup>45</sup> the sons of Lebanah, the sons of Hagabah, the sons of Akkub, <sup>46</sup> the sons of Hagab, the sons of Shamlai, the sons of Hanan, <sup>47</sup> the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, the sons of Reaiah, <sup>48</sup> the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, the sons of Gazzam, <sup>49</sup> the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, the sons of Besai, <sup>50</sup> the sons of Asnah, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephisim, <sup>51</sup> the

sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur, <sup>52</sup> the sons of Bazluth, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha, <sup>53</sup> the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah, <sup>54</sup> the sons of Neziah, and the sons of Hatipha.

<sup>55</sup> The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Hassophereth, the sons of Peruda, <sup>56</sup> the sons of Jaalah, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel, the sons of <sup>57</sup> Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, and the sons of Ami.

<sup>58</sup> All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants were 392.

<sup>59</sup> The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, though they could not prove their fathers' houses or their descent, whether they belonged to Israel: <sup>60</sup> the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, and the sons of Nekoda, <sup>62</sup>. <sup>61</sup> Also, of the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, and the sons of Barzillai (who had taken a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name). <sup>62</sup> These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they were not found there, and so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. <sup>63</sup> The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim.

<sup>64</sup> The whole assembly together was 42,360, <sup>65</sup> besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337, and they had 200 male and female singers. <sup>66</sup> Their horses were 736, their mules were 245, <sup>67</sup> their camels were 435, and their donkeys were 6,720.

<sup>68</sup> Some of the heads of families, when they came to the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site. <sup>69</sup> According to their ability they gave to the treasury of the work 61,000 darics of gold, 5,000 minas of silver, and 100 priests' garments.

<sup>70</sup> Now the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all the rest of Israel in their towns.



**3** When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. <sup>3</sup> They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, burnt offerings morning and evening. <sup>4</sup> And they kept the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the rule, as each day required, <sup>5</sup> and after that the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the LORD, and the offerings of everyone who made a free-will offering to the LORD. <sup>6</sup> From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid. <sup>7</sup> So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

<sup>8</sup> Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the LORD. <sup>9</sup> And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers.

<sup>10</sup> And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel. <sup>11</sup> And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD,

For he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel."

And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because

the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. <sup>12</sup> But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, <sup>13</sup> so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

**4** Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD, the God of Israel, <sup>2</sup> they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' houses and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here." <sup>3</sup> But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses in Israel said to them, "You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us."

<sup>4</sup> Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build <sup>5</sup> and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

<sup>6</sup> And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

<sup>7</sup> In the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam and Mithredath and Tabeel and the rest of their associates wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia. The letter was written in Aramaic and translated. <sup>8</sup> Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows: <sup>9</sup> Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their associates, the judges, the governors, the officials, the Persians, the men of Erech, the Babylonians, the men of Susa, that is, the Elamites, <sup>10</sup> and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar deported and settled in the cities of Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River. <sup>11</sup> (This is a copy of the letter that they sent.) "To Artaxerxes the king: Your servants, the men of the province Beyond the River, send greeting. And now <sup>12</sup> be it known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. <sup>13</sup> Now be



it known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and the royal revenue will be impaired. <sup>14</sup> Now because we eat the salt of the palace and it is not fitting for us to witness the king's dishonor, therefore we send and inform the king, <sup>15</sup> in order that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. You will find in the book of the records and learn that this city is a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and that sedition was stirred up in it from of old. That was why this city was laid waste. <sup>16</sup> We make known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, you will then have no possession in the province Beyond the River."

<sup>17</sup> The king sent an answer: "To Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates who live in Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River, greeting. And now <sup>18</sup> the letter that you sent to us has been plainly read before me. <sup>19</sup> And I made a decree, and search has been made, and it has been found that this city from of old has risen against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made in it. <sup>20</sup> And mighty kings have been over Jerusalem, who ruled over the whole province Beyond the River, to whom tribute, custom, and toll were paid. <sup>21</sup> Therefore make a decree that these men be made to cease, and that this city be not rebuilt, until a decree is made by me. <sup>22</sup> And take care not to be slack in this matter. Why should damage grow to the hurt of the king?"

<sup>23</sup> Then, when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their associates, they went in haste to the Jews at Jerusalem and by force and power made them cease. <sup>24</sup> Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped, and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

**5** Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. <sup>2</sup> Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

<sup>3</sup> At the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus: "Who gave you

a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?" <sup>4</sup> They also asked them this: "What are the names of the men who are building this building?" <sup>5</sup> But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it.

<sup>6</sup> This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and his associates, the governors who were in the province Beyond the River, sent to Darius the king. <sup>7</sup> They sent him a report, in which was written as follows: "To Darius the king, all peace. <sup>8</sup> Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, and timber is laid in the walls. This work goes on diligently and prospers in their hands. <sup>9</sup> Then we asked those elders and spoke to them thus: 'Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?' <sup>10</sup> We also asked them their names, for your information, that we might write down the names of their leaders. <sup>11</sup> And this was their reply to us: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished. <sup>12</sup> But because our fathers had angered the God of heaven, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house and carried away the people to Babylonia. <sup>13</sup> However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, Cyrus the king made a decree that this house of God should be rebuilt. <sup>14</sup> And the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple that was in Jerusalem and brought into the temple of Babylon, these Cyrus the king took out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered to one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; <sup>15</sup> and he said to him, "Take these vessels, go and put them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site." <sup>16</sup> Then this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and from that time until now it has been in building, and it is not yet finished.' <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if it seems good to the king, let search be made in the royal archives there in Babylon, to see whether a decree was issued by Cyrus the king for the rebuilding of this house of God in Jerusalem. And let the king send us his pleasure in this matter."

**6** Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in Babylonia, in the house of the archives where the documents were stored. <sup>2</sup> And in Ecbatana, the citadel that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found on which this was written:

"A record. <sup>3</sup> In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices were offered, and let its foundations be retained. Its height shall be sixty cubits and its breadth sixty cubits, <sup>4</sup> with three layers of great stones and one layer of timber. Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury. <sup>5</sup> And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple that is in Jerusalem, each to its place. You shall put them in the house of God."

<sup>6</sup> "Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and your associates the governors who are in the province Beyond the River, keep away. <sup>7</sup> Let the work on this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site. <sup>8</sup> Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River. <sup>9</sup> And whatever is needed—bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail, <sup>10</sup> that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons. <sup>11</sup> Also I make a decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of his house, and he shall be impaled on it, and his house shall be made a dunghill. <sup>12</sup> May the God who has caused his name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who shall put out a hand to alter this, or to destroy this house of God that is in Jerusalem. I Darius make a decree; let it be done with all diligence."

<sup>13</sup> Then, according to the word sent by Darius the king, Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates did with all diligence what Darius the king had ordered. <sup>14</sup> And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia; <sup>15</sup> and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

<sup>16</sup> And the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned

exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. <sup>17</sup> They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. <sup>18</sup> And they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

<sup>19</sup> On the fourteenth day of the first month, the returned exiles kept the Passover.

<sup>20</sup> For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were clean. So they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves. <sup>21</sup> It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by every one who had joined them and separated himself from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land to worship the LORD, the God of Israel. <sup>22</sup> And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

**7** Now after this, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, <sup>2</sup> son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, <sup>3</sup> son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, <sup>4</sup> son of Zerariah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, <sup>5</sup> son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the chief priest—<sup>6</sup> this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the LORD, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.

<sup>7</sup> And there went up also to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king, some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants. <sup>8</sup> And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. <sup>9</sup> For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. <sup>10</sup> For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

<sup>11</sup> This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of the commandments of the LORD and his statutes for Israel:

12 “Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven. Peace. And now 13 I make a decree that anyone of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom, who freely offers to go to Jerusalem, may go with you. 14 For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God, which is in your hand, 15 and also to carry the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, 16 with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, vowed willingly for the house of their God that is in Jerusalem. 17 With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and you shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God that is in Jerusalem. 18 Whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do, according to the will of your God. 19 The vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God, you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem. 20 And whatever else is required for the house of your God, which it falls to you to provide, you may provide it out of the king’s treasury.

21 “And I, Artaxerxes the king, make a decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence, 22 up to 100 talents of silver, 100 cors of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. 23 Whatever is decreed by the God of heaven, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons. 24 We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on anyone of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.

25 “And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God. And those who do not know them, you shall teach. 26 Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment.”



27 Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, 28 and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers. I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

**8** These are the heads of their fathers' houses, and this is the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylonia, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king: 2 Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom. Of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel. Of the sons of David, Hattush. 3 Of the sons of Shecaniah, who was of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah, with whom were registered 150 men. 4 Of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai the son of Zerahiah, and with him 200 men. 5 Of the sons of Zattu, Shecaniah the son of Jahaziel, and with him 300 men. 6 Of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him 50 men. 7 Of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him 70 men. 8 Of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him 80 men. 9 Of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him 218 men. 10 Of the sons of Bani, Shelomith the son of Josiphiah, and with him 160 men. 11 Of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah, the son of Bebai, and with him 28 men. 12 Of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him 110 men. 13 Of the sons of Adonikam, those who came later, their names being Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them 60 men. 14 Of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, and with them 70 men.

15 I gathered them to the river that runs to Ahava, and there we camped three days. As I reviewed the people and the priests, I found there none of the sons of Levi. 16 Then I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, leading men, and for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were men of insight, 17 and sent them to Iddo, the leading man at the place Casiphia, telling them what to say to Iddo and his brothers and the temple servants at the place Casiphia, namely, to send us ministers for the house of our God. 18 And by the good hand of our God on us, they brought us a man of discretion, of the sons of Mahli the son of Levi, son of Israel, namely Sherebiah with his sons and kinsmen, 18; 19 also Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, with his kinsmen and their sons, 20; 20 besides 220 of the temple servants, whom David and his officials had set apart to attend the Levites. These were

all mentioned by name.

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. 22 For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king, "The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him." 23 So we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty.

24 Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their kinsmen with them. 25 And I weighed out to them the silver and the gold and the vessels, the offering for the house of our God that the king and his counselors and his lords and all Israel there present had offered. 26 I weighed out into their hand 650 talents of silver, and silver vessels worth 200 talents, and 100 talents of gold, 27 20 bowls of gold worth 1,000 darics, and two vessels of fine bright bronze as precious as gold. 28 And I said to them, "You are holy to the LORD, and the vessels are holy, and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to the LORD, the God of your fathers. 29 Guard them and keep them until you weigh them before the chief priests and the Levites and the heads of fathers' houses in Israel at Jerusalem, within the chambers of the house of the LORD." 30 So the priests and the Levites took over the weight of the silver and the gold and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem, to the house of our God.

31 Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambushes by the way. 32 We came to Jerusalem, and there we remained three days. 33 On the fourth day, within the house of our God, the silver and the gold and the vessels were weighed into the hands of Meremoth the priest, son of Uriah, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas, and with them were the Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui. 34 The whole was counted and weighed, and the weight of everything was recorded.

35 At that time those who had come from captivity, the returned exiles, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel, twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-sev-

en lambs, and as a sin offering twelve male goats. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD. <sup>36</sup> They also delivered the king's commissions to the king's satraps and to the governors of the province Beyond the River, and they aided the people and the house of God.

**9** After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. <sup>2</sup> For they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands. And in this faithlessness the hand of the officials and chief men has been foremost." <sup>3</sup> As soon as I heard this, I tore my garment and my cloak and pulled hair from my head and beard and sat appalled. <sup>4</sup> Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice. <sup>5</sup> And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God, <sup>6</sup> saying:

"O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens. <sup>7</sup> From the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt. And for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today. <sup>8</sup> But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery. <sup>9</sup> For we are slaves. Yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to grant us some reviving to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us protection in Judea and Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup> "And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, <sup>11</sup> which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land that you are entering, to take possession of it, is a land impure with the im-



purity of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not give your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters for your sons, and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.' <sup>13</sup> And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved and have given us such a remnant as this, <sup>14</sup> shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you consumed us, so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape? <sup>15</sup> O LORD, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this."

**10** While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly. <sup>2</sup> And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: "We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. <sup>3</sup> Therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the Law. <sup>4</sup> Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do it." <sup>5</sup> Then Ezra arose and made the leading priests and Levites and all Israel take an oath that they would do as had been said. So they took the oath.

<sup>6</sup> Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib, where he spent the night, neither eating bread nor drinking water, for he was mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles. <sup>7</sup> And a proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the returned exiles that they should assemble at Jerusalem, <sup>8</sup> and that if anyone did not come within three days, by order of the officials and the elders all his property should be forfeited, and he himself banned from the congregation of the exiles.

<sup>9</sup> Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within the three

days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month. And all the people sat in the open square before the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of the heavy rain. <sup>10</sup> And Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have broken faith and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel. <sup>11</sup> Now then make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives." <sup>12</sup> Then all the assembly answered with a loud voice, "It is so; we must do as you have said. <sup>13</sup> But the people are many, and it is a time of heavy rain; we cannot stand in the open. Nor is this a task for one day or for two, for we have greatly transgressed in this matter. <sup>14</sup> Let our officials stand for the whole assembly. Let all in our cities who have taken foreign wives come at appointed times, and with them the elders and judges of every city, until the fierce wrath of our God over this matter is turned away from us." <sup>15</sup> Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite supported them.

<sup>16</sup> Then the returned exiles did so. Ezra the priest selected men, heads of fathers' houses, according to their fathers' houses, each of them designated by name. On the first day of the tenth month they sat down to examine the matter; <sup>17</sup> and by the first day of the first month they had come to the end of all the men who had married foreign women.

<sup>18</sup> Now there were found some of the sons of the priests who had married foreign women: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah, some of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers. <sup>19</sup> They pledged themselves to put away their wives, and their guilt offering was a ram of the flock for their guilt. <sup>20</sup> Of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah. <sup>21</sup> Of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uziah. <sup>22</sup> Of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

<sup>23</sup> Of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is, Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. <sup>24</sup> Of the singers: Eliashib. Of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

<sup>25</sup> And of Israel: of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Hashabiah, and Benaiah. <sup>26</sup> Of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi,

Jeremoth, and Elijah. <sup>27</sup> Of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza. <sup>28</sup> Of the sons of Bebai were Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. <sup>29</sup> Of the sons of Bani were Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Jeremoth. <sup>30</sup> Of the sons of Pahath-moab: Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh. <sup>31</sup> Of the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, <sup>32</sup> Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah. <sup>33</sup> Of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei. <sup>34</sup> Of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel, <sup>35</sup> Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, <sup>36</sup> Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, <sup>37</sup> Mattaniah, Mattenai, Jaasu. <sup>38</sup> Of the sons of Binnui: Shimei, <sup>39</sup> Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, <sup>40</sup> Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, <sup>41</sup> Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, <sup>42</sup> Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. <sup>43</sup> Of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah. <sup>44</sup> All these had married foreign women, and some of the women had even borne children.

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# APPENDIX 3

## *Persian Kings*

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**NOTE:** Babylon conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC. The Babylonian Empire fell to the Persians in 539 BC. The Persian Empire fell to the Greeks in 331 BC.

“The Persian Empire is important to the history and development of civilization. It had major effects on religion, law, politics, and economics. The impact came through the Jews, the Bible, contacts with the Greeks, and through Alexander the Great’s incorporation of ideas and architecture from the Persians.”

— Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary

### **CYRUS THE GREAT (559-530 BC)**

Grandson of Astyages, king of Media; Son of Cambyses I (Claimed the Medo-Persian throne by organizing the Persians and revolting against both his grandfather and father.)

Conquered Babylon (539 BC)

First group of exiles returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel (538 BC)

Temple rebuilding begins (536 BC)

### **CAMBYSES II (530-522 BC)**

Son of Cyrus the Great

### **DARIUS THE GREAT (522-486 BC)**

Cousin of Cambyses II

Temple reconstruction completed (515 BC)

### **XERXES I (486-465 BC)**

Son of Darius the Great

Hebrew name is Ahasuerus

King from the book of Esther

### **ARTAXERXES I (465-424 BC)**

Son of Xerxes I

Second group of exiles returned under the leadership of Ezra (458 BC)

Third group of exiles returned under the leadership of Nehemiah (445 BC):

# APPENDIX 4

## *Memory Passage*

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**“SANCTIFY THEM IN THE TRUTH; YOUR WORD IS TRUTH.” (JOHN 17:17)**

*Hide God’s Word in your heart. Let’s memorize the following passage this semester:*

<sup>4</sup> *“Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.*

<sup>5</sup> *And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God, <sup>6</sup> saying:*

*‘O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens. <sup>7</sup> From the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt. And for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today. <sup>8</sup> But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery. <sup>9</sup> For we are slaves. Yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to grant us some reviving to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us protection in Judea and Jerusalem.’”*

(Ezra 9:4-9)

