

Access the Bible

Tualatin Presbyterian Church

Ezra Outline

Introduction: Ezra and Nehemiah form a kind of two-volume history of what took place in Jerusalem after the Jews were freed from Babylon. The book of Ezra focuses on the rebuilding of the temple and the work of the chief priest, Ezra. You will note a much more complicated literary texture in these books- including third person narrative, material from letters, and, for the first time, the appearance of first person narratives.

Historically, we call this period of history the restoration, as the Jews are being restored to their homeland. One characteristic of this period is an extreme tension between the Jews whom the Babylonians left behind, and the Jews returning to rebuild. This family tension, plus the dire circumstances, lead to the uncomfortable jingoism and xenophobia we hear in both Ezra and Nehemiah. It is vital to pair restoration history with books like Jonah and Ruth that both point to Abram's call to be a blessing to all people and not just his own.

Chapter 1: Cyrus frees Israel to rebuild the temple; gifts offered from Neb's treasury

Chapter 2: List of those returning

Chapter 3: Worship restored; foundation for new temple laid- mixed emotion

Chapter 4: Division between "people of the land" and those returned; letter to Artaxerxes and his reply letter ordering the rebuilding stopped

Chapter 5: Haggai and Zechariah prophesy to the people to continue building; letter to Darius

Chapter 6: Darius' decree supporting construction; temple finished, dedicated, and Passover celebrated

Chapter 7: Ezra's entrance in second wave; Ezra's letter from Artaxerxes supporting him

Chapter 8: List of others returning with Ezra; Shift to first person- Ezra's account of his return

Chapter 9: Issue of mixed marriages; Ezra's prayer

Chapter 10: People's response of "unmixing"

Stories to know: Friction between those who stayed and those who returned (4:1-6); Second temple completed (6:13-22); Ezra's decree against mixing (Chapter 10:9-17)