

INTRODUCTION TO EZRA  
(Ezra 1:1)

I. Context

A. Influences on the Jewish CAPTIVES

1. They have been SETTLED in communities and engaging in normal AGRICULTURE or TRADE
2. They were PROSPEROUS, had RIGHTS as citizens of the empire(s), and a high degree of INDEPENDENCE/AUTONOMY
3. Their principal spoken LANGUAGE became Aramaic
4. Jeremiah's messages were critical for the SURVIVAL of the Jewish FAITH
5. Ezekiel's emphasis on Israel's WORSHIP, LAND, and their being GOD'S people shaped the messages of Ezra and Nehemiah

B. The Jews who RETURNED

1. ALL were glad, but FEW returned (2:64-65)
2. They settled JURUSALEM and its SUBURBS

C. The AUTHOR

1. Ezra was of the HIGH-PRIESTLY line of Hilkiah (7:1; cf. 2 Kings 23:24)
2. He was a "scribe SKILLED in the LAW of Moses" (7:6-21)
3. He was a GODLY man

II. Theology

A. The continuity of God's PLAN and PEOPLE

1. God had PRESERVED them in their captivity
  2. They would RESUME their WORSHIP
  3. God had used FOREIGN rulers to fulfill His PURPOSES
  4. God was now RESTORING them to fulfill His PROMISES
- B. The need for SEPARATION from defilement or syncretism
- C. The absolute AUTHORITY of SCRIPTURE
1. They assume it provided the historic revelation of GOD'S WILL
  2. They demonstrate the POWER of God through WRITTEN texts
- D. The centrality of WORSHIP
1. The returning exiles first BUILT an ALTAR
  2. They REBUILT the TEMPLE
  3. TRUE worship required INDIVIDUALS to be in a right relation to God
- E. The importance of PRAYER
- F. The nature and significance of HISTORY
1. Ezra and Nehemiah present a THEOLOGICAL HISTORY
  2. They record that which demonstrates God's PROVIDENCE
  3. They stressed that the exile was God's PUNISHMENT for SIN
  4. God's blessings come from His GRACE and MERCY
  5. They recognize the PARTIAL fulfillment of the remnant prophecy, but that there would be GREATER fulfillment in the future