

The Scriptures Summarized / Book 15 — Ezra

The next two volumes in our English translations might have also been combined as 1 volume even though there is some evidence of more than 1 author. (Ezra 7:25-28; Neh. 1:1). The first century Jewish historian Josephus, the Jewish Talmud as well as the Septuagint, each have the material combined. This makes sense because this body of information ends the historical portion of the OT.

The early church father, Origen, separated the material into I & II Ezra, as did Jerome who translated the Latin versions. English versions use the 2 main characters for titles.

Just as the exile to Babylon occurred in 3 stages, so did the return. Ezra documents the first 2 groups of returning captives. Restoration is the term which best describes the entire era.

The first remnant rebuilt the altar, repopulated Jerusalem and laid the foundation to rebuild the temple. The work was halted for over a decade due to organized opposition. However, God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the nation to continue the project. After reauthorization was obtained from King Darius, the Temple was finally completed.

The next remnant to return was much smaller. Even with the Temple now rebuilt, the religious condition of the nation remained poor, needing revival. Sinful intermarriage of Jews with foreign non-believers had caused the remnant to become morally compromised. Ezra had devoted himself to study the Torah. He was the perfect priest to bring spiritual reform by instructing these untaught Jews the Law of Moses.

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

- I. God uses Royal Princes to bring His People Back (chs. 1-6)
 - A. Releasing the Captives (ch. 1)
 - 1. The decree of Cyrus the Persian
 - 2. The departure under Prince Sheshbazzar (1:8)
 - B. The Register of Returnees Documented (ch. 2)
 - C. The Revival of Sacrificial Worship (ch. 3)
 - 1. The altar rebuilt by Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel the prince
 - 2. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated
 - 3. The Foundation is begun on the Temple site
 - D. The Recorded Oppositions to Rebuilding (ch. 4)
 - 1. Opposition during the reign of Cyrus
 - 2. Opposition during the reign of Xerxes
 - 3. Opposition during the reign of Artaxerxes
 - E. The Resumption and Completion of the Temple (chs. 5-6)
 - 1. Initiated by Prophets Haggai and Zechariah
 - 2. Investigated by Governor Tattenai
 - 3. Official Correspondence and Confirmation (5:6-12)
 - 4. Completion, Dedication and Celebration of the Temple
- II. God uses a Ready Priest to Bring more People Back (chs. 7-10)
 - A. Ezra's Return to Jerusalem (chs. 7-8)
 - 1. Ezra's Mandated Task
 - 2. Ezra's Multitude of Teammates
 - B. Ezra's Reforms of Judaism (chs. 9-10)
 - 1. The Message that had to be delivered
 - 2. The Marriages that had to be dissolved