



**Week 1**

# **Ezra 1-2**

Copyright © 2016 Holli Worthington. This document may be reproduced for learning purposes but not for profit.

# The First Return

## Day 1- Ezra 1-2

Read Ezra 1-2 in your Bible.

- Pray as you read, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you in understanding, praise, confession, thanksgiving, and petition in light of the truth you are reading.
- Underline/highlight key words, phrases, and verses that stand out to you.

## Day 2- Ezra 1:1-2

1. According to verse 1, how do we see God initiating the proclamation that Cyrus made?

Digging Deeper: Read Jeremiah 29:10-14. What was the word of the LORD that Jeremiah had prophesied that was about to be fulfilled? What in this prophecy would make the exiles want to trust God and return to Israel? How does seeing these verses in the context of all we have studied in 2 Chronicles impact you?

2. What do we learn about God from verse 1?

3. How does Cyrus refer to God in verse 2?

Scholar's Note: "The God of heaven" is a phrase that occurs primarily in the postexilic books. Seventeen of the twenty- two occurrences are in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel.<sup>1</sup> It was a title [God] took when his throne was removed from earth, and he gave his people into the hands of the Gentiles. He forsook the temple at Jerusalem, dissolved the theocracy and became "the God of heaven".<sup>2</sup>

Digging Deeper: Read Proverbs 21:1. How is the truth of this verse demonstrated in the first few verses of Ezra? How does it apply to us today? What should be our response to the truth found in these passages?



Proverbs 21:1 tells us that God directs the hearts of rulers wherever he chooses. Sometimes God stirs up a king's heart, like in the case of Cyrus and other times he hardens a king's heart, like in Pharaoh's case. We cannot always understand what God is doing, but we do know that he is always working out his redemptive purposes for his glory and our good.

- How well do you keep the perspective that God is working out his plan in our rulers whether you think they are good or bad?
  
- Are you more concerned about your own comfort and well being than with God's purposes in the world?

Instead of complaining about our government, pray for them and pray that you will trust God's sovereignty in the way he is carrying out his plan.

---

<sup>1</sup> Expositor's Commentary

<sup>2</sup> H.A. Ironside

## Day 3- Ezra 1:2-4

Read the Scripture that goes with each prophesy and fulfillment and answer the question.

4. Prophesy: Isaiah 44:28. Through the prophesy of Isaiah how did God describe the Persian king Cyrus and how he would use him?

Fulfillment: Ezra 1:2-3. What was God going to accomplish through Cyrus and the return of the exiles according to verses 2 and 3?

5. Prophesy: Isaiah 48:20. What did God call his people to do?

Fulfillment: Ezra 1:4. How was the return and restoration of the temple going to take place?



God fulfills his Word and keeps his promises! What does it mean to you to know that you have a heavenly Father who always keeps his promises? Numbers 23:19 says, “God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? In addition to this, all the

promises of God find their yes in Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20)! The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee. Everything God has promised is fulfilled through his son, Jesus.

- Have you ever had a disappointment or heartbreak in your life that has led you to believe that God does not always keep his promises?
- Does our frustration with God come from his failure to keep his promises or from our expectation that he should do something he has not promised to do?<sup>3</sup>

Spend time now thanking God that he is faithful and true and you can trust him completely. If you've ever had disappointment that has shaken your faith in God consider sharing with your group or talking with your leader for encouragement and direction.

#### Day 4- Ezra 1:5-11

6. Cyrus did not *command* the exiles to leave Babylon and return to Israel. Why did they return?

Picture and Ponder: "The voluntariness was a lovely evidence of grace working in their souls"- H.A. Ironside

7. What Cyrus decreed in verse 4, we see happening in verse 6. What kind of help did the exiles receive?

---

<sup>3</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr.

Digging Deeper: The return of the exiles is sometimes called the 2<sup>nd</sup> exodus. Read Exodus 3:21-22. 12:35-36 How did God use the Egyptians in a similar way?

8. Prophecy: Jeremiah 27:21-22. What did God say about the temple items?

Fulfillment: Ezra 1:7. According to verse 7, what did Cyrus supply?



Every article of gold and silver was a witness to God's protection and care.<sup>4</sup> Seventy years had passed, and I'm sure most people chalked the temple items up as lost for good. Yet God graciously delivered them back to his people. Who would have ever thought that the new, conquering ruler of Babylon would not only let the exiles return to their homeland, but also send with them the treasures that were plundered? Their own sin got them to this place, but God restores them generously, not grudgingly! God deals the same way with those who are in Christ. He has restored us and given us more than we could ever imagine in Jesus. The riches of Jesus are unsearchable (Eph. 3:8)! Charles Spurgeon puts it this way. "You may look and study and ponder, but Jesus is a greater Savior than you think Him to be even when your thoughts are at their best. My Lord is more ready to pardon than you are to sin, more able to forgive than you are to transgress. My Master is more willing to supply your needs than you are to confess them. Do not tolerate small thoughts of the Lord Jesus." Spend some time praying and meditating on Ephesians 3:20-21.

---

<sup>4</sup> Chronological Life Application Study Bible

## Day 5- Ezra 2

*It is tempting to want to skip chapter 2 with its list of names because it seems boring and irrelevant to us. But in these lists God shows how carefully he was taking note of each individual, each family, and the work they accomplished for him. From these lists we can learn how highly God values all that is done from devotion of heart to himself and for the glory of his name.<sup>5</sup>*

9. In chapter 1, we saw that God stirred the hearts of the people to leave Babylon and return to the Promised Land. Chapter 2 goes on to list different categories of people that God stirred up to accomplish the work he wanted done. In 2:2 we see that God stirred up leaders to bring the people back. List the other categories of people mentioned in Chapter 2 that were needed for what God was bringing about.

2:2a- leaders

2:2b- \_\_\_\_\_

2:36- \_\_\_\_\_

2:40- \_\_\_\_\_

2:43- \_\_\_\_\_

2:55- \_\_\_\_\_

10. Verse 59 lists another group of people who left Babylon. What was unique about this group?

---

<sup>5</sup> H.A. Ironside

11. According to verses 61-63, what happened to the sons of the priests who were returning but could not prove their lineage?

12. Recall from 2 Chronicles 26:16-19 what happened to King Uzziah when he entered the temple and took on the role of priest even though he wasn't in the priestly line. How is the exclusion of those who could not prove their priestly lineage showing a concern for holiness as well as a concern for their safety?

Scholar's Note: "The Urim and Thummim were used as lots to determine the will of the Lord. These were two small stones kept in the high priest's breastpiece, one indicating yes and the other no. A question would be put, a stone drawn out, and the answer would be determined."-James M. Hamilton Jr.



Psalm 147 was written when the exiles returned to Jerusalem. Spend some time meditating on this Psalm. Then pray through it, thanking God for the restoration and healing he has brought in your life, praising him for his power, sovereignty and understanding, confessing your pride, and asking him to help you put all your hope in his unfailing love.

One Thing: Look back over this week's study. Pick one thing that God impressed on you, convicted you about, or something new that you learned and write it here.

How will knowing this impact the way you think and act?

