

The book of



chapters

1 - 3

Day 1

1. The book of Ezra shares the events of God's people after captivity in Babylon. This week we will be looking at Ezra 1-3. If you listen to it read on the YouVersion app it should take you about 7 minutes. I like to listen to the chapter read aloud while highlighting or underlining things I feel are of special interest. Try doing this for these first three chapters and see if you don't learn a great deal before starting your study guide.

2. Ezra's name means Jehovah helps. Ezra was a priest, a scribe, and a great leader. Even though the author is not specifically named, theologians agree that it was Ezra who wrote the events of this book. We will see that his life was spent leading God's people, with God's help. Ezra knew the words of the prophet Jeremiah and he believed that God would do all he had promised for Israel. Read Jeremiah 25:8-11 and 29:10. Where have the Israelites lived for the last 70 years?

3. After reading Jeremiah 25:8-11, why had God sent the children of Israel into captivity?

Read Leviticus 25:1-5; what had God commanded their forefathers concerning the land?

4. Read Leviticus 26:33-35 and 2 Chronicles 36:15-21, had the Israelites obediently observed the Sabbath year?

What was going on in Israel while the Israelites were in captivity?

5. What time is mentioned in Ezra 1:1?

Historians tell us that Cyrus was king of Persia 539-530 BC.

2 Chronicles 36:5-7 tell us Jehoiakim reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years, and he was not a good king. He did not lead the people well. He did evil. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take them captive to \_\_\_\_\_. This captivity took place in 605 BC.



6. Ezra 1:1 says, “In the first year of Cyrus King of Persia, in order to \_\_\_\_\_ the word of the \_\_\_\_\_ spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of Cyrus king of Persia to make a \_\_\_\_\_ throughout his realm and to put it in \_\_\_\_\_.”

7. King Cyrus was not a follower of Jehovah. He obviously had heard of the God of the Israelites but that did not make him a follower. Read Isaiah 44:24-28; who is specifically named in verse 28?

Who is speaking in this passage of scripture?

What does he say about himself?

As you read verse 24, I hope your attention was drawn to who is speaking, “the LORD your Redeemer.” Are you familiar with the difference between LORD and Lord in the Bible. When you read this word and it is in all capital letters that is the Hebrew name YHWH. Ancient Hebrew did not use vowels. It is the name Jehovah. This is the name God used to reveal himself to Moses in the burning bush, “I AM.” When the word is written Lord, that is most often the name Adonai, which emphasizes his lordship.

8. Isaiah prophesied from approximately 704-681 BC. Cyrus ruled from 539-530 BC. How many years separated Isaiah’s time as a prophet and Cyrus rule as king of Persia?

What would you think if you read your name in such a specific prophecy written that many years earlier?

Day 2

9. What did King Cyrus' proclamation acknowledge about God? (Ezra 1:2)

10. According to verse 2 what was the divine assignment given to King Cyrus?

11. Specifically, what permission were the Israelites granted? Why would this be an unusual thing for this king to do for his vassals?

12. Scripture says that King Cyrus had the decree put in writing. Kings often had their decrees written down. Why do you think it was important for them to have a written copy?

Do you like to see things in writing? Why or why not?

13. Ezra 1:2-5 is the decree of King Cyrus. Write down the specifics of this decree.

What did he declare about God?

Who did this decree pertain to?

What were they given permission to do?



14. Think of the last big project you were called on to help with, did everyone do the same thing? What was your part?

When a project is completed, it is less about one task or assignment, but more about the faithfulness of each person to his part.

When my children were young, they would point to a building on N.W. Expressway in Oklahoma City and call it “Papa’s Building.” My stepfather was one of several structural engineers working on that project. I still smile when I drive by that building.

15. Verse 5 may be my favorite verse in this chapter. Notice who led the way.

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16. Decrees of King Cyrus were of utmost importance. The Medo-Persian empire ruled the entire area from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf and north to the Caspian Sea. This decree would include all the Israelites taken captive by Babylon. Babylon conquered Judah in 605 BC, it is now 538 BC. Jeremiah 29:10 had clearly prophesied their captivity would last 70 years. What thoughts might these captives be thinking after all this time?

Have you ever had to wait a designated period for something you really wanted?

Were you watching the clock or calendar waiting expectantly?

I seriously doubt any prisoner would have to be reminded that the day of their release was nearing.

17. Ezra 1:5 said, “everyone whose heart God had moved, prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.” What type of things might this preparation include?



Day 3

18. Cyrus did not merely grant permission for the exiles to return, what else did he do?

19. Do the words and actions of King Cyrus sound like a normal response of a king's first year of rule?

Kings who have just come into power seldom have their thoughts on those under them. They often want to begin making a name for themselves. One more time, who was the initiator of this decree? (Ezra 1:2)  
What does Proverbs 21:1 say about rulers and their decisions?

20. The people who returned were from two tribes. Read Ezra 1:5 and 2:1. Which two tribes were they from?

What do you believe motivated them to return to a land that had been left in rubble for so many years?

Often when we look around, we see lives of great potential filled with the rubble and devastation of sin. This should not dissuade us but prompt us to pray even more diligently.

Who are you praying for?

Does the need look impossible?

Do you believe God can accomplish his will and rebuild a life?



21. Ezra 1:7-11 states Cyrus gave back the articles of the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had taken in his raid of Jerusalem. He had them brought to \_\_\_\_\_, to take an inventory.

Read Ezra 1:8-11, what do you learn about this Persian man?

Even though God's word does not describe this man, what character qualities might be true of him?

22. Next, we read the details of inventory taken. List the articles.

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“In all there were \_\_\_\_\_ articles of gold and of silver.”

23. Just like Daniel who received a new Babylonian name when taken into captivity, the Israelite man named in verse 8 did as well. Commentaries say Sheshbazzar was more than likely the Babylonian name for Zerubbabel. We will read much more about him in the next few chapters. Why do you believe the captives were given new Babylonian names when they arrived?

24. After careful inventory was completed, the articles of the temple were then given to \_\_\_\_\_. (Ezra 1:8) Despite the fact that so few details are given concerning this man, what words might be used to describe him?

Could these words be used to describe you?



25. Ezra 2 lists the names of those exiles returning with Sheshbazzar. “The whole company numbered \_\_\_\_\_” Ezra 2:64 This must have been an amazing sight to see however, this was still just a remnant of the Israelites in Babylon.

26. What would be the reason for this detailed accounting of those who chose to return to their homeland?

Who might find this list of great importance in the future?

27. Because the people have been exiles for 70 years, being part of this returning remnant would mean leaving what they had known for a place they had only heard stories about. What might have been some of the motivating factors of this returning remnant?

28. What might these people have been leaving behind?

29. Do you find it difficult to make big life changes?

30. What do you do to make a big change a little easier?

**Day 4**

31. Who are the leaders mentioned in this first return trip? Ezra 2:1-2

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32. Have you heard any of these names before?

Nehemiah was not the same as the man who led the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem some 80 years later. Mordecai may or may not be the same as the uncle who brought up Esther, but it is not likely. These were very common names at that time.

33. King Cyrus has not given back the land. He simply allowed the exiles to return home. These Israelites will no longer be exiles living in Babylon, but are they free?

34. Sadly, there were some returnees whose name would not be written on the list of those who returned first. Read Ezra 2:59, what was the problem?

35. Read Ezra 2:62-63 describe a problem, some of the priests were experiencing. What was the problem and how would it be resolved?

Read Exodus 28:30, Leviticus 8:7-8, and Numbers 27:21 what do you learn about the Urim and Thummim. Urim means “lights” and Thummim means “perfection”

36. Even though it was only a remnant of the Israelites, can you imagine the scene? One could have seen this traveling band from a great distance away. The total number of people traveling from Babylon to Jerusalem was nearly 50,000 people.

What was the number of animals taken with them? Ezra 2:66-67

It would be very difficult to have a group of this size travel unnoticed. Do you think there might have been dangers along the way?

What kind of dangers?

They would need to rely on Jehovah Rohi, the Lord my shepherd. He will always fulfill his purposes. He will protect, provide, direct, and care for His people.



37. Read Jeremiah 52:28-30, how many Jews were taken into Babylonian captivity by King Nebuchadnezzar in his three sieges?

7th year of King Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (598 BC) \_\_\_\_\_

18th year of King Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (587 BC) \_\_\_\_\_

23rd year of King Nebuchadnezzar’s reign ( 582 BC) \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of Israelites taken into captivity \_\_\_\_\_

38. Do you see any similarities between the years of Babylonian captivity and the days of Egyptian captivity?

Read Genesis 46:26-27. When Jacob and his family moved to Egypt, how large was their family? \_\_\_\_\_ persons

After 430 years living in Egypt, many of those years as slaves to the Egyptians, Moses led the people out. Read Numbers 1:44-46, what is the number of men, 20 years and older?

This number could be doubled to include the women and that still would not be counting the children.

39. Which of God’s promises, given to Abraham, do we see happening while the children of Israel are in captivity?

If you are having trouble remembering God’s promises to Abraham, look at Genesis 12:2: 15:5: 17:3-8.

**Day 5**

40. Look at the Hebrew calendar at the end of this study guide. What month is referred to in Ezra 3:1?

41. What is the first thing we see them do when they arrive in Jerusalem?

42. What important fact do you learn about the people in Ezra 3:1?

Previously they had been exiles in a foreign land. How important is it for those who returned to bond their hearts together once again. They no longer see themselves as exiles in a foreign land. They now “assembled as \_\_\_\_\_ in Jerusalem.”

43. Have you ever been a part of a new company, church, or ministry? Wise leaders are purposeful at uniting hearts from the beginning. Helping any group find ways to bond is imperative to a strong foundation. Why do you believe this would be important?

How important is national identity?

44. In Ezra 3:3-6, we read the people were back in the land. What do we see them doing?

45. The people had only been back a short time and we read they began trading with the people of Sidon and Tyre to get \_\_\_\_\_ that would be needed to rebuild the temple.

46. Look at the map at the end of this lesson to locate Sidon, Tyre, Joppa, and Jerusalem. Why do you suppose they chose this route for bringing the beams to Jerusalem for the reconstruction project?

What geographical barriers do you see that could make it difficult to simply carry them directly to Jerusalem?

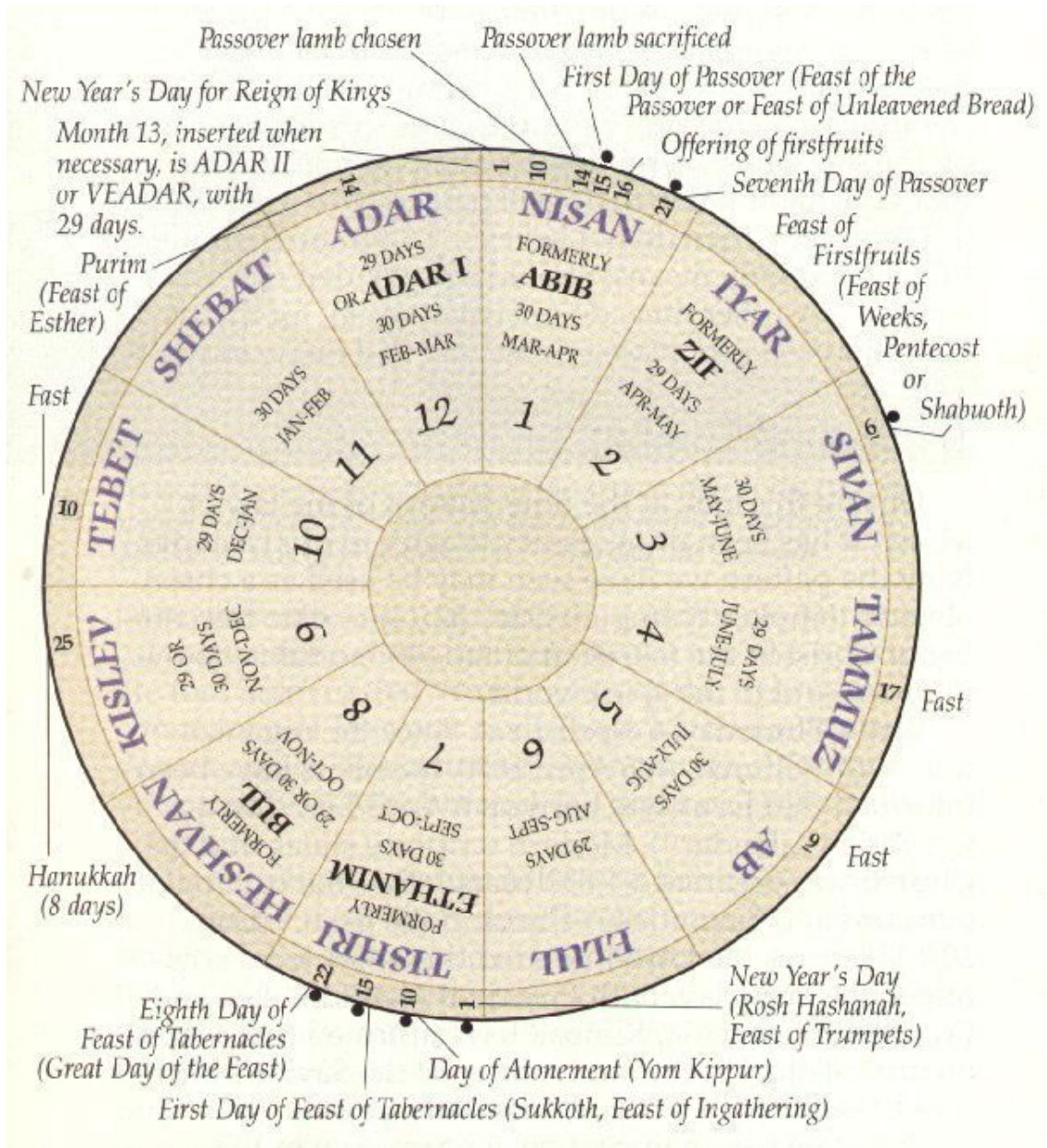
47. As the people begin their second year back in the land, (name the two leaders mentioned) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, with the help of all the people appointed men from the \_\_\_\_\_ tribe to organize the rebuilding process. (Ezra 3:8)

What were the specific requirements for these men?

48. Once the foundation had been laid for the temple, the people stopped to praise God. Read Ezra 3:11, what did they declare concerning the God they served?

49. Even though the people had much to celebrate, we see that some of older priests, Levites, and family heads who had seen the former temple wept. What does this suggest about this temple comparing it to the former temple built by Solomon?

Read 1 Kings 6:37-38, how long had it taken to build Solomon's temple?







# Biblical References

## Day 1

### **Question 2 - Jeremiah 25:8-11**

Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words, <sup>9</sup> I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” declares the LORD, “and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. <sup>10</sup> I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. <sup>11</sup> This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

### **Jeremiah 29:10**

This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.

### **Question 3 - Leviticus 25:1-5**

The LORD said to Moses at Mount Sinai, <sup>2</sup> “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. <sup>3</sup> For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. <sup>4</sup> But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. <sup>5</sup> Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest.

### **Question 4- Leviticus 26:33-35**

<sup>33</sup> I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. <sup>34</sup> Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. <sup>35</sup> All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it. <sup>36</sup> “ ‘As for those of you who are left, I will make their hearts so fearful in the lands of their enemies that the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. They will run as though fleeing from the sword, and they will fall, even though no one is pursuing them.

### **2 Chronicles 36:15-21**

<sup>15</sup> The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. <sup>16</sup> But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. <sup>17</sup> He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>18</sup> He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD’s temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. <sup>19</sup> They set fire to God’s temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. <sup>20</sup> He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors until the kingdom of Persia came to power. <sup>21</sup> The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

### **Question 5 - 2 Chronicles 36:5-7**

<sup>5</sup> Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God. <sup>6</sup> Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked him and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon. <sup>7</sup> Nebuchadnezzar also took to Babylon articles from the temple of the LORD and put them in his temple there.

### **Question 7 - Isaiah 44:24-28**

“This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb:

I am the LORD, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself, <sup>25</sup> who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, <sup>26</sup> who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited,’ of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be rebuilt,’ and of their ruins, ‘I will restore them,’ <sup>27</sup> who says to the watery deep, ‘Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,’ <sup>28</sup> who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.”’”

**Day 3**

### **Question 19 - Proverbs 21:1**

In the LORD’s hand the king’s heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.

**Day 4**

### **Question 35 - Exodus 28:30**

Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD.

### **Leviticus 8:7-8**

He put the tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him. He also fastened the ephod with a decorative waistband, which he tied around him. <sup>8</sup> He placed the breastpiece on him and put the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece.

### **Numbers 27:21**

He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the LORD. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in.”

### **Question 37 - Jeremiah 52:28-30**

This is the number of the people Nebuchadnezzar carried into exile: in the seventh year, 3,023 Jews; <sup>29</sup> in Nebuchadnezzar’s eighteenth year, 832 people from Jerusalem; <sup>30</sup> in his twenty-third year, 745 Jews taken into exile by Nebuzaradan the commander of the imperial guard. There were 4,600 people in all.



### **Question 38 - Genesis 46:26-27**

All those who went to Egypt with Jacob—those who were his direct descendants, not counting his sons' wives—numbered sixty-six persons. <sup>27</sup>With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all.

### **Numbers 1:44-46**

These were the men counted by Moses and Aaron and the twelve leaders of Israel, each one representing his family. <sup>45</sup>All the Israelites twenty years old or more who were able to serve in Israel's army were counted according to their families. <sup>46</sup>The total number was 603,550.

### **Question 39 - Genesis 12:2**

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

### **Genesis 15:5**

He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

### **Genesis 17:3-8**

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, <sup>4</sup>"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. <sup>6</sup>I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. <sup>7</sup>I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup>The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

**Day 5**

### **Question 49 - 1 Kings 6:37-38**

The foundation of the temple of the LORD was laid in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv. <sup>38</sup>In the eleventh year in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.

