

**Overview of Ezra**

**Theme:** The restoration of the spiritual heart of the nation.

**Timeline of Jews capture until their return:**

Prophesied in Is. 44:28 - 45:1 in 700 B.C.	⎵	605 B.C. - 1st exiles to Babylon
		597 B.C. - 2nd exile
		586 B.C. - 3rd exile & Jerusalem destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar
		539 B.C. - Cyrus, king of Persia, conquers Babylon
		537 B.C. - 50,000 Jews return to the land
		536 B.C. - Foundation of the temple laid
		536-520 B.C. - Work interrupted because of official opposition
		520 B.C. - Work resumed: ministry of Haggai & Zechariah
		515 B.C. - The temple completed
		458 B.C. - Ezra the scribe arrives in Jerusalem
444 B.C. - Nehemiah arrives, wall rebuilt, gates restored		

Ezra & Nehemiah were originally considered two parts of one book Ezra focuses on rebuilding the temple, and Nehemiah focuses on rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. Both books form the story of how God reestablishes Israel in the land He promised to her.

**Theme Verse:** Ezra 9:9 (read)

- The Book of Ezra is about Israel returning to her physical & spiritual foundations.

**Chapters 1-6** are about the Jews returning to the city of Jerusalem & preparing to construct the walls.

**Chapters 7-10** is when the 2nd group of Jews return to Israel. Ezra also begins teaching the Law because they were intermarrying & practicing pagan rituals they brought with them from captivity. They needed to **remember** the covenant they had made with God, **why** they were in that situation & **why** they had to go to Babylon & **why** they had been allowed to comeback.

This is indicative of us as humans who Christ redeemed with His blood, who go through life & become lazy in our faith sometimes looking back to the ways of our old self.

**In Ezra 7:10**, (read) Ezra answers the call to teach the ways of God again.

In your life, think back to the times you regressed in your faith. Was there someone God brought into your life and “woke” you up from your complacent faith? And/or has God used you to remind someone of their first love and stirred their hearts back to God?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Being used by God is part of Him returning/reminding us of our spiritual foundation in His Son Jesus.

Notice the events in verse 10 that lead Ezra to be used by God.

~ 10 Now Ezra had **determined in his heart** to **study** the law of the Lord, **obey** it, and **teach** its statutes and ordinances in Israel. -- Ezra 7:10 (CSB) ~

1. He **determined** in his heart... God can do anything in our life but He doesn't force Himself in, He shows/ed His love in His Son and waits for us to make a decision to truly follow Him.
2. ...to **study** the law of the the Lord... our decision to follow Jesus must be followed up by getting to know Him by drawing near reading **and** studying His Word to get a deeper understanding of who He is and what He did for us!
3. ...**obey** it... This is where the rubber meets the road. It's easy to read what we should do, how we are to have relationships etc. but to obey is another thing altogether. But since Jesus work on the cross is interwoven through every book of the Bible, we don't have to look far for a reason to obey the One who saved, is saving and will save us from eternal torment and suffering!
4. ...and **teach** its statutes and ordinances. If we are drawing near God, getting to know Him, and making it a daily thing, we will hear the Holy Spirits stirring in our lives, louder and clearer, prompting us to take the next step. That next step is speaking truth in love into others' lives. We are being sanctified every day by our first love! (Phil. 1:6)

To be used by God, we must first start by choosing to love Him!

Mark 12:29-31, 29 Jesus answered, "The most important is Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your **heart**, (our command center) with all your **soul** (our feelings & emotions), with all your **mind** (making the choice to obey), and with all your **strength** (actions). 31 The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other command greater than these." -- Mark 12:29-31 (CSB)

The "loving your neighbor as yourself" means to treat them as you would yourself. This is second is because if you treat yourself right by taking care of yourself spiritually, you will be able to love others well like Jesus.

### **The book of Ezra begins a new story in Israels history.**

→ **From Genesis to Deuteronomy**, God calls out Israel as a special nation & teaches them His laws. - the chosen

(We as Gentiles, grafted into God's family, are called by God because, like Israel, God chooses to use those the world doesn't think much of. Read Deut. 7:7-9)

→ **From Joshua to 2 Chronicles**, God gives Israel a land & a king but Israel loses both when they consistently disobey God. - Covenant relationship

(This is a picture of God's covenant relationship with Israel/us. In Genesis 17 God makes a covenant with Abraham and in Luke 22:19-20 God made a new covenant with us when Jesus offered up His body on the cross and poured out His blood so that we might be forgiven of our sins.)

Ezra calls attention to Israels covenant history with the Lord God made promises to Israel through Moses:

1. If the people obeyed Him, they would enjoy a good land & prosperity but,
2. If the people disobeyed Him, they would face punishment & exile.

The people disobeyed & God kept His promise (Ezra 9:7). God also made another promise that He would gather her back to her land after He had punished her (Deut. 30:3). The book of Ezra shows how God kept that promise. And by extension, how we keeps His promises to us today.

→ **From Ezra**, God restores Israel from exile in their own land again. - restoration

God, unlike pagan gods, is in the business of restoration. Restoring us to Himself. Remember, we were created to worship Him, to replace those whom He cast out of heaven. We have been given a special part to play in His creation - to worship Him! In everything we do, say, think and in every relationship we have here on earth.

- Even the angels who are of vastly higher intelligence than us, long to know God as He has allowed us too! (1 Pet. 1:12)
- God has promised to make enemies our footstool. Then angels weren't given this promise, they are sent to be ministering spirits to us! (Heb. 1:13-14)
- But God, in His long-suffering, chooses to restore us to Himself even while we hated Him and chose/choose our sin over Him! (Rom. 5:8)

**As we go through the book of Ezra, let's keep a couple things in mind:**

- Where is God perhaps disciplining us & then bringing us back into relationship with Him?
- How are we, as leaders at Calvary Arvada, guiding the church in helping others as well as ourselves & our families, reestablish true worship in our hearts?
- Where is God leading us in stirring up the community through love in bringing them into Relationship with Jesus and teaching them how & why we worship Jesus!