



# Ezra

God chose a Man for Spiritual Revival

## Introduction:

### *Importance of Spiritual Renewal/Transformation (Isaiah 40:28-31)*

God of the Bible is the Creator of the Universe. He will not grow tired or weary and gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

*“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but **those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.** They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint”* Isaiah 40:30-31

Eagles are beautiful, powerful and magnificent birds. They fly high and see untold sights of God's creation. Every child of God (EU member/Committee Member) need God's renewing strength day by day

## **Importance of Spiritual Renewal/Transformation (Isaiah 40:28-31)**

The Eagle has the longest life-span of its species up to 70 years. However, when the Eagle reaches 40, its long and flexible talons can no longer grab prey which serves as food. Its long and sharp beak becomes bent. Its old-aged and heavy wings, due to their thick feathers, become stuck to its chest and make it difficult to fly.

the eagle is left with only two options:

- ✓ Die
- ✓ Go through a painful process of change which lasts 150 days (5 months)

The process requires...

- the eagle fly to a mountaintop and sit on its nest.
- the eagle knocks its beak against a rock until it plucks it out.
- the eagle will wait for a new beak to grow back
- then it will pluck out its talons. When its new talons grow back,
- then it starts plucking its old-aged feathers.

***And after five months (150 days),*** the eagle takes its famous flight of rebirth and lives for 30 more years.

## Introduction:

*Cyrus, the king of Persia & his edict to the Captive Jews*

*(2 Chr. 36:22-23 & Ezra 1:1-3):*

- to return to their homeland from Babylon*
- to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem*
- Provided the funds for travel and reconstruction*

The people of Judah were taken captive from Jerusalem to Babylon in *three stages*, returned also in *three stages*:

## Introduction to the book of Ezra :

The people of Judah were taken captive from Jerusalem to Babylon in *three stages*, & returned also from Babylon in *three stages*

Ezra 1-6 Chapters: The first Part of Ezra (20 years duration):

1-2 Chapters: Returns to Jerusalem (*The first group*)

-the decree of **Cyrus, the king of Persia** in 538 B.C (2 Chr. 36:22-23 & Ezra 1:1-3) to go back and provided funds for travel & rebuild Jerusalem temple & the list of 50,000 of returned Jews under **Zerubbabel** the governor, prince of Judah in Babylon (Ezra 1-6; ca. 536)

3-4 chapters: Foundation and Opposition to rebuild the temple:

-An altar is built, and **the foundation** of the temple is laid (Ezra 3)  
-**The opposition** from the local Samaritans & stopped the rebuilding Jerusalem temple for 20 years (536-516) and shifted their focus to build their houses (Haggai 1) temple construction stopped for 15 years



CYRUS

DARIUS

Esther

XERXES

ARTAXERXES

THAT'S SURELY IT'S

They say they can do that!

Project interrupted

No Jews Allowed



Haggai

Zechariah

**ZERUBBABEL**

Ezra 1-6



**EZRA**

Ezra 7-10



**NEHEMIAH**

Nehemiah 1-13

### 5-6 chapters: Motivation and Completion of rebuilding the temple:

- God motivated thru Prophet Haggai & Zechariah & corrected the focus/priority and the temple work was resumed in 520 B.C (Ezra 5:1)
- the physical temple was completed after four years, during **the reign of Darius** in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:15)
- the Passover was observed (Ezra 6:19): Repentance & Rededication
- However, their spiritual condition is very poor: Spiritual Renewal is the need of the hour

Ezra 7-10 Chapters: Spiritual Renewal and Break through: (**The second group** returned with Ezra in 457 B.C)

Esther 1-8 Chapters (4 years duration): divides the book of Ezra 6:22 to 7:1 (58 years duration)

Nehemiah 1-13 Chapters: **The third group** returned in 444 B.C. with Nehemiah

## Introduction to the book of Ezra:

**The book of Ezra** consists of two portions separated by the events that took place in 58 years were described in the book of Esther (Ezra 6:22 from 7:1)

### **The first portion (1-6 Chapters):**

**Ezra 1-2 Chapters: *The first group of exiled Jews returns to Jerusalem:***

- the decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C to Jews to go back and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.
- the list of those who returned;

**Ezra 3-6 chapters: *Rebuilding the temple:***

- An altar is built and the foundation of the temple is laid.
- The opposition from the local Samaritans & temple construction stopped for 15 years
- the encouragement of Haggai and Zechariah the temple work is resumed in 520 B.C.
- the temple was completed (after four years) in about 516 B.C., during the reign of Darius and the Passover was observed

***The gap between 6<sup>th</sup> chapter and 7<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Ezra is 58 years: The events took place in 58 years were described in the book of Esther***







## Introduction to the book of Ezra:

**The Second portion (Ezra 7-10 Chapters):** The personal history of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem with a group of exiles in 457 B.C. and his religious reformation

### *Ezra's return to Jerusalem:*

- ✓ The decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. commissions Ezra to return to Jerusalem with huge amounts of gold and silver and temple articles originally plundered from the temple by the invading Babylonians.
- ✓ Ezra and his party fast and pray for God's protection (8:21-23).
- ✓ The journey of three and a half months with God's protection (8:31)
- ✓ They arrived safely to Jerusalem.
- ✓ The list of people who accompanied Ezra.
- ✓ Ezra is confronted by a situation in Jerusalem that made him heartbroken and upset: the mixed marriages of People, Priests, Levites and Rulers with the heathen peoples in the area. It is the practice forbidden by God (Deut. 7:1-5) not out of racial prejudice but because it led to idolatry and weakened their resolve to obey and serve God.
- ✓ The 113 men contracted the marriages in defiance of God's law (Ezra 10:18-44)



## Ezra, who brought His people back to God

### 1. Ezra the Man of God's Cause: counted the cost

**Ezra the Scribe,** prepared and sent by the King of kings

When God needed a man of sterling character and strong conviction...

- ✓ God chose Ezra, the priest was a faithful servant. Ezra means “help,” as in helping to restore and reform Judah.
- ✓ Ezra was a direct descendant of the priestly family that included Eleazar, Phineas, Zadok and Aaron (Ezra 7:1-5).
- ✓ He was “a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6)
- ✓ He was a scholar of the Scriptures, the priest, the scribe, an “expert in the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of His statutes to Israel” (Ezra 7:11).
- ✓ God recognized Ezra as a man of judgment (Ezra 7:25). He was conscientious (Ezra 9:3). He was profound lover of God's Word and devoted himself to study, obey and teach God's law (Ezra 7:10).
- ✓ He was an instructor in the law of God.
- ✓ Ezra found the spiritual strength he needed through prayer and fasting.

# Ezra, who brought His people back to God

## 1. Ezra the Man of God's Cause: counted the cost

### EZRA, SENT BY THE KING

- ✓ He was willing to sacrifice his own needs—and encourage others to do the same—to extol and honor God.
- ✓ Ezra had direct access and gained favor, trust, and respect of King Artaxerxes, the king of Persia.
- ✓ Ezra was one of the leaders of the Jews in exile and represented Jewish people before the king of Persia.
- ✓ King Artaxerxes granted him a commission to return to Jerusalem (457 B.C.) and granted him all that he asked' (Ezra 7:6).
- ✓ Ezra's imperial commission authorized him to appoint magistrates and judges, to teach 'the law of your God,' and to punish those who failed to obey it (Ezra 7:25). It gave him an official Persian title, 'the scribe of the law of the God of heaven' (7:12) - in modern terms, 'Secretary of state for Jewish affairs.'

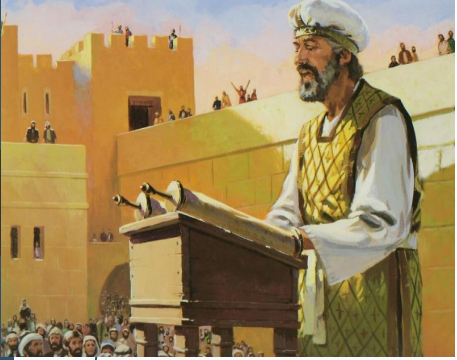
# Ezra, who brought His people back to God

## 1. Ezra the Man of God's Cause: counted the cost

### EZRA, SENT BY THE KING

- ✓ The King invited all who wanted to go—Jews, Israelites, priests and Levites—to accompany Ezra to Jerusalem. However, only 1,754 chose to make the journey, compared with 49,897 who had returned with Zerubbabel.
- ✓ He gave up a position of power and influence in the secular world to serve the Lord's purposes.
- ✓ He left Babylonia, the most influential city in the Empire and returned to Jerusalem, a remote area. Ezra arrived in Jerusalem with both the power and zeal to reorganize the Jewish community around the law”
- ✓ Ezra arrived after seventy years the first return of exiles at the opportune time (Kairos). The temple had been finished, and the walls of the city had been partially repaired. Yet much remained undone.





## Ezra, who brought His people back to God

### **2. Ezra the Man of God's Word**

- ✓ Ezra was 'skilled in the Law of Moses that the LORD, the God of Israel (7:6).
- ✓ Even the pagan king Artaxerxes recognized him as 'the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven' (7:12).
- ✓ Moreover, Ezra prepared his heart **to study** the Law of the Lord, and **to do** it, and **to teach** its statutes and rules in Israel (7:10).

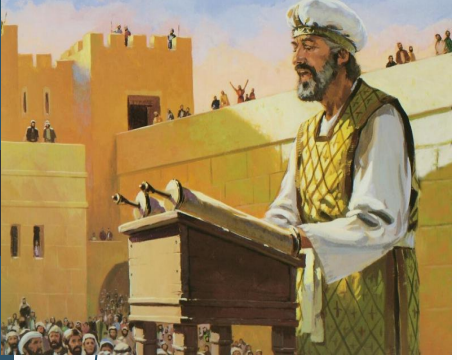
### **STUDY has several components:**

**I. Read** prayerfully, carefully, repeatedly and every day without fail (Rev 1:3; Deut. 17:19; Is. 34 :16)

**II. Rejoice** in God's Word (Ps 1: 2; Ps 112:1; 119:14,24,92,111)

**III. Meditate on God's Word**: Blessings of reflection/meditation.

1.Fruitful life 2. Successful life 3 Prosperous life (Joshua 1: 8) 4..One becomes wise (Ps 119:99).



## Ezra, who brought His people back to God

### **2. Ezra the Man of God's Word**

**IV. Research** (thoroughly examined) the Law: Bereans examined the Scriptures every day even after hearing a great man like Apostle Paul. What a role model.

**V. Fill your hearts with God's Word** (Col 3:16) Blessings of treasuring God's Word in our hearts. 1. We will not sin (Ps 119:11) 2. We will not slip (Ps 37:31) 3. We delight in doing God's will (Ps 40:8) 4. We will be strong (1 Jn 2:14) 5. We will defeat the Devil (1 Jn 2:14).

**VI. Honor God's Word** (Ps 119: 120, 161). Do we really fear God's Word?

**VII. Obey God's Word.** (Matt7:24)

# Ezra, who brought His people back to God

## 3. Ezra was a man of prayer and faith

Instead of asking the king for a military escort to guard the returning exiles,

- ✓ Ezra resorted to prayer and fasting (8:21; 9:5),
- ✓ Ezra believed God (8:22), and God listened to him (8:23).
- ✓ Ezra testified the hand of God (8:31).
- ✓ Ezra's spiritual leadership is demonstrated through fasting (9:5) and the intimate communication with God through the power of prayers (9:6-15).
- ✓ The results of Ezra's prayers were dramatic and immediate! Most of the people accepted guilt and showed a willingness to put away their pagan wives (chapter 10).
- ✓ Ezra led them to confess their guilt before God and follow God (10:9-12).





## Ezra, who brought His people back to God

### 4. Ezra the Man of Financial Integrity

- ✓ The king of Persia gave generously to Ezra to restore worship of the Lord in Jerusalem temple
- ✓ The exiles returned with 3.4 tons of gold and 22 tons of silver.
- ✓ Ezra 'set apart twelve of the leading priests' to look after the money (8:24).
- ✓ Every cent was carefully counted and recorded and after arrival to Jerusalem, they counted and weighed everything (8:34).
- ✓ Ezra was careful to be a trustworthy steward of the money. He handled the money with complete integrity.

## Ezra, who brought His people back to God

### 5. Ezra the Man of Compassion and Humility

Soon after arriving in Jerusalem, Ezra heard about the priests and people intermarriages with the idol-worshipping people. This same sin that caused the exile,

Ezra feared that God's next judgement could be the end of Israel.

Ezra's response to the news: Ezra fell on his knees and spread out his hands before temple of God (9:3-4).

**Ezra's Public prayer:** One of the Bible's great prayers of repentance on behalf of his people. People saw the intensity of his prayers & 'wept bitterly' (10:1)

**Ezra's private prayer** in fasting & mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles (10:6)

## Ezra, who brought His people back to God

### 5. Ezra the Man of Compassion and Humility

#### Ezra's humility:

- ✓ Ezra showed humility when he realized that “God’s commandments are forsaken” (Ezra 9:10, 15).
- ✓ Ezra sought to obey God and please Him.
- ✓ We, too, need to have our “senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14), producing greater spiritual depth and maturity in our lives.

#### Concern for the people:

- ✓ The Jewish community had neglected the affairs of God and more concerned about their own personal matters.
- ✓ God inspired Ezra to rekindle their zeal for God and His law.
- ✓ Ezra deeply grieved over the sins of the people and went to great lengths to ensure that they recognized their sins and were brought to repentance.
- ✓ Ezra sought to bring about a reformation in their devotion to God. (Ezra 8:21-23; 9:3; 10:6).





## Ezra, who brought His people back to God

### **6. Ezra the Man of Team-Work**

- ✓ Ezra surrounded with the team of strong leaders called ‘men of insight’ (8:16).
- ✓ He was not threatened by them. In fact, he gathered leading men from Israel to go up with him (7:28).
- ✓ During final preparations for the journey to Jerusalem, Ezra ‘reviewed the people and the priests’ (8:15) and discovered that there were no Levites amongst them
- ✓ Ezra sent a group of his most able leaders to recruit some. They brought back 38 Levites, including a key leader, Sherebiah, described as ‘a man of discretion’ (8:18).

# Ezra, who brought His people back to God

## 7. Ezra the Man of Dependence on Sovereign God

- ✓ Ezra was a talented man and a skilled leader.
- ✓ Ezra acknowledged that the primary cause of his successes was due to God's favour.
- ✓ Ezra's recurring phrases: 'the hand of the Lord was upon us' (7:6, 9, 28).

## Ezra, who brought His people back to God

### Conclusion:

Ezra arrived after seventy years the first return of exiles at the opportune time (Kairos).

God brought us to this place at the opportune time to be like Ezra  
Like Ezra, are you willing to be the Men and women of...

- ✓ God's Cause: counted the cost
- ✓ God's Word
- ✓ Prayer and Faith
- ✓ Financial Integrity
- ✓ Compassion and Humility
- ✓ Team-Work (strong leader)
- ✓ Dependence on sovereign God