

# THE FOUNDATION RESET

## PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: EZRA Ezra 3:8-13

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. TITLE

##### 1. NAME

- a. *Ezer* = ‘help’
- b. Probable meaning of title = ‘**Jehovah helps**’

##### 2. HEBREW BIBLE

- a. Ezra and Nehemiah—were one book
- b. Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah—were one continuous story
  - **First** two verses of **Ezra** are identical to **last** two verses of **II Chronicles**
- c. Ezra-Nehemiah *precedes* Chronicles

##### 3. SEPTUAGINT

- a. Ezra-Nehemiah—were called *Esdras Dueteron*—‘Second Esdras’
- b. ‘First Esdras’—was the apocryphal *Book of Esdras*

##### 4. LATIN BIBLE

- a. Divided Ezra and Nehemiah
- b. Ezra = *Liber Primus Esdrae*—‘First Ezra’
- c. Nehemiah = ‘Second Ezra’

##### 5. PROTESTANT BIBLE

- a. Maintained division of Latin Bible
- b. Renamed books—‘Ezra’ and ‘Nehemiah’

#### B. AUTHOR

##### 1. AUTHORSHIP—NOT STATED IN BOOK

##### 2. EZRA—WAS THE OBVIOUS AUTHOR

- a. **Talmud** attributes it to Ezra
- b. Portion of book is in **first person**—Ezra implied—**7:28-9:15**
- c. **Priestly** emphasis in book—and Ezra, himself was a priest—**7:1-5**

- d. Ezra had access to Nehemiah's **library** and documents—**II Mac 2:13-15**
  - Ezra probably used this library to write **Ezra 1-6**—and **Chronicles**

### 3. EZRA—THE PERSON

- a. **Priestly** heritage
  - Descended from Aaron—through Eleazar, Phinehas, and Zadok—**7:1-5**
- b. Studied, practiced, and taught the **Law**—as an educated **Scribe**—**7:6, 10**
- c. Contemporary of Nehemiah—**Neh 8:1-9** and **12:36**
- d. Went to Jerusalem in 457 BC
  - With support of King Artaxerxes—in **7<sup>th</sup> year** of his reign—**7:7-8**
  - **Artaxerxes**—was 3<sup>rd</sup> king of Persia (465-424 BC)—3<sup>rd</sup> son of Xerxes I
  - Artaxerxes's decree—for the return of exiles—**7:12-26**
- e. According to **Jewish tradition**
  - 1. Ezra helped to found the **Great Synagogue**
    - a. **120 Jewish scholars**—including several prophets
    - b. Received OT scripture—from the three post-exilic prophets
      - ▲ Haggai—Zechariah—Malachi
    - c. Formally identified and adopted the OT canon
  - 2. Ezra collected the OT books into a unit
  - 3. Ezra originated synagogue form of worship

## C. BACKGROUND—SCOPE—SETTING

### 1. BACKGROUND—BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

- a. 70-year Babylonian Captivity—**II Chr 36:20-21**
  - 1. **Jeremiah** prophesied—it would last 70 years—**Jer 29:10**
  - 2. Confirmed in **historical** account—**II Chr 36:21**
  - 3. **Three waves** of deportation into exile—**607 BC—597 BC—587/6 BC**
- b. Calculating the 70 years—two possibilities
  - 1. **Political** captivity
    - From initial defeat of Jerusalem—**605 BC**

- To return of first Remnant—**536 BC**

## 2. **Religious** captivity

- From destruction of first Temple—**587**
- To completion of second Temple—**516 BC**

## 2. **BACKGROUND**—CYRUS’S DECREE—FOR EXILES TO RETURN

### a. Background

1. Cyrus of Persia defeated Belshazzar of Babylonia—**539 BC**
2. Fulfilled prophesy of **Daniel 5**—*mene mene tekel upharsin*

### b. The Decree—538 BC—**II Chr 36:23**

*The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!*

## 3. **HISTORICAL SCOPE**—OF **EZRA** AND **NEHEMIAH**

### a. **Ezra 1-6**

1. Begins **538 BC**—first return—under **Zerubbabel**
2. Ends **515 BC**—completion of Temple-building
3. Followed by gap of **58 years**
  - During interlude—*Book of Esther*—483-473 BC

### b. **Ezra 7-10**

- **457 BC**—second return—under **Ezra**—spiritual restoration of Israel

### c. **Nehemiah**

- **444-425 BC**—from Nehemiah’s arrival—to rebuilding of Jerusalem wall

## 4. **HISTORICAL SETTING**—**CHRONOLOGY**

- **607**—First Deportation
- **605**—Fall of Jerusalem
- **597**—Second Deportation
- **587/6**—Third—final—Deportation
- **538**—First Return—Zerubbabel—made governor of Israel
- **536**—beginning of Temple-building—foundation was laid
- **534**—Temple-building discontinued
- **520**—Temple-building resumed

- **520 and following**—ministry of Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- **515**—Temple completed
- **483-473**—Esther was queen—under Xerxes
- **458**—Second Return—Ezra—under Artaxerxes
- **444**—Third Return—Nehemiah—under Artaxerxes

## D. COMPOSITION

1. AUTHORSHIP—EZRA
2. DATE OF WRITING

○ Between **458 BC** (Ezra's return)—and **444 BC** (Nehemiah's arrival)

## E. PURPOSES

1. TELLS STORY OF—ISRAEL'S RETURN AND REBUILDING OF TEMPLE
2. TELLS STORY OF—SPIRITUAL RESTORATION OF JEWISH PEOPLE

## F. THEMES

1. GOD'S SOVERIEGN RULE OVER HISTORY

- Preserving and causing His people to prosper during the Captivity
- Working through pagan kings to return His remnant to Israel

2. GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISE

- a. He restored the **Remnant**

**Jer 29:24**—*I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.*

- b. He kept His **covenant** with **David**

1. Zerubbabel was a direct descendant of David
2. Grandson of Jeconiah [Jehoiachin]

➤ See **I Chr 3:17-19**

➤ See **Mt 1:12-13**

3. OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD

- **1:1**—Cyrus's decree fulfilled the Word of the Lord
- **3:2**—Zerubbabel offered **sacrifices** following the Law of Moses
- **6:14**—they **completed the Temple** in obedience to God's command

- **6:18**—they **appointed priests** according to the Law of Moses
- **7:6-14**—**Ezra** studied, practiced, and taught the Law of Moses
- **9:4ff**—**purged foreign marriages**, according to God’s commandments
- **10:5**—they took an **oath** to obey God’s law

#### 4. RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

1. **Rebuilding** of Temple
2. **Reformation**—spiritual—moral—social restoration of the Remnant
3. **Spiritual leadership**—raised up by God—Zerubbabel and Ezra

### G. STORYLINE AND STRUCTURE

#### 1. **STORYLINE**

- a. Continues storyline from II Chronicles
- b. Describes second ‘Exodus’—from Babylonia to Israel
- c. First return—under **Zerubbabel**—to rebuild Temple (**chapters 1-6**)
  1. Isaiah **prophesied**—**Is 44:28-45:4**
    - Named Cyrus—as the king who would publish the decree
    - Predicted—the rebuilding of the Temple
  2. Distance—**900 miles** from Babylon to Jerusalem
  3. **49,897** people returned—**chapter 2**—[out of estimated 2-3 million population]
    - 42,560 Israelites—plus 7337 slaves—**2:64-65**
  4. Tribes that returned—Judah, Benjamin, Levi
  5. Rebuilding the Temple
    - Restoration of **Altar** first—then **foundation** laid—**chapter 3**
    - **Suspension** after enemy opposition and decree by Artaxerxes—**chapter 4**
    - **Haggai** and **Zechariah** encouraged people to restart building—**chapter 5**
    - Work **renewed** under Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua—**chapter 5**
    - Persian Governor **Tattenai**—challenged existence of Cyrus-decree—**chapter 5**
    - **Darius** confirmed Cyrus’s decree—ordered Tattenai to assist—**chapter 6**
    - **Completed** on 3 Adar (March) **515 BC**—6<sup>th</sup> year of Darius’s reign—**6:15-18**
- d. [Interlude—**58 years**—while Esther was queen in Persia]
- e. Second return—under **Ezra**—to reform Israel spiritually (**chapters 7-10**)

1. Ezra brought **1754** heads of families
  - **1496 males** [and families?]
  - **258 Levites** [and families?]
  
2. Date = **457 BC**
  - 5<sup>th</sup> month—of 7<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes
  - 81 years after arrival of Zerubbabel
  - 58 years after completion of Temple
  
3. Artaxerxes's decree—**chapter 7**
  - Supplied **treasures**, money and supplies for Temple and offerings
  - Granted priests, Levites, singers and doorkeepers **tax exemption**
  - Gave them authority to **govern** the people in their province
  - Allowed them to **teach** the Law—even to non-Jews
  
4. Reformation of the People—**chapters 9-10**
  - Ezra discovered many had intermarried with foreigners
  - Ezra offered prayer of confession
  - Repentance of people brought spiritual revival
  - People pledged to renounce marriages and live by God's law

## 2. STRUCTURE

### a. Part One—Rebuilding the Temple—Chapters 1-6

1. First Return of People—**chapters 1-2**
  - Cyrus's Decree—**1:1-4**
  - Gifts from Israel and Cyrus—**1:5-11**
  - Census of Returning Remnant—**2:1-67**
  - Completion of Journey—**2:68-70**
  
2. Construction of Temple—**chapters 3-6**
  - Altar and Sacrifices Restored—**3:1-7**
  - Temple Foundation Laid—**3:8-13**
  - Temple Construction Interrupted—**Chapter 4**
  - Temple Construction Renewed—**5:1-5**
  - Opposition by Governor Tattenai—**5:6-17**
  - Darius's Decree for Renewed Construction—**6:1-12**

- Completion and Dedication of Temple—**6:13-18**
- Celebration of Passover—**6:19-22**

b. **Part Two—Reformation of the People—Chapters 7-10**

1. Second Return of People—**chapters 7-8**

- Artaxerxes’s Decree—**chapter 7**
- Census of Returnees—**8:1-14**
- Addition of Levites—**8:15-20**
- The Return Journey under God’s Protection—**8:21-36**

2. Reformation of the People—**chapter 9-10**

- The Sin of Israel’s Intermarriage—**9:1-4**
- Ezra’s Prayer of Intercession—**9:5-15**
- People Repent and Covenant to Obey God—**10:1-5**
- People Take Action and Identify Offenders—**10:6-44**

## II. BIBLICAL TEXT

**Ezra 3:8-13—8** *Now in the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers the priests and the Levites, and all who came from the captivity to Jerusalem, began the work and appointed the Levites from twenty years and older to oversee the work of the house of the Lord. 9 Then Jeshua with his sons and brothers stood united with Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah and the sons of Henadad with their sons and brothers the Levites, to oversee the workmen in the temple of God. 10 Now when the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord according to the directions of King David of Israel. 11 They sang, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, saying, “For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever.” And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12 Yet many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ households, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, while many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard far away.*

## III. EXPOSITION

### A. BACKGROUND

#### 1. TIMING

##### a. Similar to building of First Temple

- Solomon began building First Temple also in second month—**I Kgs 6:1**

b. Two reasons

1. During dry season—ideal time to build

2. First—they observed the **Passover**—[implied]

➤ Celebrated God's deliverance—in **second** Exodus

➤ Paralleled what Israel did under Joshua—before taking Jericho—**Joshua 5**

2. CONTINUITY

a. **Sons of Asaph**—David assigned to worship with musical instruments—**I Chr 16:5** and **25:1**

b. **Verse 11**—paraphrases **Psalm 100:5**

*For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever.*

➤ In David's thanksgiving prayer—for the return of the Ark—**I Chr 16:34**

➤ The people sang this at the dedication of the First Temple—**II Chr 5:13**

3. PROPHECY FULFILLED

**Jer 33:11**—after Jerusalem was destroyed—this Psalm would be sung again with joy

**B. PRIORITY OF WORSHIP**

1. WORSHIP COMES FIRST—TO HONOR GOD

a. They built the **altar** and **sacrificed** first—**before** building the Temple—**3:2-6**

b. The occasion and place—for sacrifice—repentance—rededication—acceptance by God

c. **Examples**—people who built altars first

▪ **Noah**—**Gen 8:20**—immediately after exiting the ark

▪ **Abraham**—**Gen 12:7**—upon entering Canaan

▪ **Elijah**—**I Kgs 18:30**—repaired the altar on Mt. Carmel—before calling on God

2. GOD'S PRESENCE—IS UNCONFINED

a. Not in a building

1. They came to—*the house of God*—but the Temple was **gone!**

2. This was the holy place without walls—appointed by God—to meet Him

3. Like *Bethel*—though this term is not used here—**vv 8,9,11** [*bayith Elohim/Jehovah*]

➤ Where Abram first sacrificed—**Gen 12**

➤ Where Jacob had his ladder-dream—**Gen 28**

b. Not in an object

- The Ark of the Covenant was not present—lost after destruction of Jerusalem

### 3. WORSHIP INSTILLS CONFIDENCE

a. Feast of Tabernacles—celebrated God’s provision in wilderness—**v4**

b. Feast of Passover—celebrated God’s deliverance from bondage—implied **v8**

### 4. WORSHIP UNIFIES GOD’S PEOPLE

a. Worship—at the center of community life—they stood ‘united’—**v9**

b. United in joy and sorrow mingled together—to produce a ‘loud shout’—**vv12-13**

## C. WHY THE WEEPING

### 1. ABSENCE OF PREVIOUS HOLY THINGS

- No **Ark** of the Covenant—no **Shekinah**—nor **Urim and Thummim**

### 2. SPLENDOR NOT AS GREAT AS BEFORE

a. Evidence from prophets

- **Hag 2:3**—*who of you remembers the Temple in its former glory?*
- **Zech 4:10**—*who has despised the day of small things?*

b. Foundation stones

- Costly jewels—were used in the foundation of the First Temple—**I Kgs 7:9-10**

c. Splendor of worship music

1. David’s orders outlined in **1 Chr 15:16-21**

2. Musical service in Ezra fell short of this

a. No psalteries or harps—essential parts of David’s system

b. Perhaps—musical skills of Levites had declined during captivity

- ▲ **Ps. 137:1-2,4**—*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. Upon the willows in the midst of it we hung our harps. . . . How can we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?*

### 3. SIZE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AN ISSUE

a. Cyrus’s decree—laid out he *plan* for this Second Temple

b. It was *intended* to be *larger* than the First Temple

- **I Kgs 6:2**—length 60 cubits—height 30 cubits—width 20 cubits
- **Ez 6:3**—height 60 cubits—width 60 cubits

c. SETTING AND CONDITIONS

1. Israel was extremely prosperous and powerful under Solomon's rule
2. The Remnant had very little in comparison

d. WEEPING FOR PAST SINS—WHAT HAD BROUGHT THEM TO THIS POINT

**D. REASONS FOR JOY—THE 'LOUD SHOUT'**

1. OBVIOUS REASONS

- a. Restored relationship favor of God—evidenced by their delivery
- b. Freedom to worship God—reason for *first* Exodus
- c. Freedom from Captivity—and joy of homecoming
- d. Restoration of national identity
- e. Renewed hope for the future

2. HIDDEN REASONS—EMBEDDED IN MESSIANIC PROPHECY

a. *This* Temple—would be even **more glorious** than Solomon's!

- It would witness the coming of the Messiah
- **Hag 2:9**—*The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former, says the Lord of Hosts, and in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.*

b. *This* Temple—would be instrumental in blessing **all nations**

- The renewal of God's covenant with Israel
- A promise given to the 'dispersed of Israel' who would gather there
- The 'House of Prayer'—that Jesus would cleanse and prepare for all nations
- **Is 56:6-8**—[Jesus quoted in **Mk 11:17**]**—6** *Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, everyone who keeps from profaning the sabbath and holds fast My covenant;* **7** *Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.* **8** *The Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.*