

Cover to Cover: From Genesis to Maps
Sermon # 15 – “Ezra”
September 9, 2007

The Book of Ezra is not a play-by-play coverage of the Babylonian Captivity. (No such record exists.)

We’re told of the Babylonian Captivity at the end of 2 Chronicles. Now, in Ezra, we have the story of the return from captivity.

The opportunity to return arose because Persia overran Babylon. One great empire conquered another. King Cyrus of Persia, in the first year following his conquest, released the Jews to return to their homeland.

NOTE: Babylon is modern-day Iraq. Persia is modern-day Iran.

Jeremiah had prophesied 70 years of captivity. But from the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC) to the return of the exiles (538 to 536 BC) is a span of only 50 years. Was Jeremiah wrong?

There are two ways to come up with 70 years:

1. Babylon dominated Jerusalem before the fall. Under Babylon, there were actually 3 deportations. The first occurred in 606 to 605 BC. The second was in 597 BC. The third and final deportation was in 586 BC. From the time of the first deportation (606 BC) to the return from exile (536 BC) is a span of 70 years.
2. 586 BC was when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. In 516 BC, the temple was finally rebuilt. Thus, the time between temples is a span of 70 years.

Outline of Ezra

I. Chapters 1-6. The first group returns from exile.

- The Year: 538-536 BC
- The Number: 50,000
- The Leader: Zerubbabel
- The Focus: Rebuilding the Temple

Highlights:

1. The Remnant is released from Babylon. Chapters 1-2

2. The Remnant returns to Jerusalem, renewing their worship of God and laying the foundation for a new temple. Chapter 3
3. The Remnant faces opposition. Chapter 4
4. The work on the temple comes to a standstill. (NOTE: Between 4:24 & 5:1 there is a gap of 15 years.)
5. God's prophets—Haggai and Zechariah—challenge the people to finish the work. Chapter 5
6. The temple is finally completed & dedicated in 516 BC. Chapter 6

(NOTE: Between chapters 6 & 7 is a span of about 58 years. The events in the Book of Esther occurred during this time frame.)

I. Chapters 7-10. A second group returns from exile.

- The Year: 458 BC (80 years after the first group)
- The Number: 2000 to 5000
- The Leader: Ezra
- The Focus: Reforming the people

Highlights:

1. The Coming of Ezra. Chapters 7-8

7:10 – Ezra was “a man of the Book.”

- He studied the scriptures.
- He obeyed the scriptures.
- He taught the scriptures.

2. The Confession of Sin. Chapter 9
3. The Cleansing of the Nation. Chapter 10

10: 2 – “*There is still hope...*” How? 2 Chronicles 7:14