

Ezra: He was a Jewish exile in Babylon of priestly descent. The return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, and rebuilding of the temple, and the inauguration of social and religious reforms is the main subject of Ezra. The power of the Word of God in human life can be found throughout the writings from Genesis to Revelation. The Word speaks through prophets or little servant girls, whether it is called the Word of the Lord, or the Law of Moses, or Commandments, or the Law of the Lord.

King Cyrus of Persia (as well as many, many Persian leaders and authorities) was spoken to by the Lord to build a temple in Jerusalem; not anywhere else but Jerusalem and he put out a decree that whoever wants to come back to Jerusalem and Judah can do so as he, King Cyrus, had authority over all the nations of the world as he said.

There were several attempts to rebuild the temple and walls and the first return was under the leadership of Zerubbabel. The names of the returning remnant of the people, the priests, the Levites, the descendants of Solomon's servants, and their substance and gifts are listed.

These building enterprises were the altar rebuilt and worship established; then the foundation of the temple was laid, but then the people of the land which were heathen wanted to join in the work but they were rejected because they were not sanctified as the chosen children of God. These became violent opposers causing the suspension of the work. After a long delay, the work was resumed by an edict of King Darius. The temple was finished and dedicated and book of the Law of Moses was observed.

The return of the second exile group was authorized by King Artaxerxes and the list of Ezra's company of returning exiles is listed and also their arrival at Jerusalem. The correction by Ezra of the social evils was heart-wrenching but necessary.

Ezra was associated with Nehemiah in initiating a revival of the study of the Scriptures. Ezra's great faith and trust in God was his protection when called upon to carry great treasures through dangerous places.

Ezra's prayer continued O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before You in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before You because of this. Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. ...we have traspases against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: ...Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.