

Character Study: Ezra

Part 1 – Ezra Prepares the People to Return Home

Ezra 7:1-8:23

What's happening?

- Ezra was a priest in the family line of Aaron. He is described as being a “skilled scribe in the Law of Moses,” who had a heart to know, obey and teach God’s Word. (7:1-10)
- Ezra lived at a time when Judah (the Southern Kingdom) was returning home from their exile in Babylon. It was because of sin that God had allowed the Babylonians to take the Israelites captive (586 BC). After the Persians overthrew Babylon under Cyrus the Great (538 BC), the people were allowed to return home.
- Zerubbabel had led the first group of Israelites back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple (538 BC; note Ezra 1:1-5). Now, eighty years later, under the reign of Artaxerxes, Ezra was given permission to lead a second group back. (7:11-26)
- As Ezra gathered those interested in returning to their homeland (about 4,000-5,000 people), he had a time of fasting and prayer, requesting God’s protection on the long journey they had ahead. He could have requested additional assistance from the king, but he knew that this trip would show God to be the One who protects His people. (8:1-23)

What's God doing?

> Israel had split into two kingdoms after Solomon’s reign. The Northern Kingdom was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 BC and never returned. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin made up the Southern Kingdom, which was taken into captivity by the Babylonians. God used Ezra to lead people from Babylon back to Jerusalem as a means of preserving His people and keeping the promises He made to David (note II Sam. 7:4-16).

What's to learn?

- Ezra had a passion to continually learn more about God, and share with others what he was learning. He also had a trust in God that showed his faith was real. Can people see in your life a faith that is real?
- Although God’s people faced consequences for their sin, God did not forsake them. God’s sovereign hand of protection was over His people at all times, just as it is with us today.

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