

Going Home

A STUDY ON THE BOOK OF EZRA

MARK SCOTT • 6 SESSIONS

**NEXT
LEVEL**  **ONLINE**

OZARK CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

NextLevel: Going Home: A Study on the Book of Ezra

SESSION ONE: GOING HOME

Mark Scott

“Home” is a word that conjures up many emotions.

- Psalm 137
- Psalm 126

Perhaps we can get our arms around this overview with the phrase *Names and Numbers*.

1. Think about these numbers:

- 12— 10 northern tribes known as Israel; 2 southern tribes known as Judah
- 70—The number of years that the Messianic line was kept alive in Babylon.
- 3⁴—three is such a significant number in the Bible:
 1. 3 Waves of people return to the Promised Land.
 2. 3 Leaders who led these returns
 3. 3 Prophets who assisted the other three leaders
 4. 3 Enemies who opposed the other leaders and prophets
- 2²
 1. Ezra and Nehemiah constitute one scroll, known as “The Writings.”
 2. Two was also the number of the languages used in this book. Most of the book is in the Hebrew language, but 4:8-6:18 is actually in Aramaic.
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 1. Cyrus
 2. The nation of Israel
 3. Jesus

2. Thinking about the name:

- Ezra’s name means “help.” He helped the remnant in three ways:
 1. He *helped* reestablish the sacrificial system.
 2. He *helped* the remnant study the Bible.
 3. He *helped* begin the process of pulling the OT canon together.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Israel was punished in Babylonian captivity for 70 years for its habitual idolatry. Was the punishment effective? Did it work? What did Jesus encounter in the New Testament to indicate that it worked so well that they swung the pendulum to the other side (Mark 7:1-23)?
- 2) Why was it so important to resecure the land of Israel? Why did it matter that the Messiah would have to come from this land (Genesis 17: 8; Psalm 48:2; 1 Peter 2:6; Revelation 14:1)?
- 3) Zerubbabel was a *type* of Christ. Look in a Bible Dictionary for what typology is. What does knowing that the Old Testament is full of *types* do to interpreting the entire Bible with a Christ focus?
- 4) Ezra was a great student of the Bible (Ezra 7:20; Nehemiah 8:8). How is his Bible study a model for ours?

NextLevel: Going Home: A Study on the Book of Ezra
SESSION TWO: *WHEN PAGANS HELP GOD'S PEOPLE GO HOME*
EZRA 1-2
Mark Scott

The Babylonians have been defeated by the Persians, and in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy, it is time for God's people to go home—back to the land of Israel. God will use a *pagan king* to accomplish this task.

The Proclamation for Going Home (Ezra 1)

The People Who Are Going Home (Ezra 2)

Why does all of this matter?

- God knows your name
- Getting the right people in place matters.
- Numbers may be summaries.
- Ancient historiography
- Eph. 4:7

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Every time Cyrus is mentioned in chapter one (five times), he is called “king of Persia.” God is called “The Lord, the God of heaven.” What is the difference?
- 2) What is so significant in ensuring that the tribe and people of Judah get first crack at their homeland?
- 3) What was the value of the resources that the Israelites were bringing back to their homeland (1:9-11; 2:65-67, 69; cf. 1 Kings 10:14-29)? Why was so much needed?
- 4) The Israelites could check their records and use the Urim and Thummim to discern God's will. What do believers have today to help discern his will (Acts 16:6-10; 1 John 2:27-28; 3:24; 4:13)?

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SESSION THREE: *WHEN REBUILDING HOME TAKES A HIT*
EZRA 3-4
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Rebuilding the Altar: The Center of Worship (3:1-7)

- They start with the altar—the centerpiece of their worship.

Rebuilding the Temple: The House of Worship (3:8-13)

- Psalm 136 is referenced.

The Adversary's Feigned Help (4:1-5)

- However genuine their offer to help seemed, we must critique it in light of the leader's response.
 1. Verbal discouragement.
 2. Fear and Intimidation.
 3. Bribes.
 4. Letter.
 5. Lies.
 6. Feigned loyalty.
 7. Record checking.

The Adversary's Feigned Letter (4:6-16)

- This letter is a flashforward. It would actually take place 80 years later.

The Adversary's Temporary Success (4:17-24)

Napoleon said, "Leaders are dealers in hope." And Haddon Robinson said, "Hope is the music of the future, and faith is the courage to dance to it now."

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How will rebuilding the altar of burnt offering (Exodus 27:1-8; 38:1-7; Leviticus 1:1-17) help Israel restore their spiritual heritage?
- 2) How does offering praise for the Lord interface with the rebuilding of the temple foundation? How are those inextricably linked?
- 3) The adversaries of Israel's efforts to rebuild their home were geographically close (people of the land and foreigners living in the land of Israel). How does this make standing up to the opposition more difficult?
- 4) What methods or tactics does our spiritual enemy, the devil, use today to intimidate us?

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SESSION FOUR: *STARTING OVER AT HOME*
EZRA 5-6

Start—Like Again (5:1-5)

Stop—Until We Are Sure (5:6-6:12)

Finish (6:13-18)

Celebrate (6:19-22)

The people of God get a “do-over.”

1. God provides solid leaders for his people.
2. God leads secular leaders to advance God’s agenda.
3. God keeps his word—go home and wait for the Messiah.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Prophets and leaders cooperate to get God’s people to where they need to be. How has God used leaders to equip you (Cf. Ephesians 4:11-13)?
- 2) How can we emotionally own our sin without it overwhelming or incapacitating us (5:12) from serving God?
- 3) God caused his name to dwell in Jerusalem. That was no small thing. Where is his name dwelling today (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20)?
- 4) Israel celebrated their faith via festivals. At the heart of their identity was the deliverance from Egypt celebrated at Passover. What festivals of your faith help you celebrate God’s redemption?

Correction:

When Israel last celebrated the Passover fully (Ezra 6:19-22; Cf. Neh. 8) was not 1400 years but from the time of Joshua, which was 1400 B.C.

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SESSION FIVE: *GOING HOME WITH GODLY LEADERS*
EZRA 7-8
Mark Scott

Characteristics of Godly Leaders found in Ezra:

1. Study, Practice, and Teach God's Word (7:1, 6-10, 25)
2. Live Under God's Providence (7:28; 8:18, 22, 31)
3. Handle Money Well (7:14-20)
4. Demonstrate Spiritual Disciplines (8:21-23)
5. Act Courageously (8:15-18)
6. Live a Life of Doxology (7:27-28)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Ezra was a scribe. In light of Matthew 13:52, what does being a scribe in the kingdom of heaven mean to you?
- 2) Sometimes there is a fine line between God's intervention miraculously and his daily providence. Can you share an example of an ordinary time when God took care of you?
- 3) Fasting and prayer are mentioned in these two chapters as two of Ezra's spiritual disciplines. In your opinion, how does fasting make your prayers more earnest?
- 4) How do we cultivate a habit of doxology every day?

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SESSION SIX: *WHEN REBUILDING COMES HOME TO ROOST*
EZRA 9-10
Mark Scott

Syncretism is the inappropriate blending of one nuance of religion with another.

The Book of Ezra ends with a mass divorce.

Penance (9:1-5)

Prayer (9:6-15)

Confession/Covenant (10:1-5)

Confrontation (10:6-17)

Commitment (10:18-44)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What does “unequally yoked” mean (Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14), and how would it apply to Ezra 9-10?
- 2) What “sin” words do you find in these chapters (e.g., abomination, faithlessness, blush, etc.)? How does knowing these words give breadth to Ezra’s confession on behalf of Israel?
- 3) One has to appreciate Ezra’s great zeal for following God’s ideal for marriage within Israel. Do you think he went too far by holding this mass divorce for people who had taken foreign wives? I mean, do two wrongs make a right?
- 4) If you know much about the content of the Book of Nehemiah, how does the way that Ezra ends prepare us for the Book of Nehemiah?

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