

EZRA: RETURN TO THE WORD

RETURN TO THE BEGINNING (EZRA 1-2)

Memory Verse: "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel." Ezra 7:10



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- Jeremiah had prophesied that the exile would last seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11–12; 29:10–14). Isaiah had even named Cyrus as the ruler through whom God would accomplish His purpose (Isaiah 44:28–45:1), which he did in 538 BC.
 - Sometimes the greatest spiritual need is not to discover something new but to return to what God has already revealed.
 - The promise of restoration is not permission to continue in sin. It is an invitation to repent and return. The God who permitted the exile is the same God who opened the way home.
- 1. Return with a Willing spirit**
 - Ezra 1:1,5
 - God stirs the heart of people to respond to His purposes (Hebrew word *yur*)
 - Haggai 1:14 | Ezra 1:6
 - A return requires a willingness to leave something and a willingness to invest in the future.
 - Abraham, Moses, and the disciples are examples of leaving/investing; are you?
 - Acts 2:44-47
 - 2. Return with a Worship focused on God**
 - Ezra 1:7,11
 - The vessels being returned was a sign of God's restoration of His people and their worship to Him.
 - The temple mattered because it was the appointed center of Israel's covenant worship. Returning to Jerusalem was not merely a sentimental return to the land of their ancestors but a spiritual reclaiming!
 - Ephesians 2:19-22
 - The Reformation was a returning to the authority of the Scriptures over the religion of churches: *Sola Scriptura*.
 - 3. Return with a Worldview based on Truth: Whose you are matters more than who you are**
 - Ezra 2:1-2
 - Zerubbabel represents the Davidic line and Joshua the high priestly line
 - The people's lineage opened the door for their service; God's covenant continues despite worldly opposition
 - John 10:27-29 | Ezra 2:40
 - The Church is all believers, not just the leadership or the prominent ones; we must work together for the glory of God
 - Ezra 2:68-69
 - A Worldview from God's perspective results in His people taking action based on truth, not feelings.
 - If God is calling you back to the beginning, do not settle for remembering what faithfulness once looked like. Return to Him now. Rebuild what has been neglected. Restore what has been displaced. Take your place in His work.

Questions:

1. Read Ezra 1:1-4; Proverbs 21:1; Isaiah 46:9-10; Daniel 2:20-22; Romans 8:28-30. God stirred Cyrus's spirit to fulfill His Word. What does this passage teach us about God's sovereignty over history, including the actions of rulers who do not necessarily share His faith? How should this truth shape our response to uncertain political, cultural, family, or church circumstances? Where are you tempted to believe that circumstances have placed you beyond God's ability to work? How can you trust God's sovereignty without becoming passive or claiming to know His hidden purposes? What is one act of obedience you can take even though you cannot control the outcome?
2. Read Ezra 1:5-6; Haggai 1:12-14; Philippians 2:12-13; James 1:22-25; Revelation 2:4-5. God stirred the hearts of the people who returned. How do we distinguish genuine spiritual renewal from temporary emotion, nostalgia, or enthusiasm? What role do repentance, the Holy Spirit, Scripture, and practical obedience play in spiritual renewal? What spiritual discipline or act of obedience have you neglected? What attachment, habit, or fear might be keeping you from responding to God's Word? What specific, measurable step can you take this week to move from intention to obedience?
3. Read Ezra 1:7-11; Romans 12:1-2; John 4:23-24; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 2:4-5. Why were the temple vessels important to the restoration, and what do they teach us about stewardship and dedication to God's purposes? How can Christians recover biblical worship without merely reproducing the customs or styles of an earlier generation? What currently receives the greatest share of your time, attention, and resources? Is your worship shaped primarily by God's Word or by personal preference? What change would help you make Christ and His Word more central to your daily life?
4. Read Ezra 2:1-63; Psalm 139:1-18; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-13. Why does Scripture preserve such a detailed record of the returning families, priests, Levites, and servants? What does this list teach us about belonging to God's people, the value of seemingly ordinary service, and the importance of accountability? Have you underestimated your importance because your service is not publicly recognized? What gifts, skills, or responsibilities could you use more faithfully to strengthen your church or family? How can your congregation better honor quiet faithfulness while maintaining biblical standards for leadership?
5. Read Ezra 2:64-70; Exodus 35:20-29; 1 Chronicles 29:6-14; Mark 12:41-44; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. The returning community contributed resources toward rebuilding the house of God. What does their response teach us about the relationship between God's grace and our responsibility to give, serve, and persevere? How can a church avoid confusing faithful stewardship with fundraising success or impressive buildings? What resources has God entrusted to you that could serve His purposes more effectively? Is there a ministry need you have criticized without helping to address? What concrete commitment of time, service, prayer, or financial support could you make in the coming month?