

Bible Book of Whenever (B-BOW)

Ezra

Hello, Friends, and Welcome!

Here's the reading plan for Ezra:

Since Ezra only has 10 chapters, you may read leisurely.

If you want, you could read one chapter a day, and go through Ezra 3 times in this month. See if you don't notice different passages each time!

May we all have that Ezra-like devotion to study, observance, and teaching God's word.

Here's the Swedish Marking System:

- ? Something I don't understand, or would like to know more about, etc.
- ★ Something I think is really good, helpful, inspiring, etc.
- ➔ Something I need to think about, work on, etc.

Title

The name "Ezra" comes from a Hebrew word meaning "help." It probably meant, "Jehovah Helps."

When you read Ezra's story, it will become obvious that God did help him. Pay special attention when you read Ezra to the references of the Hand of God being upon him (**Ezra 7:6, 9, & 28; 8:18, 22, & 31**).

He is called a priest (**Nehemiah 12:1**).

We learn in his book that he was a descendant of Phinehas, the son of Aaron (**Ezra 7:1-5**).

He is also called a teacher of the Law of God, or a Scribe (**Ezra 7: 11,12**).

Outline

Ezra chronicles the activities of two people: Zerubbabel and Ezra. Each had a major accomplishment. Zerubbabel led in the rebuilding of the temple, and Ezra led in a revival of the people. So the book may be broadly outlined around these two:

I. (1-6) Zerubbabel and the Temple

II. (7-10) Ezra and the People

Note:

1. There is a time gap in Ezra. Notice at the end of chapter 4, the work on the temple pauses. This pause took place because of enemy opposition. The work picks back up after around 60 years! Not too long after the work is finished, Ezra arrives.
2. The whole story of Ezra is not contained in the book bearing his name. His story is continued in the book of Nehemiah. Actually, Ezra and Nehemiah were originally considered one book. It is good to read them back to back.

Research

If you want to spend some time either online or in some Bible reference world, here are some places you might enjoy going to:

Prophets: You might want to read Haggai and Zechariah in conjunction with reading Ezra. Note especially the mention of these prophets in Ezra 5.

The Synagogue: You might consult a good Bible dictionary for a history of the Jewish Synagogue. With no access to the temple during the captivity, the synagogue emerged. Many credit Ezra with being the founder of the Synagogue.

The Old Testament Canon: The term “Canon” depicts the books accepted as belonging in the Bible. Jewish tradition said that Ezra was president of a council of 120 men who together worked out which books should be included in the Bible.

Psalms 119: Ezra had a great love for the Law of the Lord. It seems a great revival of Bible study occurred as a result of his work. Some scholars believe he might have written Psalm 119, which is a celebration of God’s Word.

Scribes: A major class of noteworthy people in the Bible.

Asaph: an interesting character: Asaph was a Levite and one of the leaders of David’s choir. He was the head of one of the three families permanently in charge of the temple music. His family formed a guild that bore his name and is frequently mentioned (**2 Chr 20:14; 29:13 & 30**). Twelve psalms (**50 & 73-83**) are attributed in the titles to the family of Asaph. A hundred and twenty-eight of Asaph’s family members, all singers, came back from Babylon and took part when the foundations of Zerubbabel’s temple were laid (**Ezra 2:41; 3:10**).

Intermarriage in the Bible. This has often been a controversial issue. It is good to educate ourselves in what this was all about from a Biblical perspective.

Bible “politics:” One interesting insight into God’s ways of accomplishing His will is how He works through different governmental means. God uses powerful rulers (even those who do not know Him—see **Ezra 6:22**). One amusing incident in Ezra is how the enemies of God’s people plot to have all construction stop, only to wind up causing the work not only to go on, but to be funded (this story is found in chapters **5 & 6**). A good corollary study here would be to consult a good Bible dictionary or encyclopedia about the Providence of God.

National prayers: **Ezra 9** chronicles a prayer for the nation.

There is another one in **Nehemiah 9**.

Daniel also prayed one in **Daniel 9**.

All these men confessed the sins of the nation, and prayed for forgiveness.

Compare these prayers to **2 Chronicles 7:14**.

Memory Verses

Two good verses are:

Ezra 7:10—*For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.*

Ezra 8:22—*The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to Him, but His great anger is against all who forsake Him.*