

EZRA

BIBLE STUDY

Rebuilding the
Temple, Restoring
the Heart

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the Heart

Darlene Schacht,
NYT Best-Selling Author

TIME-WARP WIFE MINISTRIES



All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Ezra Bible Study: Rebuilding the Temple, Restoring the Heart

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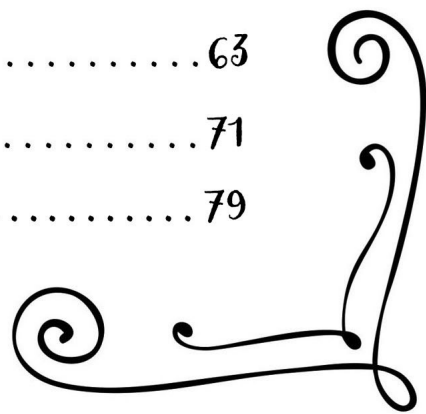
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*And I will give them an heart to
know me. that I am the Lord: and they
shall be my people. and I will be their
God: for they shall return unto me
with their whole heart.*

Jeremiah 24:7



TIMELINE



This is an approximate timeline of events in the Book of Ezra. Some dates may vary slightly according to different sources.

605 BC – The Captivity of the Jews

538 BC – Release from Captivity

537 BC – The First Group Returned to Judea &
The Altar Was Built

536 BC – Work Began on the Temple

535 BC – Work on the Temple Ceased

520 BC – Work Resumed as Haggai and Zechariah
Prophesied and Encouraged Them

516 BC – The Temple was Completed

516 BC – 58 Year Gap at Which Time the Story
of Esther Took Place

458 BC – Ezra returned to Jerusalem and Started
a Revival



INTRODUCTION



READ: 2 CHRONICLES 36

This study on the book of Ezra began when I decided to rewrite my Bible study on the Book of Esther. In order to understand the climate of the people at that time, I wanted to quickly read the books preceding that story. What I found however, was that Ezra was too important for a quick read. I found that God was leading me deeper and deeper, each time that I opened the book. Every time I learned one thing, I had to learn something else until my study took on a new life of its own.

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book called Ezra Nehemiah. These books were later divided into the two books we have now. But here's the interesting thing: the Book of Esther takes place between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra. As a result, the three books are linked together in a unique way. As we progress you'll also see that the book of Haggai is directly connected to chapter 5 of this study.

THE CAPTIVITY

To understand the book of Ezra, we need to examine what was taking place during this period of Jewish history. You might be familiar with King Nebuchadnezzar from the book of Daniel. He's the one we read about in Daniel Chapter 3 who sentenced Daniel's friends to be executed in a fiery furnace because they wouldn't bow down to the 90 ft. idol he had constructed from gold. He's also the one responsible for destroying Jerusalem along with Solomon's Temple and taking the Israelites into captivity in 586 BC.

And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. (2 Kings 24:12b-14, KJV)

Before we get into the study of Ezra, read through 2 Chronicles Chapter 36. Understanding this chapter will help us to further understand the book of Ezra.

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

According to Jeremiah Chapter 24, the Israelites were taken into captivity for “their good.” God sent them there knowing that they would return to Him with all of their heart, but it would take 70 years.

THE HEART OF MAN

The Book of Ezra begins in the first year of King Cyrus’ reign. As you’ll notice in the first few chapters, it’s written in a third person narrative. About halfway through, however, it switches to first person and Ezra is introduced into the story.

While Ezra deals with the rebuilding of the temple, Nehemiah talks about the rebuilding of the city and its walls. The three books, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther are symbolic of the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life. We’ll talk about that a little more in chapter 7.

As we focus on Ezra in particular, we see a parallel to the purification of one’s heart: The process that David talked about when he prayed,

*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
(Psalm 51:10, KJV)*

The purpose of the 70-year captivity was to do this very thing. It was a process of refining and trying their faith so that they might turn away from their sin and return to the Lord. According to Dictionary.com, the word purify means, “To make pure; free from anything that debases, pollutes, adulterates, or contaminates, or to free from foreign, extraneous, or objectionable elements.”

This definition of purification is especially evident further on in this study as we’ll see in chapters 9 & 10.

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

What’s interesting to note, is that while many of the Israelites returned to Jerusalem, the majority of them remained in the Persian Empire. Those are

Purify my heart, Lord

the ones we read about in the Book of Esther. When I read this, I was reminded of the letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, referring to them as carnal Christians.

I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:1, KJV)

Believers can be satisfied with minimal growth when they ought to desire the deeper things of the Lord. Instead of a hunger and thirst for righteousness, they're back in Babylon drinking their milk. Sometimes it's easier to stay in our comfort zone than to step out in faith. After 70 years, I'm sure that many of them had families, occupations, and homes that they weren't ready to leave behind. Isn't that the way it is when we come to the Lord? We're walking away from the things we once loved to a God that we love all the more.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24, KJV)

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

According to Jeremiah Chapter 24, the Israelites were taken into captivity for "their good." God sent them there knowing that they would return to Him with all of their heart, but it would take 70 years.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Book of Ezra has a focus on two main characters who lead the return from captivity. The first is Zerubbabel (chapters 1-6) followed by Ezra (chapters 7-10). Ezra is a type of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, which means that he typifies the characteristics of the Holy Spirit in many ways. In fact, the name Ezra means "help" and the Holy Spirit is said to be our helper. As we go through this study, we will point out some of those characteristics and their parallel to the Spirit at work in our life. We'll see how he grieves, how he leads, how he teaches, and how he makes intercession for the people in prayer.

Oh, how I wish we could dive into Nehemiah and Esther at the same time as they are all interwoven together. You see, the Holy Spirit is typified in both of those books as well. The first, in the person of Nehemiah as he works on the building of the walls, and then in the person of Mordecai, Esther's uncle in the book of Esther. For the sake of space and time, we'll focus on Ezra in this study, but I will be getting to the book of Nehemiah soon after.

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

King Cyrus is the only non-Jewish figure in the Bible referred to as God's anointed.
(see Isaiah 45:1)

TAKE NOTE

As you go through the questions at the end of each chapter, you'll find that some of them relate to you personally. There's no right or wrong answer with these questions as they are designed for soul searching. Other questions may relate to scripture outside the book of Ezra, and so it's important to pay attention to the assigned reading.

For your convenience, I have included an answer key at the back of this journal. Please try to answer the questions on your own before referring to the answers.

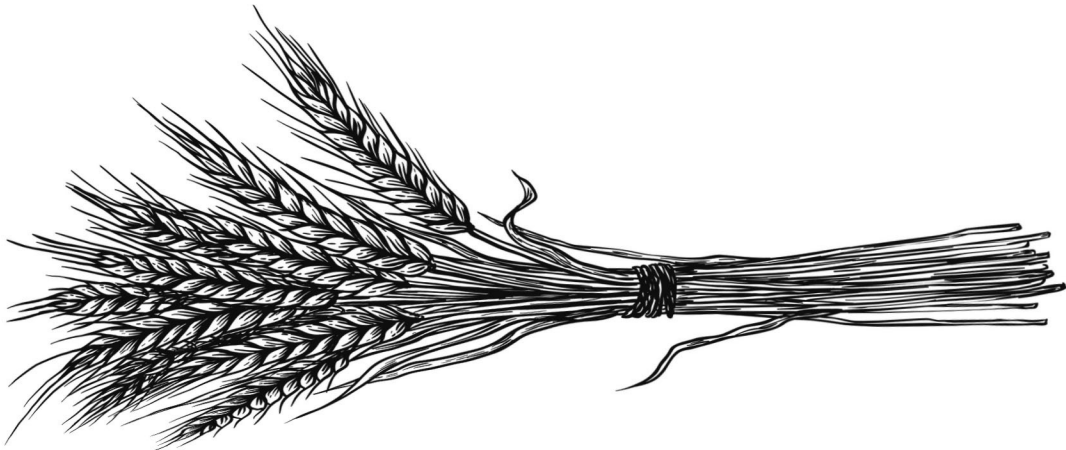
What did Nebuchadnezzar do to Jehoiakim (Eliakim)?

What do we know about the Jewish people during the reign of Zedekiah?

How did they react when God sent messengers to them?

What was God's response to their actions? (v. 17)

What did Nebuchadnezzar's men destroy, and what did they take away?



What is the definition of purify?

What happened to the remnant of Israelites that survived the massacre?

Read Jeremiah 24:6-7.
Write verse 7 out here:

Look up the definition of the word “heart”. Which definition do you think applies to that verse in Jeremiah Chapter 24?
