

# **Sunday School Lesson**

**March 6, 2022**

**Babylonian Captivity Ends**

**Ezra 1:1-8, 11; 2:64-70**

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# Questions for Us Today

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Why did God have the people spend 70 years in exile?

Why did God choose to use Cyrus?

What role did Ezra perform in all of this?

What role did Jeremiah perform in all of this?

# Sunday School Lesson Objectives

1. Review the situation leading to the Babylonian captivity.
2. Understand the role of Ezra.
3. Understand how and why God used King Cyrus of Persia.
4. Understand the role of Jeremiah in relation to today's passage of Scripture.
5. Understand that working together for the will of the Lord provides awesome results.

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# **Sunday School Lesson Segments**

- 1. Points of Information: Ezra**
- 2. Other Individuals for Today's Lesson**
- 3. Lesson Context**
- 4. Lesson Text**

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## **Points of Information – Ezra**

**Ezra, the great-grandson of a priest (Hilkiah), was born into the priestly line of Aaron.**

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**Loosely translated, Ezra's name means "God is My Helper."**

# Points of Information – Ezra

Along with the Books of Nehemiah and Esther, the Book of Ezra is a historical volume of Scripture which speaks of the time after the captivity (exile) of the Jews in Babylon – the post-exilic period.

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In the Jewish tradition, the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are combined into one Book.

In addition to the Book named for him, it is believed that Ezra may have also written First and Second Chronicles as well as Psalm 119.

## Points of Information – Ezra

Ezra performed a number of roles: Elder, scribe, priest, prophet, preacher, civic and spiritual leader.

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Ezra's love of the Holy Word led him to become a scribe.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Book of Ezra, we find a powerful intercessory prayer, offered by this priest and scribe, because of the seriously serial sins of the people.

## Points of Information – Ezra

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Ezra led a second wave of the people back to Jerusalem, from the 70-year captivity in Babylon. The first six Chapters of the Book of Ezra tell of the first wave, led by Zerubbabel and others – comprised of about 50,000 people. Chapters 7 through 10 tell of the second wave, which totaled around 2,000 people.



# Points of Information – Ezra

When Ezra stood in a pulpit and read (preached) the Word to the people, it was a model for our congregational worship. The people stood in respect and reverence for the reading of the Law and they wept. Nehemiah 8:1-9.

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Ezra teamed with Nehemiah in the work to rebuild the walls and temple for and in the city of Jerusalem

# Other Individuals for Today's Lesson

1. Kings Cyrus, Darius II and Artaxerxes I of Persia
2. Jeremiah
3. Haggai & Zechariah
4. Zerubbabel

# Babylonian Captivity Ends Context

Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10 predicted that, due to their chronic disobedience, the people of Israel would spend 70 years in Babylonian exile.

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Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-4 predicted that a ruler named Cyrus would free the people.

Ezra chronicles the emancipation by King Cyrus.

# **Babylonian Captivity Ends Context**

**There were three major returns (of exiles) to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity:**

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- 1. Zerubbabel led 50,000 people (approx.) in return.**
- 2. Ezra led 2,000 people (approx.) in return.**
- 3. Nehemiah led a small group in return.**

# **Babylonian Captivity Ends**

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**Lesson Text:**

**Ezra 1:1-8, 11; 2:64-70**

## Ezra 1:1 (NRSV)

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the Word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared:

## **Ezra 1:2**

**“Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of Heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem in Judah.**

## **Ezra 1:3**

**Any of those among you who are His people – may their God be with them! – are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel – He is the God who is in Jerusalem;**



## **Ezra 1:4**

**and let all survivors, in whatever place they reside, be assisted by the people of their place with silver and gold, with goods and with animals, besides freewill offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem."**

## **Ezra 1:5-6**

**The heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites – everyone whose spirit God had stirred – got ready to go up and rebuild the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.**

**All their neighbors aided them with silver vessels, with gold, with goods, with animals, and with valuable gifts, besides all that was freely offered.**

## **Ezra 1:7-8**

**King Cyrus himself brought out the vessels of the house of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods.**

**King Cyrus of Persia had them released into the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.**

## **Ezra 1:11**

**the total of the gold and silver vessels was five thousand four hundred. All these Sheshbazzar brought up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.**

## **Ezra 2:64-65**

**The whole assembly was forty-two thousand three hundred sixty, besides their male and female servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty-seven; and they had two hundred male and female singers.**

## **Ezra 2:66-67**

**They had seven hundred thirty-six horses, two hundred forty-five mules, four hundred thirty-five camels, and six thousand seven hundred twenty donkeys.**

## **Ezra 2:68-69**

**As soon as they came to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, some of the heads of families made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site.**

**According to their resources they gave to the building fund sixty-one thousand darics of gold, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly robes.**

## **Ezra 2:70**

**The priests, the Levites, and some of the people lived in Jerusalem and its vicinity; and the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all Israel in their towns.**



**Remember these things:**

**The Lord chooses whom He uses.**

**When the people of God work together,  
following His will, great things will  
result.**

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