

LESSONS THIS QUARTER

- 1) 07 Dec Esther 1-3 Deliverance is Needed
- 2) 14 Dec Esther 4-10 God Provides Deliverance
- 3) 21 Dec Luke 2 God Provides a Savior
- 4) 28 Dec Ezra 1-6 God Ordains Restoration**
- 5) 04 Jan Ezra 7-10 God Commands Obedience
- 6) 11 Jan Nehemiah 1-2 God Inspires the Work
- 7) 18 Jan Sanctity of Life Protect Human Life
- 8) 25 Jan Nehemiah 3-6 Be Faithful in Adversity
- 9) 01 Feb Nehemiah 7 Do Your Appointed Part
- 10) 08 Feb Nehemiah 8 Get an Understanding
- 11) 15 Feb Nehemiah 9 Return to the Restoring God
- 12) 22 Feb Nehemiah 10-13 Commit Your Way to the Lord
- 13) 01 Mar Nahum 1-3 God is

INTRODUCTION

- What does it take to successfully start and finish a major undertaking?
As we will see in the book of Ezra, we often need righteous & driven leaders, willing and knowledgeable followers, and God's oversight.

WHO WAS EZRA

- He was a Chief Priest & "skilled" scribe, descended from Zadok
- He possibly wrote I, II Chronicles, Ezra & Nehemiah (originally all one book). Tradition also has Ezra writing **Psalm 119**
- He is noted for collecting & compiling the OT books (Law, Historical, Prophets, and Poetry) into a single collection
- He's also noted for instituting synagogue worship for towns with at least 10 adult male Jews along with the formal reading of Scripture

SIX TEMPLES IN THE BIBLE – ALL BUILT TO CENTRALIZE WORSHIP

- 1) Exodus' Tabernacle (built from the one depicted in Heaven)
- 2) Solomon's Temple (The Ark of the Covenant was removed)
- 3) **Ezra's Temple built after the Babylonian 70 year dispersion**
- 4) Herod's Temple (Ezra's temple greatly expanded – destroyed 70 AD)
- 5) Tribulation Temple (yet to be built during the peaceful first 3.5 years)
- 6) Ezekiel's Temple (built during the 1000-yr Millennial Reign of Christ)

NOTE: In the eternal Heaven there will be no Temple structure (*"I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple"* (Rev 21:22 NIV)). (See study for [Ezekiel 40-48](#))

Passage	Comments
Ezra 1:1-11	Release of the Exiles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary exodus – Some ventured away from their comfort zones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ The best of the best ('chiefs') were 'raised up' v5 ♦ Others provided financing for the trip v6 ♦ The Persian Govt even returned war booty v7-11
2:1-70	Resettlement in Judah <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two strong leaders stood up – Jeshua (High Priest) & Zerubbabel (Governor) • King David established 24 family groups of Priests but only 4 groups returned to reestablish worship vv36-39
3:1-13	Altar and Temple Foundation established <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of Worship was a priority (7th month) WHY? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Feast of Tabernacle with daily burnt offerings ♦ Freewill offerings & other ceremonies and feasts • God is big on feasting (WHY?) – For enjoyment, encouragement, & to establish a lasting culture (e.g. Christmas) • v10. Temple Foundation finished (2nd yr) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ v8. Reappointment of Levites (30 yrs vs 20 yrs service) - God did not object (He worked w/ them) ♦ Similar to Hezekiah celebrating Passover one month late while people got ready 2Chr 30:1-4 ♦ vv12-13. There was both Rejoicing & Weeping ♦ The glory of this house will be greater than Solomon's [due to Jesus walking through it] Hag 2:9
4:1-24	Outside Persecution Stops Temple Progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vv1-3. Leaders rejected outside help Why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Discernment saw through the true motive of the neighbors, which was to hamper Israel's progress ♦ Caution on using this passage to justify isolation

Passage	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Much money was received from indigenous neighbors to buy land & material <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 mina = 5yrs wages == \$1.2B (2:69) 2. Israel accepted help from the Persian Govt (7:22) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vv4-6. These disgruntled Samaritans hired lawyers • vv7-23. A letter to Artaxerxes seems out of place, but it is inserted, presumably, to reflect the true heart of the enemies and the extent they went to stop the work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Other alleged discrepancies in the Bible are from man's perspective – no doctrine is ever impacted ♦ God's ways are not our ways – God possibly allows alleged discrepancies in His Word to foil unbelievers by giving them excuses to reject the truth – 'seeing they shall not see' Mark 4:12 <p>PLUS – it makes us think to give a suitable answer</p>
5:1-17	Temple Work Resumed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • v1. Haggai & Zechariah to the rescue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ v2. Even good leaders may need extra support ♦ v5. God oversees everything, even a 14-year delay ♦ vv6-17. Another official transcript (4 of 7) • Haggai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Hag 1:4-11. Wrong priorities led to chastisement. Caution here on transferring cursing of the land to the NT era. Israelites were under a Land covenant. Our covenant is based on grace (unmerited favor), not on the promise of material blessings & cursings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Hag 1:12,14; 2:18,19. Obedience brings blessings ♦ Hag 2:9. This temple will have more glory • Zechariah <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Zech 1:3 'Return to me so I may return to you' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Powerful principle – God has done a lot to position (draw) everyone unto salvation & blessings, but we need to go or return to Him ♦ Zech 1:16,17 Compassion & Prosperity ♦ Zech 3:8 Messianic message (the BRANCH)
6:1-22	Temple Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vv8-12. A 2nd decree from Darius confirms 1st decree • vv15-22. Temple sacrifices restored <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Only thing missing – The Ark (where was it/is it?) ♦ v16. Dedication Ceremony

CONCLUSION/APPLICATIONS

- We need to recognize the time period we are in and act accordingly. In the 'Last Days' – while it is day we should strive to accomplish God's work with enthusiasm and urgency **John 9:4**
- We also need to realize personnel strengths. Some, for example, are great at starting projects and churches, but not so strong at maintaining things. Others have greater strengths maintaining things, but struggle with getting a major undertaking off the ground. Very few can do both – to start up major efforts and keep things going.
- Like Ezra, we should strive to be skilled scribes in God's word
 - ♦ Only by sound doctrine are we able to save ourselves and those who hear us **1Tim 4:16**

NEXT WEEK:

Ezra 7-10. These chapters touch on a lot of hot issues relevant for us TODAY from same-sex marriages to the "divorce-remarriage" revolution. If Christians do not hold marriage in high honor, how can we expect the rest of the world to comply? Ezra gives us guidance on how to fix, not the world, but the Church first.



"A message from the enemy, sire. They threaten to tell on us if we don't stop building the walls."