

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF EZRA

Today for the first time in a long time you get to change out of your **running shoes** into your **walking shoes**. There are only 10 Chapters in the **Book of Ezra**, so we have a better shot of taking our time and looking at more of the details in the book. Still there is more material than I can cover. These historical events pick up the story line after the **Babylonian Captivity** which we saw at the end of **2 Chronicles**. Now the exiles return to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem under the leadership of first Zerubbabel and then Ezra.

Remember these 2 words: Return and Restoration.

I am going to jump right in by looking at my **favorite verse** in the book:

Application: Make the Word of God a high priority.

Ezra 7:10:

“For Ezra had set his heart [3 priorities]

- *to study the law of the Lord*
- *and to practice it,*
- *and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.”*

Special focus of today’s study – highlighting all of the **Applications of God’s Word**. There will be 16 slides formatted like this one – just like I was taught in Hermeneutics class in seminary – make sure you have 16 major points.

The phrase in **7:10** "*set his heart*" indicates a deliberate decision, reflecting a deep inner conviction. **What is your heart set on?**

Reading the bible is important; but we need to be committed to dig deeper and apply ourselves to study the Word.

This practical application is crucial, as seen in **James 1:22**, which urges believers to be *doers of the word, not hearers only*. Ezra's life exemplifies the **integration of faith and action**, serving as a model for believers to follow. His practice of the Law would have been a powerful testimony to those around him, demonstrating the power of God's Word to guide and transform.

Ezra's mission includes teaching, which is vital for the preservation and transmission of faith. The "*statutes and ordinances*" refer to the specific commands and decrees within the Law. Teaching is a key component of the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20**), where Jesus instructs His disciples to teach others to obey **everything** He has commanded. We take the entire body of truth and faithfully teach it to the next generation of believers. You don't have to be gifted in teaching to teach your family and to teach people you are discipling.

We are going to see the **power of preaching the Word** in this book of Ezra.

2nd Application: Sometimes we need to renew our spiritual mission.

What was lost in the Exile that needed to be Restored and Revived?

- Loss of the system of priesthood
- Loss of the system of sacrifice
- Loss of the central sanctuary
- How committed are we to our mission of the Great Commission?
- How committed are we to making the Word of God our priority – studying it, practicing it, and teaching it to others as God gives us opportunity?

Title: Hebrew – Originally combined with **Nehemiah** as one book

Cover about one century in Israel's history – from 538 – 433 BC

Eventually in 1448 – the two books in the Hebrew bible Renamed as Ezra and Nehemiah = basis for our English division and names

Name derived from Hebrew meaning *help* or *helper* – concept of God as the nation's Helper

Arguments for Ezra as the Author:

- Jewish tradition in the Talmud; has remained the consensus view
- Specific portions of the book written in first person = from Ezra's point of view
- Vividness of details suggest an eyewitness account
- Strong priestly emphasis – Ezra was a respected scribe

Reknown of Ezra:

- The founder of the **Great Synagogue** = group of learned Jewish scholars; like a Synod; progenitor of the Sanhedrin in the days of the Gospels
- Really settled on the OT canon as far as its threefold division – the Law, Prophets and the Writings (**Luke 24**)
- In the transcribing of the Hebrew text, he changed the characters that were used from the Hebrew characters to the **square Assyrian characters** (Ezra was a scribe)
- Initiated the **local synagogues** – see them in the NT cities – place of education – taught the Torah = the Law of Moses; to worship they were to go to Jerusalem and the temple; main tenet: the whole success of their culture depended on returning to their religious roots and obedience to the Law and conformity to the sacrificial system administered by the priests and Levites (wrote 1&2 Chronicles as well) with the emphasis on the Temple and the covenant relationship
- Compiled 4 books in the OT – impressive task

Historical Setting:

Why the Exile to Babylon? What is known as the 70 year Babylonian Captivity occurred after the events of 2 Chronicles. They broke the covenant and suffered the consequences as detailed in **Deut. 28**.

3rd Application: We cannot escape divine accountability.

when we cheat God there comes a payday; must give God what is His; *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatever a man sows, he shall reap*

2 Chron. 36:19-21 *“Then they burned the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its fortified buildings with fire, and destroyed all its valuable articles. ²⁰ And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, ²¹ to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.”*

4th Application: God keeps His promises so we need to trust Him completely.

Jer. 29:10

“When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”

Prophet Jeremiah had predicted 70 years of captivity until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths – to make up for the 70 sabbath years that Israel had failed to observe in their recent 500 year history; every seventh year they were not to plant seeds in their fields – People probably reasoned: “Why let the land lay fallow? Why not increase our wealth;” God was collecting the 70 years of rest that He deserved.

Exile effectively lasted only **50 years** after 586 B.C. – but the 70 year duration is taken from the beginning date of 606 BC when the first deportation took place.

3 Deportations of Jews to Babylon:

- (606 BC) – During Jehoiakim's Reign
included some nobles, royal family members, **Daniel** and his friends
- (597 BC) – During Jehoiachin's Reign
around 10,000 people including the king, some craftsmen, artisans, **Ezekiel** taken
- (586 BC) – Fall of Jerusalem
After a failed rebellion by King Zedekiah, Babylonians returned;
Destruction of the Temple, city walls and royal palace;
Most of the remaining population taken except the poor

Bill McRae: Conditions during those 70 years: 3 geographic areas:

- Some remained in Jerusalem; a few in the priesthood; but mainly the poor; incorporated into province of Samaria governed by Babylonian kingdom at that time; they will oppose the rebuilding of the temple under Ezra and of the walls of the city under Nehemiah – would lose part of their province; Lamentations describe the conditions
- Group living in Babylon after having been taken captive – story in Daniel and Ezekiel
 - Jewish people became commercial merchants during this time; had been farmers up until that time

- They no longer had any inclination towards idolatry; had other problems like formalistic, ritualistic legalism
- Some returned after the 70 years and some stayed (like Esther); Talmud – Aramaic translation of the Jewish laws and the interpretation of the rabbis for the Jews who remained in Babylon instead of returning
- Some went to Egypt – cf. Jeremiah – just a very few – some stayed for an extended period of time; needed bible in their language = LXX translation into Greek; they had lost the Hebrew language and had learned the language of commerce = Greek

Providential Preparations for Return of Jewish Exiles:

- Changed World Empires – from Babylon to Persia
- Blessed the Jews with material prosperity in commerce
- Turned the hearts of pagan kings to accomplish His will
- Raised up spiritual leadership to guide the return and restoration

3 Corresponding Returns:

- (538 BC) – Led by Zerubbabel – Initiated by King Cyrus – Chaps. 1-6
 - 50,000 Jews (out of population of 2-3M) –
 - Rebuilding of altar; restoration of sacrifices
 - Temple completed in 516 BC
 - Required faith and courage – long journey; left comforts of home; faced uncertainty and danger
- (457 BC) – Led by Ezra – Initiated by King Artaxerxes I – Chaps. 7-10
 - 1,500 men plus families (much smaller group)
 - Religious reforms / Confession of national sins

Book of Esther written in 483 B.C. – historically fits in between the 58 year gap between Chaps. 6 and 7 of Ezra

[Books of the various prophets fit into the historical timeline – pre-exilic prophets; Daniel and Ezekiel; then post-exilic prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)]

- (444 BC) – Led by Nehemiah – Initiated by King Artaxerxes I
 - About 13 years after the events in the book of Ezra
 - Rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and secure the city;
 - Social and religious reforms

5th Application: Restoration is possible after failure.

Ezra 9:8-9

“But now for a brief moment grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. ⁹ "For we are slaves; yet in our bondage, our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.”

BIG IDEA:

REBUILDING WORSHIP FOUNDATIONS REQUIRES A HEART REFORMATION INFORMED BY THE WORD OF GOD

Thomas Constable: Rhetorical studies of Ezra-Nehemiah have revealed a **chiastic structure** that supports the view that these two books [Ezra and Nehemiah] were originally one.

A. Zerubbabel’s return and list of returnees (Ezra 1—2)

B. Building of the temple and opposition (Ezra 3—6)

C. Return of Ezra (Ezra 7—8)

D. Center: Purification of the people (Ezra 9—10)

C.’ Return of Nehemiah (Neh. 1—2)

B.’ Building of the walls and opposition (Neh. 3:1—7:3)

A.’ Zerubbabel’s return and list of returnees; final reforms (Neh. 7:4—13:31)

John Martin: Ezra wrote to encourage the remnant to be involved in true temple worship and to remind them to fulfill their covenantal obligations because of God’s mercy. The highlight of the book is in **chapters 9-10**, which tells of the people’s proper response after sin was found in their midst. Ezra wanted his readers to emulate that same attitude of dependence on God, which believers of all time should have.

Structure of Book:

I. (1-6) Return and Restoration under Zerubbabel

Restoration of Worship / Rebuilding the Temple

II. (7-10) Return and Restoration under Ezra

Recovery of God’s Word / Conviction of Sin/ Heartfelt Repentance

J. Sidlow Baxter:

THE BOOK OF RESTORATION

“Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion.”

Return Under Zerubbabel (i.-vi.)

Decree of Cyrus (i. 1-4)
Leader = Zerubbabel (i. 8; ii. 2)
Names & Number of Remnant (ii. 3-65)
Sacred vessels-gifts (i. 6-11; ii. 68-70)
Coming to Jerusalem (iii. 1)
Prophetic Ministry: Haggai / Zechariah
Main Outcome = Temple rebuilt
(vi. 15-22)

Return Under Ezra (vii.-x)

Decree of Artaxerxes (vii. 1, 11-26)
Leader = Ezra the scribe (vii. 1-10)
Names & Number of company (viii. 1-20)
Sacred vessels-gifts (vii. 15-22; viii. 24-35)
Coming to Jerusalem (viii. 32)
Intercessory ministry of Ezra (ix. 1-15)
Main Outcome = People re-separated
(x. 1-44)

Structure of Book:

I. (1-6) Return and Restoration under Zerubbabel

Restoration of Worship / Rebuilding the Temple

A. (1:1 – 2:70) THE RETURN

1. (1:1-11) Permission to Return Granted by King Cyrus –

Restoration of the Temple Initiated by the Sovereign Intervention of the Decree of Cyrus to Fulfil Covenantal Promises

2. (2:1-70) Roster of Returnees

B. (3:1 – 6:22) THE RESTORATION

1. (3:1-13) Restoration of Worship and Laying the Temple Foundation –

Revival Starts with Re-Establishing Obedience to God in Worship

2. (4:1-23) Opposition to God’s Work –

God’s Enemies Use Familiar Tactics to Oppose God’s Work and Achieve Temporary Victories

3. (4:24 – 6:22) Rebuilding of the Temple

God providentially used Cyrus to initiate the restoration of the exiles back to Jerusalem and the project of rebuilding the temple.

(1:1-11) *“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ² 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³ 'Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴ 'And every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.'” ⁵ Then the heads of fathers' households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. ⁶ And all those about them encouraged them with articles of silver, with gold, with goods, with cattle, and with valuables, aside from all that was given as a freewill offering. ⁷ Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and put in the house of his gods; ⁸ and Cyrus, king of Persia, had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and he counted them out to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. ⁹ Now this was their number: 30 gold dishes, 1,000 silver dishes, 29 duplicates; ¹⁰ 30 gold bowls, 410 silver bowls of a second kind, and 1,000 other articles. ¹¹ All the articles of gold and silver numbered 5,400. Sheshbazzar brought them all up with the exiles who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem.”*

6th Application: All human authority is delegated authority.

“The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth,”

7th Application: God is Sovereign over all world events.

He controls kings and empires to accomplish His purposes. Isaiah had prophesied about 150 years before Cyrus came to the throne and issued his decree that the temple would be rebuilt. The prophet actually named Cyrus as the one who would bring it about. (**Isaiah 44:28** calls Cyrus “My shepherd”; **45:1** calls Cyrus “His anointed”)

Isaiah 45:28 *“It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'”*

8th Application: The Providence of God controls every circumstance of our lives in amazing ways.

Bill McRae: God made some **remarkable preparations** for the restoration of his people

- God changed the rule of govt from Babylonian empire to Persian – Babylonians transplanted the inhabitants of the populace; Persians had opposite policy – recognized the individual uniqueness of the lands they conquered; encouraged them to maintain their culture and religion; that is what motivated the priority behind the decree of Cyrus as he takes over

- Prosperity of the Jews – God permitted the Jews to prosper in skill in commerce while in captivity; Why? So they could rebuild the temple – required resources – even the ones who did not return were compelled by Cyrus to share in the cost of the rebuild; look at how Jews continue to prosper in business in Europe and America – providence of God; that wealth being used to rebuild Israel today and later will rebuild the temple again
- Rise of a pagan king Cyrus – God raised him up to accomplish a particular task;
- Amazing leadership God raised up among Jewish exiles – Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi – in control of every circumstance in our lives as well

9th Application: God can provide resources from surprising sources.

Gary Smith: To the Israelites, as well as to God, the continuation of a worshipping community of believers in Jerusalem was of utmost importance. By releasing the **precious Temple utensils**, Cyrus affirmed the legitimacy of Israel's God and his right to have worship at his own Temple in Judah. Possession of these valuable items created continuity between the ancient past and the new worship activities in Jerusalem. These utensils also gave legitimacy to this new worship. The returnees would worship at the same place using the same Temple utensils as their forefathers.

These temple utensils were going to serve an important purpose later on of authenticating the restoration project when it came under attack – **Chap. 4-6**. The fact that King Cyrus had released these items from the temples and treasuries in Babylon and sent them back with the exiles proved he had authorized the project.

5:13-15

“However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God. ¹⁴ And also the gold and silver utensils of the house of God which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, and brought them to the temple of Babylon, these King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon, and they were given to one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor. ¹⁵ And he said to him, ‘Take these utensils, go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt in its place.’” (Also 6:5)

(3:1-13) Restoration of Worship and Laying the Temple Foundation –

Revival Starts with Re-Establishing Obedience to God in Worship

Altar and sacrifices are restored;

They start observing the Feast of Booths and other religious festivals.

They lay the foundation for the temple.

Look at the contrasting reaction on the part of the people: **3:10-13**

“Now when the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD according to the directions of King David of Israel. ¹¹ And they sang,

praising and giving thanks to the LORD, saying, 'For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever.' And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. ¹² Yet many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' households, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, while many shouted aloud for joy; ¹³ so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard far away."

10th Application: Spiritual Renewal can stir emotions of both Joy and Sorrow.

Looking backwards, there can still be a sense of loss due to sin and its consequences.

Looking forwards, there can be great joy in the prospects for future worship and obedience and the renewal of God's blessing.

Our lives are a complex mixture of many experiences and emotions. Allow people space to react with heartfelt sincerity and authenticity.

Chaps. 4-6 – Dealing with Opposition While completing the Temple Project

11th Application: Reject ecumenical alliances that compromise theological integrity.

4:1-3 *"Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the LORD God of Israel, ² they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households, and said to them, 'Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here.' ³ But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them, 'You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us.'"*

The invitation of cooperation sounds very positive. How could you reject such an offer of help? But the theological foundations must be evaluated. Is there really a commonality of belief and mission?

12th Application: Expect opposition to the Lord's work.

4:4-6 *"Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, ⁵ and hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. ⁶ Now in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem."*

Satan continues to use the same tactics to try to discourage God's people and divert us from our Christian mission. Opposition can come from within the believing community or from without. He uses fear and threats and intimidation and accusations. In this case after letters back and forth to the officials in Persia, a directive came down to stop the work. So there was a 15 year period when the work paused.

It took the prophetic ministries of Haggai and Zechariah to stir the people up to resume the work and finish the temple project.

4:7-23 – opposition that occurred almost a century later to the building of the walls – lumped in here in the **theme of opposition** – shows the long lasting nature of the opposition; **4:24** picks up the main line of the story

13th Application: God directs the hearts of kings to accomplish His purposes.

Prov. 21:1 “The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.”

This happens to be a life verse for the Apple household. I shared earlier at one of the Men's prayer breakfasts what this verse means to us. We have it inscribed on a plaque just inside the entrance to our home. The Lord blessed us with purchasing this home by turning the heart of the seller to look favorably on us even though she had a substantially higher offer from somebody else.

We have already seen this principle at work in King Cyrus. Here we see it in directing the heart of King Darius to reject the accusations of Israel's adversaries and command the work to continue to completion. Even providing additional resources.

Your situation might look impossible; but God is able to accomplish the impossible.

II. (7-10) Return and Restoration under Ezra

Recovery of God's Word / Conviction of Sin/ Heartfelt Repentance

A. (7:1 – 8:36) THE RETURN

1. (7:1-28) Emphasis on God's Hand of Favor on the Leader —
2. (8:1-36) Emphasis on Shepherding the Workers and the Resources —

Successful Pioneering Mission Couples Effective Leadership with Dependence upon the Blessing of God –

B. (9:1 – 10:44) THE REFORMS — HEARTBROKEN REPENTANCE MUST LEAD TO ACTIVE REPENTANCE

1. (9:1-15) Heartbroken Repentance Should Result from Exposure of Flagrant Sin
2. (10:1-44) Active Repentance Expresses Sorrow to God While Committing to Corrective Action

14th Application: God's good hand of favor is what guarantees success.

God is actively guiding, empowering, and protecting Ezra and the returnees.

For returning exiles, the rebuilding of the temple and reestablishing the Law were daunting tasks. These references to the “*hand of God*” served as **encouragement and assurance** that God was still with His people.

6 References:

“*This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the LORD his God was upon him.*” (Ezr. 7:6) Shown favor in the eyes of the king who granted him his requests

“*For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God was upon him.*” (Ezr. 7:9) Safe 900 mile journey; protected from dangers

“*Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to adorn the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, ²⁸ and has extended lovingkindness to me before the king and his counselors and before all the king's mighty princes. Thus I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my God upon me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.*” (Ezr. 7:27-28) Strengthened to carry out the mission to return and rebuild

“*And according to the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of insight of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, and his sons and brothers, 18 men;*” (Ezr. 8:18) Provision of much needed Levites and temple servants

“*For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, ‘The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him.’*” (Ezr. 8:22) Protection from enemies and a safe journey

“*Then we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was over us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way.*” (Ezr. 8:31) Protection from enemies and a safe journey

(8:1-36) 6 STEPS IN LAUNCHING A SUCCESSFUL REBUILDING MISSION FOR GOD

- 1) (:1-14) BUILDING A FUNCTIONAL TEAM
- 2) (:15-20) RECRUITING MISSING WORKERS (LEVITES FOR TEMPLE SERVICE)
- 3) (:21-23) SEEKING GOD’S PROTECTION AND BLESSING (BY PRAYING AND FASTING) FOR ALL THE LOGISTICS (HERE = SAFE JOURNEY)

- 4) (:24-30) STEWARDING THE PRECIOUS RESOURCES DEDICATED TO GOD'S SERVICE
- 5) (:31-34) EXECUTING THE MISSION SUCCESSFULLY
- 6) (:35-36) WORSHIPING GOD AND SEEKING ONGOING SUPPORT

15th Application: If we believe in God is sovereign, we need to pray more – both individually and corporately.

For Ezra, prayer was foundational to leadership, national restoration, repentance, and seeking God's guidance.

Ezra 8:21 *"Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions."* Prayer for protection and safe journey

7:27-28 -- Ezra offers a spontaneous prayer of **praise** and humble thanksgiving after receiving the king's favor to return to Jerusalem and lead the people.

9:5-15 Intercessory prayer of confession and repentance on behalf of the nation

16th Application: Genuine Confession Leads to Active Repentance Reflected in Corrective Action involving separation from sin.

Law of God revealed the sin of the people intermarrying with non-Israelites (pagan nations) and convicted Ezra of the nation's need for repentance. not condemning **interracial marriage** – don't marry people who don't worship the true God;

The sin is not just a breach of cultural norms—it is seen as a betrayal of **God's covenant** and a threat to the community's holiness and identity.

9:4 *"Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiles gathered to me, and I sat appalled until the evening offering."*

9:5-15 Extensive Prayer of Genuine Confession – verbal acknowledgment

Key features of this Confession:

- **Grief and mourning:** Ezra tears his clothes, pulls hair from his head and beard, and sits appalled (**Ezra 9:3**).
- **Corporate Solidarity in guilt:** He uses first-person plural language ("our iniquities", "we have forsaken your commandments") to confess on behalf of the nation (**Ezra 9:6–7**).

- **Acknowledgment of grace:** Ezra recognizes that God has shown mercy by allowing a remnant to return (Ezra 9:8–9).
- **No excuse or defense or minimization:** The confession ends with the stark statement: *“We are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this”* (Ezra 9:15).

10:2-4 Shecaniah Encourages Active Repentance and Corrective Action

Remainder of **Chap. 10** -- the people agree with the indictment regarding intermarriage; join publicly in confession and repentance; and take the dramatic step of putting away their wives and children

There's **ethical tension**, especially regarding the decision to send away foreign wives and children (Ezra 10:3, 44). It shows how sin leads to **painful consequences** even after confession.

[This example of specific repentance is not a prescriptive command for believers to put away their unbelieving spouse and children]

REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS:

1. **Make the Word of God a high priority.**
2. **Sometimes we need to renew our spiritual mission.**
3. **We cannot escape divine accountability.**
4. **God keeps His promises so we need to trust Him completely.**
5. **Restoration is possible after failure.**
6. **All human authority is delegated authority.**
7. **God is Sovereign over all world events.**
8. **The Providence of God controls every circumstance of our lives in amazing ways.**
9. **God can provide resources from surprising sources.**
10. **Spiritual Renewal can stir emotions of both Joy and Sorrow.**
11. **Reject ecumenical alliances that compromise theological integrity.**
12. **Expect opposition to the Lord's work.**
13. **God directs the hearts of kings to accomplish His purposes.**
14. **God's good hand of favor is what guarantees success.**

15. If we believe in God is Sovereign, we need to pray more – both individually and corporately.

16. Genuine Confession Leads to Active Repentance Reflected in Corrective Action involving separation from sin.

BIG IDEA:

REBUILDING WORSHIP FOUNDATIONS REQUIRES A HEART REFORMATION INFORMED BY THE WORD OF GOD

Why Study this Book?

- To see the faithfulness of God in not abandoning His elect nation, despite their disobedience resulting in discipline in captivity.
- To view redemption in a fuller perspective as we read this account of a “second Exodus” where God brings His people out of captivity.
- To deepen our conviction regarding the sovereignty of God who is able to move the hearts of pagan kings to provide support and resources for this rebuilding effort in Jerusalem.
- To gain insight into effective spiritual leadership and the steps one must take to accomplish a successful pioneering work for God
- To learn how to combat opposition and discouragement in ministry and to continue to get up after setbacks and remain on course to fulfil God’s mission.
- To see the importance of learning, applying and teaching the Word of God in laying the foundation for moral and spiritual reforms that will support genuine worship of God.
- To appreciate how God answers the prayers of His people — providing necessary leaders, providing safety and protection during the dangerous journey to Jerusalem, and fulfilling all of His covenant promises.
- To point us to the New Covenant and the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice for sin which alone can give us the new heart we need to worship and obey God.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: **Revival** of the Jewish remnant in Ezra bears 7 Characteristics:

- Consciousness of their own weakness (**chapters 2 and 9**)
- Obedience to the Word of God (**chapter 7**)
- Return to the God-given centre (**chapter 3**)
- Separation from the world (**chapter 4**)
- Spirit of commitment and sacrifice (**chapter 2:68-69**)
- Consciousness of unity of the people (**chap. 3:1; 6:17; 8:35**)
- Prophetic service and anticipation of the Messiah (**chap. 5:1; 6:14**)