

## Restoration of Exiles: A Study of Ezra Chapter 1

1. Ezra 1:1-4 is about the Edict that the Persian King Cyrus made. Read these verses. For the reference to Jeremiah in v. 1, read Jeremiah 25:8-12. Who initiated the return of the people to their homeland and who prompted him to do so (Ezra 1:1, 2, 5)? What were they being sent to do (vv. 2-3)?
2. Ezra 1:2-4 appears to be a quote from an official government record. Whoever wanted could go back to their homeland and the others were to support those who were going. This is indeed what happened (vv. 5-6).
3. Ezra 1:5-11 tells about the first group of Jews who returned to their homeland. This was initiated by God (vv. 1, 6), permitted by the pagan king Cyrus (vv. 1, 2), and led by a Jewish Governor named Sheshbazzar (vv. 8, 11; cf. 5:14, 16). But significance is also given to the people who went and the ones who supported them (vv. 5-6). In fact, most of Ezra 2 is devoted to listing the family names and the number of people from each family who went back to their homeland.
4. For the articles from the Temple mentioned in vv. 7-11, compare 2 Chronicles 36:5-7, 9-10, 15-18.
5. The actual return is briefly mentioned in v. 11 and more will be said about it in chapter 2. Note that the journey was about 500 miles as crow flies, but more like 900 miles as the road goes. In Ezra 7:9 we read that Ezra later made the journey in Took Ezra 4 months "because the gracious hand of the Lord was with him" (7:9). This was a *long* walk.
6. How would you feel if you were conquered by a pagan nation and marched hundreds of miles from your homeland to theirs and had to live in captivity in a foreign land?

7. How would you feel if, after seventy years, a new leader arose and announced that you could return to your homeland?
  
8. Would you have chosen to return with the group or stay behind but give support the ones who were returning?
  
9. Thinking about all of Ezra 1, how would you state the relationship between what the Lord did and what the people were called to do? How would you apply this to us today?
  
10. Do you think things are going to go pretty smoothly once the people get back to their homeland or that there will be difficulties and troubles?
  
11. Why did the Lord want his people to go back to Judah? What specific thing did he want them to do and why in general do you think God was doing it?
  
12. How would you compare and contrast the reason these people were sent into exile with the reason we have been sent into "exile" over the last two months? How would you compare and contrast God's purpose for their exile and ours? What's the first thing you're going to do when you are released from the "exile" we are currently experiencing in our nation and world?
  
13. What is your "take home" lesson from Ezra 1 and how can you act on it?

