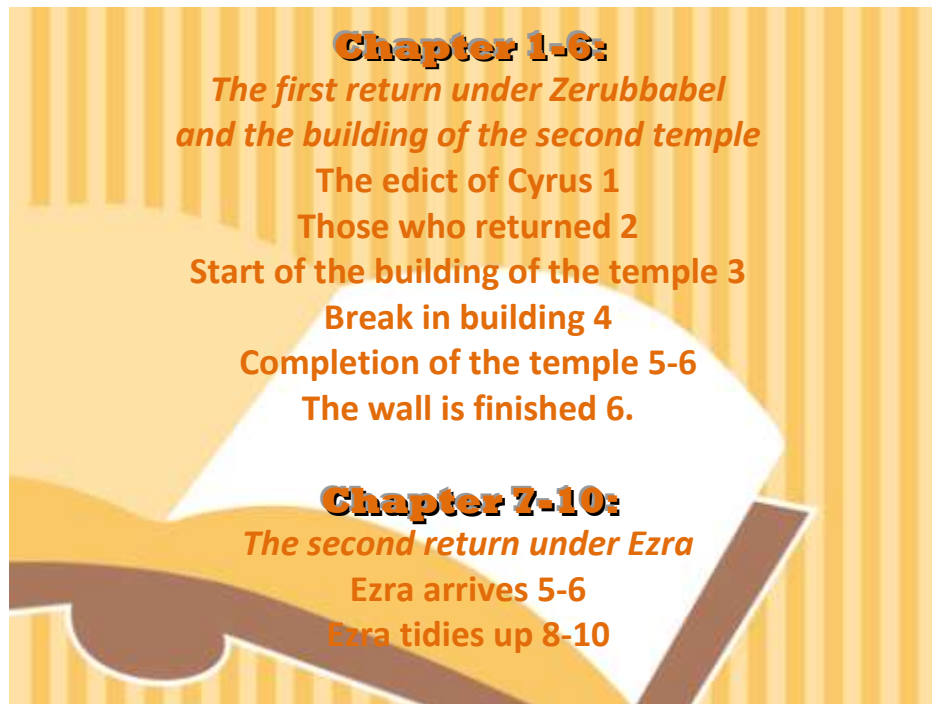


The Book of Ezra

"Be of good courage, and do it." Ezra 10:4



How it started: Much points to Ezra having written this book himself, although he wasn't actually present at the time of the first report. The book of Ezra reflects the years from 538 to 456BC.

What is fascinating is that in the book of Ezra a whole people is given the opportunity to be released from captivity to return into its old homeland. This is on the orders of the ruling king, Cyrus the Great.

It is also interesting that at the same time there were high officials from the people of Israel in leading positions of the Persian government. Daniel and his friends were some of them, as well as Queen Esther.

What it is all about: Historically, the book of Ezra is a sequel to 2 Chronicles. In two parts, it tells the story of the return of the people of Israel from Babylonian captivity into their homeland Israel.

The first part, chapters 1-6, reports that Zerubbabel returned in 536BC with a number of Israelites who joined voluntarily. The instruction given to him by King Cyrus was to build the temple of God in Jerusalem. But this is connected with difficulties such as a break in the building work and sabotage. This part describes 22 years, until the point in time when the temple is rebuilt.

In the second part, from chapter 7-10, the priest Ezra is instructed by king Artaxerxes the First to move to Jerusalem, to take further temple utensils, and to rule as governor over the Jewish people. When he arrives in Jerusalem, Ezra is shocked at the indifference and the generally bad condition of the Israelites.

How about today? The book of Ezra is a book of the Bible in which it becomes especially apparent that God directs great world politics. He can use the mightiest rulers in order to help his people.

Furthermore, you can learn much from Ezra's attitude and behaviour as a faithful man of God. Note especially what his main concern was. He worked hard for the altar and the temple of God.

According to the New Testament, all true Christians represent the temple of God (see 1 Corinthians 3:16-17).