



Return

Ezra · Nehemiah · 1 & 2 Chronicles

The people return to the promised land. They rebuild the Temple and the city walls. The restoration is incomplete. They need the promised king to fulfil God's plan and rebuild God's kingdom into a worldwide kingdom.

Video Summary

The Babylonian Empire gives way to the Persian Empire. King Cyrus the Great decrees the Israelites can return to their land in 536 BC.

The people rebuild the Temple. The project is led by Ezra who also taught the people God's law. The people also rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, the capital city where the Temple is located. This project is led by Nehemiah.

This is where the Old Testament ends. There is a lingering sense that this isn't the true ending of the story. The story of Israel's history — the story of human history — is still waiting for the promised king who will build God's house so God can live with his people in his place.

The promised king will fulfil the responsibilities of living in God's kingdom and enable the people to do so too, so they can enjoy the benefits. He will be a champion who will: interrupt the spiral towards self-destruction; crush the Snake; remove sin; re-establish connection and closeness to God; and enable us to have life as it's supposed to be. He will bring God's kingdom from heaven to earth — a kingdom God himself will establish — a worldwide kingdom, everywhere for everyone, forever.

Discussion Questions

- 1** God moves the heart of King Cyrus to begin rebuilding the Temple. What does that show you about God and the way he works? Have you seen times when God worked through unexpected people or situations in your life?
- 2** Ezra taught the people God's law as part of the work rebuilding God's kingdom. Why is a return to kingdom responsibilities essential for meaningful restoration? What would it look like for you to structure your life around God's definition of how to live?
- 3** Even though they return, why is there a lingering sense that the story is unfinished? What is missing? Why doesn't it feel like a full restoration?

Bible Passages for Further Study

Ezra 1:1-6 — The rebuilding of the Temple is authorised

Nehemiah 2:1-6 — The rebuilding of the city walls is authorised

2 Chronicles 36:15-23 — The final words of the Hebrew Bible — a king chosen by God to build God's house

