

*Ezra and
Haggai
Leader Guide*
(NASB and ESV)

REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra and Haggai Leader Guide (NASB and ESV)

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USING LEADER GUIDES

Leader Guides are intended for you, the leader, to guide your Precept Upon Precept® and In & Out® discussions. They are designed to help you reason through the content of the lessons and to ensure you have understood what your group should have learned from their study. The guides offer effective plans for leading discussions.

The Holy Spirit is your guide as you prepare. He is the one who knows what your group needs to apply to their lives. Pray for them as they study and for yourself as you prepare to lead the discussion.

These guides can be used for either the NASB or the ESV edition of the courses. ESV words follow the NASB after a slash / or are set off with parentheses.

Leader Guides include the following:

- Lesson emphasis
- A logical order for the discussion
- Discussion questions
- Suggested visual aid(s)

Practical tips for using the Leader Guide:

- **Don't simply "do" the lesson.**
Stay with the lesson until you have a good understanding of it. This will give you a better grasp of how the Leader Guide takes you through the lesson.
- **You don't have to ask every question in the guide.**
Often one question will be covered while discussing another question so there is no reason to ask it. Your goal is not to ask every question, but to ask enough questions to make sure your group understood the lesson and to help them apply the truths to their lives.

Using the Leader Guide with In & Out

When your entire group uses In & Out

Compare an In & Out lesson with the Leader Guide. Use what relates to the In & Out lesson as a guide for the discussion. Don't teach what's not in In & Out lessons. Remember your goal in the discussion is for your group to discuss what they've learned, not for you to lecture on what you learned.

For groups studying both Precept Upon Precept and In & Out

Use the Leader Guides as designed for PUP, knowing that the In & Out assignments will be covered in the discussion. Make a note in the Leader Guide of what is not in the In & Out.

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**EZRA / HAGGAI
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 1**

Lesson focus

- Ezra 1–3
- The promise-keeping God

You can begin by asking your group if God spoke anything specific to their hearts while studying this lesson.

NOTE: Keep this very short, but it can create an atmosphere among your group of sharing their thoughts with one another.

Then ask how Ezra begins.

Cyrus’s first year as king of Persia, to fulfill the Lord’s word through Jeremiah

HISTORICAL SETTING / BACKGROUND

Direct your group to look at “The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther” chart as a visual aid for this part of your discussion.

What were the events in Israel’s history which led to Ezra 1:1? Ask what your group learned from the cross-references.

Isaiah 44 and 45

The Lord, through Isaiah, said that Cyrus was to rebuild the foundation of His temple in Jerusalem.

God named Cyrus more than 100 years before he was born. He called him by name even before the Babylonians took Jerusalem captive.

2 Chronicles 36

The Lord brought King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon against His people in Jerusalem.

The kings of Judah were evil, and the priests and people were unfaithful to the Lord.

They defiled His house, His temple in Jerusalem.

They mocked the prophets like Jeremiah whom the Lord sent to them.

Then He sent His wrath in the form of the Chaldeans—the Babylonians.

The people were killed or taken captive to Babylon.

The temple was destroyed and its holy articles taken.

Jeremiah 25 and 29

The Lord said that Judah was to be exiled in Babylon for 70 years. When the seventy years were completed, the Lord would bring them back to their own land.

Daniel 5 and 6

Daniel, who was taken captive in the first siege against Jerusalem, prophesied in Babylon to the people of Judah and Jerusalem who were exiled there. He was in Babylon for the whole seventy years. He also prophesied to the kings of Babylon.

The last one was Belshazzar. Daniel told him how the Medes and Persians were to take over his kingdom. It happened as he said.

EZRA 1

Now ask your group what they learned from their study of this chapter.

NOTE: If they don't discuss all the main points in Ezra 1, then you might ask some of the following questions to direct the discussion more specifically.

When did the events of this chapter take place?

In Cyrus's first year as King of Persia, 539–538 B.C.
The end of the seventy years exile in Babylon
The time shortly after Daniel 6

What happened in verses 1-4?

Cyrus sent a written proclamation throughout his kingdom for those of Judah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Lord's temple there.

You might direct your group to look at the map and locate the places mentioned.

Why did Cyrus send the proclamation?

The Lord stirred up his spirit to do His will.

He used a pagan king to fulfill His Word.

At this point, you can ask what your group learned about the Lord in the passages you've discussed. Give time for application discussion as well.

There is a list about the Lord at the end of this lesson's guide which you can use as an example of a visual aid for this discussion. Add to the list as you discuss each chapter.

What else do verses 1-4 say about the Lord?

He was in the process of keeping, fulfilling, His promises in His Word through Jeremiah.

He stirred Cyrus' spirit to make the proclamation.

The God of heaven gave Cyrus all the kingdoms of the earth. Isaiah prophesied this. He appointed Cyrus to rebuild His house in Jerusalem.

He's the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem.

What happened in verses 5-11?

The Lord also stirred up the peoples' spirits to return to Jerusalem.

The heads of Judah and Benjamin
—the two tribes of the Kingdom of Judah

The priests and Levites
—those who ministered in the temple

And the people

They were encouraged to return by the people about them, with gifts and offerings for their journey and the rebuilding. Verse 4 might include the Persians and Jews, or only the Jews. Either might have given silver and gold, as with the Egyptians at the Exodus. But a freewill offering seems to indicate a Jewish offering at God's temple.

King Cyrus sent the temple articles taken by Nebuchadnezzar with the prince of Judah Sheshbazzar.

Give time for discussion about God stirring up spirits to do His will.

To end your discussion of Ezra 1, ask your group how they summarized this chapter on their At a Glance charts.

God stirred spirits to return and rebuild His house in Jerusalem

EZRA 2

What is this chapter about? Ask your group how they summarized this chapter.

This is a list of those who returned to the cities of Judah.

49,897 total went with the leaders named in verse 2.

Families—verses 3-20
Cities—verses 21-35
Priests—verses 36-39
Levites—verses 40-42
Temple servants—verses 43-54
The king's servants (descendants of Solomon's servants)—verses 55-57
Those with no evidence that they belonged to Israel—verses 59-63

What are verses 68-70 about?

After arriving in Jerusalem, some of the family heads gave offerings to restore the foundation of the Lord's house.

They lived in their own cities / towns in Judah, not all in Jerusalem.

EZRA 3

What is this chapter about? Tell your group to look at their At a Glance charts again.

They celebrated the Feast of Booths, laid foundation of Lord's house

Discuss the main points of verses 1-3.

In the 7th month of the year, after the people returned to Judah, they gathered in Jerusalem.

Jeshua and Zerubbabel and their brothers built the altar to burn sacrifices and offerings to the Lord.

Compare these two men with the leaders named in 2:2.

The people were terrified of (feared) the other people living in the land around them.

NOTE: This could also be translated, "Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altar on its bases."¹

Review why the people of Judah had been taken out of their land, why they were in exile.

Evil kings
Faithless priests and people

Turned away from the Lord

Since the end of the captivity and their return to their land, was all peaceful and well?

They were terrified of the people who lived in their land while they were gone.

¹ The New King James Version. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982). Ezra 3:3.

But they knew who to turn to—the Lord.

Discuss possible application of this point.

What happened in verses 4-7?

They celebrated the Feast of Booths in the 7th month

How is the Feast of Booths described in Leviticus 23:39-44?

On the 15th day of the 7th month all Israel was to celebrate this feast for 8 days.
It was to be celebrated every year.

They made booths out of foliage, branches and boughs of trees.

It's a feast of rejoicing before the Lord.

What were the people to remember as they celebrated this feast? What was the cause for rejoicing? What did it signify?

The Lord brought them out of slavery, captivity, in Egypt.
They lived in booths in the wilderness after He led them out of Egypt.

Since they had just come out of captivity to Babylon, they must have been overjoyed to celebrate this feast before their God. He's the God of Israel.

What happened after the feast?

They continued to offer on the altar all the offerings connected with all the festivals and new moons.

It was a reminder of the Lord with them in their land.

Then they began to rebuild the house of the Lord.

Money was given to the masons and carpenters.

Goods were traded with the Sidonians and Tyrians for cedar from Lebanon.
Locate these places on the map.

What is the time of verse 8?

2nd year, 2nd month

This was about 7 months after the Feast of Booths in verses 4-6.

Who is named in verse 8? Compare the names in verse 8 with the leaders in 2:2 and 3:2.

It seems that Zerubbabel and Jeshua were the leaders.

They appointed the Levites to oversee the work on the temple.

What did the leaders and the people do?

They laid the foundation of the temple, the Lord's house.

Relate verses 10-11 to 2:36-42.

The priests and Levites praised the Lord with music when the foundation was laid. They led the people in praise.

Gave thanks

God's lovingkindness / steadfast love is on Israel forever

He didn't leave them, but kept His promises to them for return.

He does the same now—He keeps His promises in His Word.

What was the reaction in verses 12-13?

While most of the people shouted loudly for joy, the old men who had seen the previous house wept—the ones who had lived through the seventy years of captivity.

How do Psalm 137:1-6 and Psalm 126 relate to this?

When the people of Judah were in Babylon, they wept when they remembered Zion—Jerusalem. They longed for their own land.

They couldn't sing for joy in captivity.

Psalm 126 was after the return.

They came back with joyful shouting, saying, "The Lord has done great things for us."

How does Proverbs 21:1 relate to Ezra 1–3?

Ezra is a demonstration of what Proverbs says.

How does this relate to the everyday lives and trials of the people in your group?

For application you might end with a discussion of this verse and the events of Ezra 1–3.

The LORD

Fulfilled His word to Jeremiah

—70 years of captivity / named Cyrus

Stirred up Cyrus's spirit and the people's

God of heaven

Gave Cyrus kingdoms, appointed him to build His house

God of Israel in Jerusalem

Lovingkindness / steadfast love on Israel forever

Praise and give thanks

**EZRA / HAGGAI
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 2**

Lesson emphasis

- Ezra 4–6

REVIEW

To begin this discussion, ask what your group remembers from the first lesson about the historical setting leading up to Ezra.

The chart “The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther” is a good visual aid for this part of your discussion.

The Lord told His people about coming judgment because they turned away from Him and worshiped other gods.

Through Isaiah, He also told of restoration after the Babylonians took Judah captive.

He named Cyrus, the Persian king, before Persia was a major kingdom, over 100 years before he was born, and at least 75 years before Judah was exiled.

Then through Jeremiah, the Lord told Judah when they would return to their land.

After 70 years of Babylonian captivity, they started returning to Judah and Jerusalem.

What is Ezra 1–3 about?

Direct them to look at their At a Glance charts for this.

Ezra 1 God stirred spirits to return and rebuild His house in Jerusalem

Ezra 2 The list of those who returned to Judah and Jerusalem

Ezra 3 They celebrated the Feast of Booths, laid foundation of Lord’s house

It was the second year after their return.
Zerubbabel and Jeshua were the leaders.

They were making progress and praising the Lord for His lovingkindness.

EZRA 4

What is this chapter about? Tell your group to look at their At a Glance charts.

Enemies' / Adversaries letters; building stopped

NOTE: You can ask the general question above, but if that doesn't lead to a discussion of the whole chapter, then you can ask the more specific questions that follow.

As a visual aid for this part of your discussion, direct your students to look at the chart again "The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther."

Judah's enemies / adversaries wrote letters to the kings to stop rebuilding in Jerusalem.

The work stopped for about 14 years.

Who were the enemies / adversaries? Where did they live?

They were the people Esarhaddon king of Assyria brought to live in the land of Israel after the northern kingdom of Israel was taken by Assyria.

Compare with 2 Kings 17:21-41.

Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel (after their split from the southern kingdom of Judah), introduced idol worship to the people of God.

Because of their continued idol worship, God brought Assyria against them. Israel was dispersed, and people from other nations were brought to live in the area surrounding Samaria (capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel).

These people brought their own gods with them to Israel's land, but they also were trained to worship the Lord.

They tried to mix worship of the true and living God with the false.

That resulted in their being enemies / adversaries of those who truly worshiped the Lord.

You might ask your group if that still happens now.

There is only the one true God. He alone is to be worshiped.

What did the people of the land want to do in Ezra 4:1-2?

They wanted to help the people of Judah and Benjamin rebuild God's house. They said that they also sought or worshiped Him.

How does the rest of this chapter show that they didn't really seek / worship Him?

Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin told the people of the land that they had nothing in common with them.

Then the people of the land, the enemies, discouraged and frightened them from building. They hired counselors to frustrate Judah's counselors the whole time Cyrus was king of Persia.

God's enemy / adversary, the devil, still uses the same tactics.

The building stopped until the second year of Darius king of Persia, verse 24. That was about 14 years.

NOTE: On the chart "The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther" there are two kings named Darius. The first was Darius the Mede who reigned at the same time as Cyrus of Persia. The second king named Darius was the Persian king named in Ezra 4.

What happened in verse 6? When?

The enemies wrote accusations about the Jews to the reigning Persian kings.

The first was Ahasuerus. He was king of Persia about 45 years after Cyrus. He was also known by "Xerxes." This Persian king was Esther's husband.

What are verses 7-23 about? When did this take place?

Although the time jumped ahead to Artaxerxes' reign, about 57 years after the time when the temple rebuilding stopped during Cyrus's reign, the theme is the same—opposition to God's people and His will.

The letter to Artaxerxes opposed rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and its walls. It called Jerusalem a rebellious city which didn't pay tribute to foreign kings in the past and revolted against them. It said that was why it was laid waste.

If you have time, you might ask for the reasons from God's perspective as to why Jerusalem was laid waste.

What did the letter from the king say in verses 17-23? And what was the result?

Even the pagan kings had records of Jerusalem's history—its greatness and its decline.

Artaxerxes issued a decree that the city not be rebuilt. The work was stopped by force.

What was the time of verse 24?

This was when the work on the temple was stopped in Cyrus's reign.
The work stopped until the second year of Darius king of Persia.

EZRA 5

What is this chapter about? When? Who was king of Persia then?
Again, direct your group to their At a Glance charts.

Prophets supported Judah, rebuilding began; Tattenai's letter to King Darius

Darius was king of Persia, so it was the second year of his reign as Ezra 4:24 says. That was about 14 years after the beginning of chapter 4 when the work stopped.

Who was mentioned by name in verses 1-2?

Prophets: Haggai and Zechariah
Leaders: Zerubbabel and Jeshua

What are verses 3-5 about?

Tattenai, the governor beyond the river and his colleagues asked who issued a decree for the Jews to rebuild the temple. They wrote a report about this work to Darius.

But the eye of God was on the elders of Judah, and they didn't stop the work again. They worked while they waited on the reply from the king.

What are verses 6-17?

This is the report sent to King Darius about the work on the Lord's house.

You might ask your group what they learned about the Lord from this report. You can also list their insights as a visual aid for this part of your discussion.

The great God, the God of heaven and earth
His wrath destroyed His temple and deported His people.

Who was mentioned again by name in verses 13-16?

Sheshbazzar, appointed governor by King Cyrus, was given the utensils / vessels for the Lord's house. Cyrus sent him to Jerusalem to put the utensils in the temple. Ezra 1:8-11 says that he was the prince of Judah.

That Sheshbazzar also laid the foundations of the house.

NOTE: Ezra 5:13 says, “king of Babylon,” referring to King Cyrus of Persia. It seems that when a king conquered a previous kingdom, he might also be referred to as king of that kingdom. This would also be true of Ezra 6:22 when Darius king of Persia (Ezra 6:1, 8) is referred to as “king of Assyria.”

EZRA 6

How does this chapter continue the events from Ezra 5?

Darius found Cyrus’s decree to rebuild the house of God, and he sent a decree to finish it. Daniel 6:8 and Esther 8:8 state that a Persian king’s decree was irrevocable.

Ask your group how they summarized Ezra 6 on their At a Glance charts.

Lord’s house was completed in King Darius’s 6th year

That was four years later.

What are the details in verses 3-12?

The size of the temple, 60 x 60 cubits (approximately 90 feet x 90 feet)

The cost paid by Cyrus’s royal treasury

Temple utensils / vessels returned from Babylon to Jerusalem

Tattenai, governor of province and colleagues / associates keep away from the work

Let the governor of the Jews, Sheshbazzar (5:14), and the elders rebuild

Full cost paid from royal treasury, from taxes in provinces and provide for offerings

Request to pray for king’s life and his sons

Violation of edict resulted in being impaled

The God of heaven caused His name to dwell in Jerusalem

What are verses 13-15 about?

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah spoke to the people, and the house was finished on the 3rd of Adar in Darius’s 6th year.

What happened in verses 16-18?

They celebrated the temple dedication with joy.

The priests and Levites were appointed for temple service as directed by Moses in the Law.

Compare this with 2 Chronicles 7:1-5 and the dedication of the first temple.

The glory of the Lord filled the house and fire from heaven consumed the sacrifices in Solomon's day. They offered thousands of animals to the Lord.

There is no mention of the Lord's glory in Ezra 6, and the sacrifices were only a few hundred.

But there was still joy in doing the Lord's will.

NOTE: If any of your group read Exodus 12:1-8, then ask what they learned about Passover and Unleavened Bread Feasts when discussing the answers to the next question.

What happened next in verses 19-22?

The returned exiles celebrated the Passover in the first month.

They were purified, separated from the impurity / uncleanness of the nations, to seek / worship the Lord God of Israel.

They observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with joy.

They rejoiced because the Lord turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in their work.

Relate this to Ezra 1:1 and 5.

The Lord stirred up spirits to accomplish His work.

Even in the midst of opposition, the work resumed and was completed by His hand.

Help your group to realize that He still does these kinds of things for His people to do His will.

He supported them by sending His prophets to speak His word to the people.

The same is true for Bible study now.

**EZRA / HAGGAI
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 3**

Lesson emphasis

- Haggai

REVIEW

To begin this discussion, you can ask your group what they remember of the history leading up to Ezra. Then ask what Ezra 1–6 is about.

Direct them to their At a Glance charts as a visual aid.

God’s people were sent into exile for seventy years because of their repeated faithlessness and disobedience to Him.

At the end of the seventy years, the Lord worked to send them back to Judah and Jerusalem.

Ezra 1	King Cyrus of Persia made a proclamation to rebuild God’s house God stirred up spirits to return and rebuild His house
Ezra 2	List of who returned to Judah
Ezra 3	They celebrated Feast of Booths and laid temple foundation
Ezra 4	Their enemies stopped the work during Cyrus’s reign
Ezra 5	The work resumed in 2 nd year of King Darius of Persia
Ezra 6	The Lord’s house was completed in King Darius’s reign, 6 th year

Direct your group to the chart in the Appendix, “The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.” Then ask about the timing of these events or work the time into the review above.

In Cyrus’s first year, he made the proclamation.
In the second year of the Jews’ return, they began the work.

It stopped until Darius’s 2nd year.
For about 14 years no work was done on the Lord’s house.

Then the work resumed in Darius’s 2nd year and was finished in his 6th year.
It took 20 years to rebuild the temple.

Why did the work on God's house stop?

The Jews' enemies in their land discouraged, frightened, and frustrated their counselors.

Why did the work resume according to Ezra 5:1-2?

When the prophets Haggai and Zechariah spoke in God's name to His people, then they began to rebuild.

They supported the people with God's word, His message to complete what He began.

HAGGAI 1

When did Haggai speak for the Lord?

In Darius's 2nd year as king of Persia
from the 1st day of the 6th month until the 24th day of the 9th month

Verses 1-11

Who was his first message directed to?

He spoke to the leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua (spelled Jeshua in Ezra).
Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah, and Joshua was the high priest.

Compared with Ezra 5:13-17 and 6:7, Sheshbazzar was appointed by King Cyrus as governor of the Jews. He was the same one to whom Cyrus entrusted the transport of the utensils / vessels for the Lord's house from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Sheshbazzar might have been Zerubbabel's Babylonian name.

What did the Lord speak to those two leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, through Haggai?

The people said that the time hadn't come to rebuild the Lord's house. That was probably because of the enemies' accusations initially.

Ezra states opposition from enemies as the reason the temple work stopped, but Haggai adds disobedience by the returning Jews as another reason.

What then did Haggai say to the people?

Consider your ways! Consider means "set your heart on."¹

The Lord withheld the harvest to help them consider why they didn't have enough food, drink, warmth, and wages.

¹ New American Standard Bible: 1995 update, marginal note (Hag 1:5, 7) (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

He withheld the rain and brought a drought, so that they would “set their hearts on” building His house. He wanted their hearts set on Him, not on themselves.

How do Deuteronomy and Leviticus relate to this?

The Lord God withholds the rain to bring about obedience.
These things were designed to help them consider their ways.

Discuss if the same is true now.

What was the result in verse 12?

Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people obeyed what the Lord said through Haggai.
Obedience shows reverence for the Lord.

Verses 13-15

What was Haggai’s next message?

23 days later the Lord told the people, “I am with you.”

He again stirred up their spirits so that they came and worked on His house.

HAGGAI 2

Verses 1-9

What was Haggai’s next message to all the people?

Almost a month later, the Lord spoke through Haggai again telling them to take courage, literally “be strong,”² and work because He was with them.

NOTE: Some in your group might notice that this day was the last of the Feast of Booths. The Lord told them that He was with them, dwelling in their midst, on the last day of this feast.

He also made a comparison of the house they were beginning to work on with the first temple Solomon built. This one might seem like nothing in comparison.

When the foundation was laid about 14 years earlier, some wept when they saw it—those who’d seen the first temple.

Even though it seemed like nothing in comparison, they knew that God said to build it and that He was with them in the process. Relate this to Ezra 5:5.

² New American Standard Bible: 1995 update, marginal note (Hag 2:4) (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

What did He make reference to in Haggai 2:5?

A word or promise (ESV—covenant) that the Lord made, literally “cut with,”³ the people when they came out of Egypt—His Spirit was dwelling in their midst.

Like that former time, He was with them in Haggai’s time to accomplish His will.

“Don’t fear.”

Relate this to the New Testament passages in this lesson about His Spirit and His temple. What is the comparison, application?

1 Corinthians 3 and 6; 2 Corinthians 6; John 7 and 14

Believers are corporately and individually now the temple of God because His Spirit lives within each one. John 7:38-39 says that all believers receive the Spirit.

When the Lord tells believers to do certain things, He’s with them to strengthen and support. John 14:16-17 refers to the Spirit as “the Helper.”

From the time Jesus was glorified, His Spirit came to indwell all believers forever. We’re the temple of the living God.

1 Peter 2 and Romans 12

As living stones, we’re being built up as a spiritual house.

We present our bodies as living sacrifices, not being conformed to this world.

We’re to be different from the world, renewing our minds and cleansing ourselves from the world’s defilements.

What are verses 6-9 about?

When the Lord will shake

heavens
earth
sea
dry land
all the nations

Then nations will come with their wealth to His house.

In past times, Egypt and Persia had contributed to building God’s temple.

³ New American Standard Bible: 1995 update, marginal note (Hag 2:5) (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Relate this to Isaiah 60:1-9.

This is about the future time when the wealth of the nations comes to Jerusalem. They'll go to the Lord's altar with acceptance as He glorifies His house.

NOTE: This speaks of the future temple Ezekiel saw in visions. The 2nd temple was the one of Ezra's days which Herod the Great refurbished before Jesus' time. The 1st temple that Solomon built was destroyed by the Babylonians.

What else will happen when the Lord shakes the heavens, earth...?

And He will fill this house with glory so that the latter will be greater than the former glory. There will be peace in this place—His house or Jerusalem.

How does Hebrews 12:25-29 compare with Haggai's message?

Verse 6 is quoted speaking of a future shaking of created things—the heavens and earth. But His kingdom can't be shaken. Believers are part of His kingdom, not earthly kingdoms.

This text speaks of offering to the Lord gratitude and service with reverence and awe. Romans 12:1-2 says worship is to present one's body as a living sacrifice.

According to Luke 2:22-35, when was a time that the Lord's glory was in His house? Compare with John 1:14 and Hebrews 1:1-3.

Jesus, the Lord's Christ—the glory of His people Israel—was brought into the temple when He was a child. He's the light of revelation to Gentiles, as well.

Jesus—the Word—showed God's glory to the world when He became flesh. He's the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation / imprint of His nature.

Although the complete fulfillment of Haggai 2:6-9 seems still future, God's glory entered the second temple built in Ezra's and Haggai's times when Jesus entered the temple.

That second temple was also destroyed, but God's Spirit now dwells in the midst of His people the body of Christ. The Church is now His temple and shows His glory to the world.

Verses 10-19

What was Haggai's message in these verses?

A little more than two months later, Haggai spoke again to the people of Judah.

This time it was about them and their offerings being unclean. It sounds similar to the first message in 1:5-11.

Relate Numbers 19:11-13, 22 to Haggai 2:11-13. What's the illustration or principle of uncleanness?

Uncleanness spreads.

If the person is unclean, so is his offering, and anything else he touches becomes unclean.

How did this message end?

From that day forward the Lord will bless them.

Haggai 1:12 says that they obeyed the Lord and showed reverence for (feared) Him. That was only a little over 3 months before this message.

Review the main points for application.

Consider your ways.

I am with you.

Take courage / Be strong and work; My Spirit is in your midst.

I'll bless you.

Verses 20-23

Who is the last message to / about?

The second message, on the day when the Lord said that He was going to bless His people, was specifically for Zerubbabel.

Verses 21-22 are very similar to verses 6-7.

"On that day," verse 23, refers to the time of verses 21-22.

The Lord chose His servant Zerubbabel to make him like a signet ring.

Ask your group what they learned about a signet ring.

Genesis 41

When Pharaoh gave Joseph authority over Egypt, he gave him his signet ring as a symbol of that authority.

Esther 8

The seal of the king's signet ring showed that he was behind the decree. It carried his authority.

Jeremiah 22

The Lord removed the authority of Judah's kings, like taking off a signet ring. Coniah was the king of Judah taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C.

How do the Matthew passages relate to this?

Matthew 1 gives the genealogy of Jesus the Christ, Messiah. This line includes Zerubbabel and his grandfather Coniah (Jeconiah).

His descendants would not sit on the throne ruling in Jerusalem as he did. And none have to this day.

Zerubbabel had a right to the throne of Jerusalem, the throne of David. But he didn't sit on the throne; he was only the governor appointed by a Gentile king who ruled over the people of Judah.

However, the One who is to sit on David's throne is from David.

NOTE: Luke 3 gives Jesus' genealogy showing that Mary descended from David by his son Nathan. The Zerubbabel in that line was not the same as in Matthew 1.

Jesus, the King of the Jews, is coming again to sit on His glorious throne (Matthew 25:31).

To end this discussion, you might review the messages of Haggai and their application. Then ask about Matthew 6:31-33 and how it relates.

Consider your ways.

I am with you.

Take courage / Be strong, I'm in your midst by My Spirit.

Don't be unclean. I'll bless you.

I've chosen you.

Don't be concerned for yourself and your needs. Seek first God's kingdom and all these things will be added to you.

**EZRA / HAGGAI
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 4**

Lesson focus

- Ezra 7–8
- The Lord’s hand on Ezra

REVIEW

To begin this discussion, you can ask your group to look at their At a Glance chart of Ezra and the “The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther” chart.

What are the main events of Ezra 1–6, and how does Haggai’s message relate to them?

As your class discusses this, ask about the time of these events.

Ezra 1	King Cyrus of Persia made a proclamation to rebuild God’s house God stirred up spirits to return and rebuild His house
Ezra 2	List of who returned to Judah
Ezra 3	They celebrated Feast of Booths and laid temple foundation
Ezra 4	Their enemies stopped the work during Cyrus’s reign
Haggai	Consider your ways, rebuild the temple—I am with you, will bless you
Ezra 5	The work resumed in 2 nd year of King Darius of Persia
Ezra 6	The Lord’s house was completed in King Darius’s reign, 6 th year

EZRA 7

Verses 1-10

Use the “The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther” chart as a visual aid for this.

How does this chapter begin? When were these events?

During Artaxerxes’ 7th year of reign as King of Persia, verses 1 and 8

These events took place about 60 years after the temple was finished in Ezra 6.

NOTE: Esther, a Jew, married Ahasuerus (Xerxes), the king between Darius 1 and Artaxerxes.

Who was Ezra?

He was a priest from the line of Eleazar, Aaron's son, and Eleazar's son Phinehas.

The Lord promised the priesthood to Phinehas because of his zeal for Him in Numbers 25:1-13.

Ezra was also a descendant of Zadok, the priest of King David's time, who fulfilled the prophecy in 1 Samuel 2:35; 1 Kings 2:27, 35.

Faithful
Do according to God's heart and soul / mind
God will build him an enduring (a sure) house
Walk before the Lord's anointed always

Ezra's great-grandfather Hilkiah was the high priest at the time of King Josiah's cleansing and revival in Judah, 2 Chronicles 34:1-21.

He's the one who found the book of the law which had been lost in the Lord's house. Josiah the king of Judah read about God's wrath on those who forsake Him.

Ezra's father was Seraiah. Ezra 2:2 says a man named Seraiah returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel. He was probably Ezra's father.

How else is Ezra described in verses 6-10?

He was a scribe, skilled in the law of Moses. A scribe was an expert in the Law.

Set his heart to study (seek or inquire⁵)
practice or do
teach
God's law in Israel

King Artaxerxes gave Ezra all he requested because God's hand was on Ezra.

He had a journey from Babylon to Jerusalem which took only 4 months because the Lord's hand was on him.

Verses 6-10 seem to be an overview of chapters 7 and 8.

Give time for your group to discuss application of verses 6-10.

⁵R. Laird Harris, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999, c1980). 198.

Discuss how Nehemiah 8 is an example of Ezra teaching God’s Word to Israel.

The people stood as he read it.
Then he blessed the Lord, and the people bowed in worship.
The Levites explained and read from the Law also, so that the people understood it.
That day was holy to the Lord as they understood and responded in grief and joy.

Verses 14-17 tell of the response to hearing about the Feast of Booths read from the Law.

Ezra read it daily for the whole eight days of the feast.
He got to do exactly what he set his heart to do, Ezra 7:10.

Verses 11-26

What are these verses?

This is the decree which King Artaxerxes sent with Ezra regarding his return to Jerusalem.

Any Jews who wanted to return with Ezra were granted permission.

The king sent Ezra to:

inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem according to God’s law

bring offerings to be made to the God of Jerusalem/heaven, “so that” His wrath would not come on King Artaxerxes and his sons.

Verse 21 gave Ezra access to all the treasuries beyond the River (Euphrates).

King Artaxerxes gave Ezra authority to make and enforce law in all the provinces beyond the River. He appointed the magistrates and judges who knew God’s law and / or taught those who didn’t.

The King made it clear that all things were to be done according to God’s law, as Ezra was to teach.

Verses 27-28

Why did Ezra bless the Lord?

The Lord God of Israel put into the heart of a pagan king to adorn His house and send to Jerusalem priests, Levites, and people of Israel.

Compare this with Ezra 1:1-4.

What strengthened Ezra to accomplish his task from the Lord?

Three times this chapter stated that the Lord’s hand was on Ezra.

Give time for your group to discuss application.

EZRA 8

How does this chapter continue the flow of thought from Ezra 7?

7:28 states that Ezra gathered leading men, literally “heads,” from Israel to go with him, and 8:1 begins to tell who those men were.

Verses 15-20

What was the problem in verse 15? Solution? Result?

No Levites were gathered to return to Jerusalem.

Ezra sent for “ministers,” Levites.

Again, because the Lord’s hand was on them, Levites answered the call.

What is the difference between priests and Levites?

Numbers 3:4-10; 8:14-19

Priests and Levites are both descendants of Levi, the tribe of Levi.

But only those in Aaron’s line are priests.

The Levites perform certain duties in the temple to minister to the priests, who perform the sacrifices and offerings to the Lord.

The Lord Himself chose Levi and Aaron to be separate from the others of Israel.

Understanding the difference between priests and Levites helps to understand why Ezra needed Levites to return to Jerusalem with the others who were priests and people of Israel.

Verses 21-23

What happened in these verses?

Ezra set a fast to humbly seek the Lord’s protection for their journey.

Compare with 7:8-9. He listened and answered.

What had Ezra told the king about the Lord?

Verse 22 helps in understanding 7:23.

“Seek / sought” is repeated three times in these three verses.
(ESV translates “sought” in verse 23 as “implored.”)

Ask your group what they learned about seeking the Lord—“set your heart.”

King David commanded the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon build the first temple.

“Set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord . . . and build”

King Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, was described as doing evil because he didn’t set his heart to seek the Lord; he “strengthened himself.”

King Jehoshaphat of Judah set his heart to seek God. He appointed judges in Judah’s cities, judges who were to fear the Lord. He led his people back to the Lord.

Lead your discussion back to Ezra 8.

Verses 24-30

Who are these verses about? What did they do?

Priests and Levites

Ezra set apart 12 priests to be entrusted with the transport of the silver, gold, and utensils / vessels—the offering from King Artaxerxes, his counselors and princes and the people of Israel.

Ezra reminded the priests and Levites of their holiness before the Lord.

Verses 31-34

What are these verses about?

This is about the journey.

They left from the river Ahava on the 12th day of the 1st month.

Compare this with 7:9.

Ezra began to leave Babylon on the 1st day of the 1st month.

The journey took four months, during which time the Lord protected them from ambushes on the way.

The Lord’s hand is greater than the enemy’s hand, verse 31.

The offering was given to the priests in Jerusalem at the Lord’s house.

The Lord protected; He answered prayer, He listened, 8:22-23.

Verses 35-36

What happened?

These exiles made offerings at the Lord's house when they returned to Jerusalem.

Compare this with Ezra 3:2-3 and 6:16-18.

Review the main points of these two chapters.

God put in the king's heart to allow Ezra and others to go to Jerusalem.

Ezra set his heart to study, practice and teach God's law.
He even taught it to the king.

Priests, Levites, and the people had a safe 4-month journey, even transporting treasures.

When they got to the Lord's house, of course they wanted to present offerings to Him.

How does the message of Ezra 7–8 relate to 1 Peter 2:9-10?

Believers are now a priesthood
to proclaim His excellencies.

He called us out of darkness into light

We are to set our hearts to study His Word, practice / do it, and teach it to others.

Give time for your group to discuss any personal application of this.

**EZRA / HAGGAI
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 5**

Lesson emphasis

- Ezra 9–10

REVIEW

To begin this last discussion, you might ask what your group has learned from the whole course.

Then ask for a brief review of the main themes of Ezra / Haggai.

Use the At a Glance charts as visual aid for this discussion.

Ezra 1	God stirred up spirits to return and rebuild His house King Cyrus of Persia made a proclamation to rebuild God's house
Ezra 2	List of who returned to Judah from Babylon with Zerubbabel
Ezra 3	Jews celebrated Feast of Booths and laid temple foundation
Ezra 4	Their enemies stopped the work during Cyrus's reign
Haggai	Consider your ways, rebuild the temple—I am with you, will bless you
Ezra 5	The work resumed in 2 nd year of King Darius of Persia
Ezra 6	The Lord's house was completed in King Darius's reign, 6 th year
Ezra 7	God's hand on Ezra to lead Jews to Jerusalem, Artaxerxes' 7 th year
Ezra 8	Those who returned to Judah with Ezra / God's hand on their journey

EZRA 9

Verses 1-4

What is this chapter about?

Ezra was appalled because the people of Israel had intermarried with the peoples of the lands.

Most of this chapter is Ezra's prayer about the matter.

Why was this appalling to him?

Deuteronomy 7:1-6

The Lord clearly commanded His people Israel not to intermarry with the people in the nations surrounding them. They were to be a holy people to the Lord their God.

The reason was that they led Israel to worship other gods.

That's exactly what happened.

1 Kings 11:1-10

Solomon was the first of the kings of Israel to marry foreign women who led him to worship other gods. His sin resulted in God dividing the kingdom in two.

Worshiping other gods was why God sent Israel and Judah captive to the nations. The people of Judah returned 70 years later from Babylon.

Ezra 9:1-2

Then Ezra heard that the same thing happened again. It was appalling!

The princes / officials were the ones who told Ezra and were the foremost in the unfaithfulness.

The holy seed intermingled with the peoples of the lands.

Ask your group what they learned from Ruth and Corinthians about holy relationships.

Ruth

Since the Moabitess Ruth took Naomi's God to be her own, then Ruth became a proselyte to Judaism.

It was right for Boaz to marry her and establish a descendant for Naomi's dead husband and sons. However, Naomi's sons Mahlon and Chilion should not have married Ruth and Orpah at the beginning.

Ruth is the great grandmother of King David and is in the line of Christ (Matthew 1:1-6).

1 and 2 Corinthians

The Lord's instruction for believers now is not to be bound together with unbelievers.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are to marry only others who are "in the Lord."

What was Ezra's response to the sin of the people?

Tore his garments, pulled hair from his head and beard—signs of mourning, humiliation (verse 3).

Who gathered to Ezra in 9:4?

Everyone who trembled at the Lord's Word

You might ask if there is any application for your group from verses 1-4.
How did others in the Bible respond to sin?

1 Samuel 2 and 3

Eli's sons were evil men, serving in the priesthood.

Eli knew of their sin, but didn't rebuke them
—so they all paid the consequences.

1 Samuel 15

King Saul knew what the Lord told him to do through Samuel the prophet.
But he only obeyed what he wanted to. Therefore, the Lord rejected Saul from being king
because he'd rejected the Lord's Word.

But Samuel confronted Saul's sin—unlike Eli with his sons.

Jeremiah

God's people forsook Him for other gods, and they weren't even ashamed.

Jeremiah was sorrowful, mourned.
He was broken and dismayed because of their sins.

What is application for the church in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13?

Mourn over sin in the church.

Don't be arrogant about tolerating it.

Remove it from the church's midst.

Don't associate with any "so-called" brother who continues in his sin.

God judges the unbelievers, but the church is to correct its own (or those who claim to be His).

With an attitude of restoration and love
By the Word of God and prayer

Verses 5-15

What are these verses? And about what?

This is Ezra's prayer about their iniquity.

He recounted Israel's sin and captivity; then he mentioned God's grace toward the escaped remnant. The Lord didn't forsake them in their bondage.

Verse 9 speaks of God's lovingkindness / steadfast love, reviving, and restoration / repair. Verse 13 says that He requited them less than their sins deserved.

This is a wonderful statement of God's mercy.

You might ask what this means and how it applies to our lives.

Direct your group back to Ezra.

If the sin continued, Ezra said that the Lord was right to destroy them.

No one can stand before the Lord because of sin.

Ezra confessed the people's sin as though it were his own.

EZRA 10

How does this chapter continue with the results from chapter 9?

While Ezra prayed, a large group assembled and wept bitterly for their sins.

A man named Shecaniah suggested a plan for hope.

Make a covenant with the Lord to put away the foreign wives, children.

Do it according to God's law, as counseled by Ezra and those who trembled at God's command (9:4).

He called Ezra to take responsibility, as a righteous priest.

Be courageous / strong and act.

Who was Shecaniah's family?

He was Jehiel's son and Elam's grandson.

Verses 26 lists Shecaniah's father Jehiel as one who had a foreign wife. His uncles had done the same.

What might it have cost Shecaniah to make this stand with Ezra against this sin?

His family

Relate this to Matthew 10:32-38 and application for believers now.

Jesus said that anyone who loves his family more than Him is not worthy to be His disciple.

Sometimes when one in an unbelieving family becomes a believer in Jesus, that one becomes an outsider to his natural family.

Verses 5-8

What happened?

Ezra made the leading priests and Levites take an oath according to Shecaniah's proposal.

Then they made a proclamation for Judah and Benjamin to assemble to Jerusalem in three days.

Relate verse 8 with Ezra 7:25-26.

Ezra had authority from King Artaxerxes of Persia to judge all in the king's provinces beyond the Euphrates, even to the point of banishment or confiscation of goods or imprisonment.

But he had to exercise that authority over his own people Israel.

Verses 9-17

How was the problem handled?

On the 20th day of the 9th month Israel assembled at Jerusalem.
It was during the rainy season, the end of November and beginning of December.

All the people assembled and sat trembling because of the matter and the rain.

Ezra confronted their sin and told them to confess it before the Lord and do His will—separate from their foreign wives.

The assembly agreed. But each case was dealt with in their own cities by their judges and leaders because of the rain and the greatness of this transgression.

What was the opposition?

A few men stood against the decision.

Commentators and scholars disagree as to which decision it was.

Separating from the foreign wives

Or

Doing it at appointed time in the cities

How long did the investigation take? What did that indicate?

According to verses 16-17, the investigation took three months.

According to the lists in verses 18-43, there were many in Israel who had sinned by intermarriage with the people around them.

To end this part of your discussion you might ask your group what they learned about marriage and divorce from Malachi and Corinthians.

Malachi 2

A little over twenty years after the incident in Ezra 9–10, the Lord spoke to the priests of Israel about corrupting the covenant.

God was not accepting their offerings, and He told them why.

He told them not to deal treacherously with the wives of their youth by covenant—those were women of Israel, not the foreign wives of Ezra’s time. Evidently these priests were divorcing their wives.

God said that He hates divorce. (ESV translates verse 16 as a man who hates divorce.)

1 Corinthians 7:12-16

Believers are to marry believers, not unbelievers.

But if one becomes a believer after he/she is married, then the believer is not to divorce the unbeliever. That union might lead to the unbeliever’s salvation.

Or the unbeliever might choose to leave / divorce the believer.
If so, then the believer is free.

If you’re a Christian married to an unbeliever, what should you do?

Stay, pray, and live godly.

To end your study of Ezra, you might ask your group what they’ve learned from the whole study. Give time for them to share. Encourage them to bring another person with them to the next study.