

## **Matthew 5:1-16 & INTRODUCTION TO EZRA – 1:1-10:44 (All Ten Chapters)**

### OBSERVATION

### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

Monday 7:00pm, H 105 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by the vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – Phil Twente, cell #714 425 9221; email – [ptwente@gmail.com](mailto:ptwente@gmail.com) For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: [www.ptwente.com](http://www.ptwente.com) Click on “Latest Studies” on the right side. References include commentaries by numerous pastor/teachers.

## **The Sermon on the Mount**

**Mat 5:1** And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated **His disciples** came to Him.

### **The Beatitudes (Characteristics of a believer, a child of God, a member of His Kingdom!!)**

Mat 5:2 Then He opened His mouth and **taught them**, saying:

Mat 5:3 "Blessed *are* **the poor in spirit**, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:4 Blessed *are* **those who mourn**, For they shall be comforted.

Mat 5:5 Blessed *are* **the meek**, For they shall inherit the earth.

Mat 5:6 Blessed *are* **those who hunger and thirst for righteousness**, For they shall be filled.

Mat 5:7 Blessed *are* **the merciful**, For they shall obtain mercy.

Mat 5:8 Blessed *are* **the pure in heart**, For they shall see God.

Mat 5:9 Blessed *are* **the peacemakers**, For they shall be called sons of God.

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Mat 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

Mat 5:12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

Mat 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

Mat 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Mat 5:15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

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#### INTRODUCTION TO EZRA – 1:1-5:17 (First Five Chapters) – Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines

These chapters describe four key events in the history of the remnant of Israel that had returned to their land.

##### I. Returning to the Land (1-2)

##### A. The proclamation (Ezr 1:1-4)

These verses are almost identical with 2Ch 36:22-23. Isaiah 44:28-45:3 contains an amazing prophecy of Cyrus, **more than 150 years before the great Persian ruler was born**. In **538-539 B.C. Cyrus conquered Babylon** and established the Persian empire. His policy with prisoners of war was opposite that of Babylon, for he encouraged the Jews to return to their land, rebuild their temple, and pray for his welfare. No doubt Cyrus extended this same privilege to other displaced nations and their gods. **His decree was in 538 B.C.** Do not confuse this decree with the one in Dan 9:25, which refers to the rebuilding of the city and is **dated 445 B.C.** Cyrus’s decree had to do with the people returning to the land and rebuilding the temple. This decree was a marvelous fulfillment of Scripture.

##### B. The precious things (Dan 1:5-11)

The Spirit of God worked in the hearts of the people and of their captors. The temple treasures were restored to the Jews, and the Gentiles also gave them freewill contributions for their temple. See 2Ch 36:7; Dan 1:2. “Sheshbazzar” in Ezr 1:8 and Ezr 1:11 is **Zerubbabel**, the appointed governor. The Jews could not restore the temple worship without the appointed furnishings. How unlike our NT worship (Joh 4:19-24).

##### C. The people (Ezr 2:1-70)

About **fifty thousand Jews, led by Zerubbabel around 538BC**, were concerned enough to leave the safety and luxury of Babylon and return to their own land. This same list is cited in Neh 7:6-73. Note that this register is in special groups: the leaders

(Ezr 2:1-2); certain families (Ezr 2:3-19); certain towns (Ezr 2:20-35); the priests (Ezr 2:36-39); the Levites (Ezr 2:40-42); the Nethinim, or temple helpers (Ezr 2:43-54); Solomon’s servants (Ezr 2:55-58); and those with no genealogy (Ezr 2:59-63). The word “tirshatha” in Ezr 2:63 refers to Zerubbabel. In Ezr 2:64-70 we have the totals of the men and beasts: there were 49,897 people registered, along with a multitude of animals. Much has been said about the so-called “lost tribes of Israel,” but the NT makes it clear that *all twelve tribes* were represented in this remnant (see Act 26:7 and Jas 1:1). Ezr 2:70 says “all Israel.” In Ezr 6:17 we see the priests offering twelve male goats for the twelve tribes; see also Ezr 8:35. Jesus will one day judge twelve tribes (Luk 22:30). Most of the Jews had settled down in Babylon and had no desire to return to their Promised Land. Content with security and material gain, they abandoned the land of their fathers and stayed with the captives in Babylon.

##### II. Rebuilding the Temple (Ezr 3:1-13)

##### A. Establishing the altar (Ezr 3:1-6)

The altar was the center of the Jewish worship for without their sacrifices they could not approach God or expect His blessing. The exiles feared their powerful neighbors, but they knew God would protect them if they obeyed Him. You will recall that Elijah had to set up the altar again (1Ki 18:30). Joshua and Zerubbabel led the people to establish the sacrifices and also to keep the feasts. It was the seventh month (our Sept.-Oct.), the month of the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles (Num 29:1-6; Lev 23:23-25).

##### B. Laying the foundation (Ezr 3:7-13)

The people apparently gave offerings, adding these to the gifts from the king (Ezr 1:5-11) who also provided materials to rebuild the temple. In the year 535 they started the work, in the second month (our April-May).

The Levites led the way in doing the work, assisting the other workers on the job. So grateful were the people that they sang and shouted when the foundation was laid. God was doing the impossible in this situation (Jer 33:1-11). Of course, there were older people there who remembered the former temple in its glory, and they could only weep as they saw the plainness of this second temple (see Hag 2:3). However, it is not good to live in the past.

##### III. Resisting the Enemy (Ezr 4:1-24)

Our enemy, Satan, never wants the Lord’s work to prosper. Christ is the Builder; Satan is the destroyer. We now see the hand of the enemy as he seeks to oppose and hinder the work.

##### A. Compromise (Ezr 4:1-3)

The people of the land offered to assist the Jews in their work, but Zerubbabel and Joshua refused their aid. These people were the Samaritans, a half-breed nation of mixed Jews and Gentiles. Read 2Ki 17:1-41 for a description of the Samaritans and their false religion. (In Joh 4:20-24, Jesus clearly rejected Samaritan religion.) The Samaritans finally built their own temple on Mt. Gerazim and remained separated from the Jews.

##### B. Interference (Ezr 4:4-5)

The people of the land hired men at court to resist the Jews, and this device succeeded in stopping the work; see Ezr 4:24. **For nearly fifteen years (534-520) the work ceased on the temple.**

Ezr 4:6-23 have posed a problem to the Bible student because they seem to be out of place chronologically. The kings mentioned in Ezr 4:6-7 ruled later than the time covered in Ezr 4:1-24. There are two possible explanations. It may be that the kings had more than one name, so that the Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes of Ezr 4:6-7 are really the names of the kings that ruled

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during this era. Merrill Unger believes that “Ahasuerus” was an official title (like Pharaoh), and that Artaxerxes was another name for Cambyses. These verses, then, would contain the official records filed by the enemy to stop the work of the Jews. A second possibility is that these verses may have been included as examples of opposition from a later time, to show that the Jews had constant trouble with their enemies. In either case, the lesson is clear: worldly people use every means they can to hinder the work of the Lord. The king listened to the accusations and the work ceased.

#### IV. Resuming the Work (Ezr 5:1-17)

**Fifteen years go by between Ezr 4:1-24 and Ezr 5:1-17.** It is not until the Word of God is proclaimed by the two prophets Haggai and Zechariah that the work of the temple begins again. The Word of God had begun the work (Ezr 1:1), and now the Word of God would encourage the workers and ultimately finish the work (Ezr 6:14). **From 520-515 the people labored and finished the temple. The preaching of God’s Word by His servants is the secret of victory in any work of God.** God’s Word encouraged Joshua and Zerubbabel, and God’s eye was upon them (Ezr 5:5).

You will note in Haggai **four different messages**:

- (1) **Rebuke of the people for building their own houses and neglecting God’s house, Hag 1:1-15;**
- (2) **Encouragement of Zerubbabel that God is with him, Hag 2:1-9;**
- (3) **Conviction to the priests for refusing to cleanse themselves of defilement, Hag 2:10-19; and**
- (4) **Promise to Zerubbabel that the Messiah would one day rule in glory, Hag 2:20-23.** Haggai even dated each of these messages.

The Book of Zechariah is more complicated, but it too deals with the same period of time. In Zec 1:1-6, the prophet called the nation to repent; this was in November. Later, in February, he gave several visions of encouragement to the people (1:7-6:15). In the last half of his book (chaps. 9-14), Zechariah pictured Christ in His rejection, second coming in glory, and future kingdom. All of these messages, of course, were meant to encourage the people to get to work and finish the temple.

Tatnai the governor was within his rights asking about the building program, since the materials were being supplied partly by the royal treasury. We have his letter to the new ruler, Darius, and in Ezr 6:1-22, the reply of the king. Ezr 6:8 indicates that the ministry of the two prophets had stirred up the people, for the work was progressing rapidly. “Sheshbazzar” in Ezr 6:16 is Zerubbabel. The Jews knew that they were in the right and suggested that the governor investigate the records to find the decree of the king. **It is not wrong for God’s people to claim their rights as citizens; see Act 16:35-40 and Act 22:25.**

### INTRODUCTION TO EZRA -- Chapters 6-10

#### Ezra 6:1-10:44

#### I. The Completion of the Temple (Ezr 6:1-22)

**Darius became ruler in 522 B.C.;** it was he who established the great empire of the Persians by defeating Babylon. (This was *not* Darius the Mede mentioned in Dan 5:1-31, Dan 6:1-28, and Dan 9:1-27.) He had a friendly attitude toward his subjects and was kindly disposed toward the Jews. We have in Ezr 6:3-5 a detailed record of the original decree of Cyrus, mentioned in Ezr 1:1. To this original decree, Darius added his own decree (Ezr 6:8-12): the governor must assist the Jews in their work and see that there is no opposition, and the supplies are to be provided out of the king’s treasury. Of course, Darius had a strong motive for his kindness: he wanted the Jews to pray to Jehovah for the king’s health and for the welfare of his family.

The governor hastened to obey the decree. Haggai and Zechariah provided the spiritual encouragement; the governor supplied the material needs; and thus the work was completed. The Jews joyfully dedicated the house of the Lord, even though the building was not as grand and glorious as Solomon’s temple had been. They kept the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. God had answered prayer and turned the king’s heart (see Pro 21:1); the nation had its temple again. Between chapters 6 and 7 is a period of fifty-eight years. The Book of Esther fits in here.

#### II. The Coming of Ezra to Jerusalem (7-8)

The Artaxerxes of Ezr 7:1 is “**Artaxerxes Longimanus,**” who ruled Persia from 465 to 425. **In his seventh year,** he permitted Ezra the priest-scribe to return to Jerusalem to assist the people in their spiritual needs. In Ezr 7:1-5 we have Ezra’s genealogy, the proof that he was a priest from the family of Aaron. He was also a ready student of the Law, a scribe; see Jer 8:8. Apparently Ezra had requested permission from the king, realizing that the remnant in the restored nation desperately needed spiritual guidance. It took Ezra four months to make the journey of nearly a thousand miles from Babylon to Jerusalem. The good hand of God was upon him and he prospered; see Neh 1:10; Neh 2:8, Neh 2:18.

The king decreed that any Jew could go up with Ezra and return to the land. These Jews would take with them a large freewill offering from Babylon to assist in the work of the Lord. Darius also gave Ezra an “expense account” (Ezr 7:20-22) up to about \$100,000, to be taken from the king’s treasury. Ezra’s task was to establish order and religious worship in the land (Ezr 7:25-26). Ezra’s doxology in Ezr 7:27-28 shows how grateful he was to the Lord for answering prayer.

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Ezr 8:1-36 lists the names of the families and the men who accompanied Ezra on his hazardous trip to Jerusalem. It was important that the Levites go along because it was their duty to study the Word and teach it to the people. Unfortunately, Ezra had to “draft” some of the Levites, because they did not volunteer to go (Ezr 8:15-20). Ezra proclaimed a fast, because he knew that God alone could prosper their journey. The very testimony of the nation was at stake — for Ezra had told the king that they would not require a military escort, for the Lord would take care of them. Their fasting and prayer and the Lord’s response should encourage similar behavior in us today (Ezr 8:21-23). Ezra chose twenty-two godly men to carry the treasures (Ezr 8:24-30), and he warned them that God would require an accounting when they reached Jerusalem. What a beautiful picture of Christian stewardship today. God has entrusted us with spiritual treasures, and at the Judgment Seat of Christ we will give an account of our stewardship. The **group departed in April 458 BC A 58 years later and arrived at Jerusalem in July, traveling at an average of seven miles a day**. The people deposited their treasures, and it was found that each man had been faithful. They had heeded Ezra’s warning, “Watch and keep!” (Ezr 8:29)

### **III. The Confession of Sin (Ezr 9:1-15)**

No sooner had a teacher of the Word arrived than the Word began to reveal sin (Heb 4:12). Ezra discovered that the Jews had mingled with their heathen neighbors and married heathen wives. See Deu 7:1-26; Exo 19:5-6; and Psa 106:35. Ezra was so burdened at hearing this report that he publicly tore his garment in sorrow and repentance and sat like a dumb man until the hour for the evening sacrifice. The people who knew God’s Word began to tremble (Ezr 9:4; see Isa 66:1-2), fearing what the Lord might do to the feeble nation.

Ezra’s prayer of confession should be compared with Daniel’s prayer (Dan 9:1-27) and the prayer of Nehemiah (Neh 9:1-38). “I am ashamed and blush to lift up

my face!” Ezra prayed. He looked back to Israel’s past sins (Ezr 9:7) and admitted that the nation deserved captivity. But now the Lord had sent deliverance; they had been restored by His grace; and yet the nation was sinning again. The future of the kingdom was hanging, as it were, like garments on a tent nail, so feeble was the restored remnant of Israel. God had given them a wall of protection (Ezr 9:9) and graciously answered their prayers. What more could Ezra say? “We have not learned our lessons,” he says, “for God has punished us for our sins, yet we go on sinning still!”

It is interesting to note that Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah all had to confess national sin and plead for forgiveness. 2Ch 7:14 applies here. However, it was not enough for the religious leader to pray. The entire nation had to face its sins and make matters right with the Lord.

### **IV. The Cleansing of the Nation (Ezr 10:1-44)**

Read Neh. 8-13 for parallel accounts of the religious revival in Jerusalem. God answered Ezra’s prayer by touching and convicting the hearts of the people. Some of the men came to him openly and confessed that they had married heathen wives and disobeyed the Law of the Lord. They offered to make a covenant with God and to put away their unclean wives. What a great revival would come to our churches today if all God’s people would humble themselves before God, confess their sins, and obey the Word of God!

The result was a proclamation throughout the land, calling the people to gather in Jerusalem to settle this important matter. Whoever was guilty and did not come would forfeit his place in the land. It was on December 20, 457, when the great multitude assembled in spite of the terrible rain that usually fell at that season. But the people trembled not only for the rain, but also because of their fear of the Lord. Ezra presented the ultimatum to the people: confess your sins and put away your wives. This is repentance and restitution, and both must go together. The people agreed to obey, but they admitted the problem was too widespread and complicated to be settled in a day. The people suggested that the rulers straighten out their houses first (Ezr 10:14), and then, having made matters right,

assist Ezra in the work of purging the nation of sin. Ezr 10:15 tells us that only four men “stood up against” this suggestion (“were employed”); the rest of the leaders approved it. We cannot always expect 100 percent cooperation, especially in matters of discipline.

It took from December to April to straighten out this problem. Ezr 10:18-44 indicate that seventeen priests, ten Levites, and eighty-seven other men were found guilty of marrying heathen wives. It is frightening to find priests deliberately disobeying God, for when the spiritual leaders are backslidden, what can we expect of the rest of the people? So thorough was the investigation that even the heathen children were exposed and expelled. Of course, we realize that the Jewish husbands and fathers made provision for the welfare of these expelled people, but they were to live with them as husband and father no more. How long did this reformation last? About twenty-five years later, Nehemiah faced the same problem (Neh 13:23). It was a repeated sin and required repeated discipline. God’s servants must “watch and pray” if the work of God is to prosper.

To rebuild the temple without reforming the people would have been folly. It was easier for Ezra to rebuild the temple than it was to bring the sinful nation back to God.

### **INTRODUCTION TO EZRA – J VERNON MCGEE**

Ezra is the writer of this book. He is one of the characters who has not received proper recognition. He was a descendant of Hilkiah, the high priest (Ezra 7:1), who found a copy of the Law during the reign of Josiah (2 Chron. 34:14).

Ezra, as a priest, was unable to serve during the Captivity. There was no temple. It had been destroyed. He did, however, give his time to a study of the Word of God. Ezra 7:6 tells us that he was “a ready scribe in the law of Moses.”

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Ezra was also a great revivalist and reformer. The revival began with the reading of the Word of God by Ezra. We will see that in Nehemiah 8. Also, Ezra was probably the writer of 1 and 2 Chronicles and Psalm 119 (the longest chapter in the Bible).

Ezra organized the synagogue. He was the founder of the order of scribes. He helped settle the canon of Scripture and arranged the Psalms. Let us pay tribute to Ezra who was the first to begin a revival of Bible study. Is this not God’s program for revival?

We have had no real revival in our day. Dwight L. Moody made this statement (and he saw a revival), “The next revival will be a revival of Bible study.” Those who have tried to whip up revivals by organization, by methods, and by gimmicks have failed. Revival will come only as people come back to the Word of God.

**The theme of the Book of Ezra is The Word of the Lord.** There are ten direct references to God’s Word in this little book: Ezra 1:1; 3:2; 6:14, 18; 7:6, 10, 14; 9:4; 10:3, 5. The place of the Word of God is seen in the total lives of these people: religious, social, business, and political.

**The key to this book is found in Ezra 9:4 and 10:3: they “trembled at the words of the God of Israel.”**

Dr. James M. Gray made this statement concerning the Book of Ezra: “We already have seen that the Babylonian captivity did not bring the Jews to national repentance and so lead to national restoration. As the reading of Ezra will disclose, when Cyrus, king of Persia, gave permission to the captives to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple, scarcely fifty thousand Jews availed themselves of the privilege, a considerable portion of whom were priests and Levites of the humbler and poorer class.”

The Book of Ezra is the last of the historical books, but they do not follow *ad seriatum* (one right after the other).

When we conclude 2 Chronicles, we see that the southern kingdom of Judah went into captivity for seventy years. We do not hear a word from them after they were captured until Ezra picks up their history. There are three historical books that are called “postcaptivity” books: Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Also there are three prophetic “postcaptivity” books: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Now Ezra and Nehemiah belong together. Ezra was a priest and Nehemiah was a layman. They worked together in such a way that God’s will was accomplished in Jerusalem. Together they were instrumental in seeing that the walls, the city of Jerusalem, and the temple were rebuilt.

Haggai and Zechariah also worked together. They encouraged the people to build the temple. Haggai was a practical man, as we shall see when we get to his book. The reconstruction and refurbishing of the temple were his supreme passion. He was as simple and factual as 2+2=4. He was neither romantic nor poetic, but he sure was practical. Zechariah, on the other hand, was a dreamer. Haggai had his feet on the ground and Zechariah had his head in the clouds. For example, Zechariah saw a woman going through the air in a bushel basket. My friend, that is poetical! Haggai would never have seen that. But the interesting thing is that Zechariah would never have concerned himself about the measurements of the temple and that you must have doors in it and a foundation under it. Haggai and Zechariah went together just like Ezra and Nehemiah. The practical man and the poet must walk together; God arranged it that way.

The Books of Haggai and Zechariah should be read and studied with the Book of Ezra, for all three books were written in the shadow of the rebuilt temple, and were given to encourage the people in building. “Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of God of Israel, even unto them” (Ezra 5:1).

In the Book of Ezra there are **two major divisions**. There is **the return of the captives from Babylon led by Zerubbabel in the first six chapters**. About fifty thousand returned. Then there is **the return led by Ezra in chapters 7–10**, and about two thousand people followed Ezra.

**ALL THE WAY MY SAVIOR LEADS ME – F. Crosby/Joslin**  
*All the way my Savior leads me, What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt His tender mercy, Who through life has been my Guide?  
Heav’nly peace, divinest comfort, Here by faith in Him to dwell!  
For I know, whate’er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well;  
For I know, whate’er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.*

*All the way my Savior leads me, Cheers each winding path I tread,  
Gives me grace for every trial, Feeds me with the living Bread.  
Though my weary steps may falter And my soul athirst may be,  
Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! A spring of joy I see;  
Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! A spring of joy I see.*

*All the way my Savior leads me, Oh, the fullness of His love!  
Perfect rest to me is promised In my Father’s house above.  
When my spirit, clothed immortal, Wings its flight to realms of day  
This my song through endless ages: Jesus led me all the way;  
This my song through endless ages: Jesus led me all the way.*