

MSOP Ongoing Spiritual Training

Memphis School of Preaching--Spring Semester, 2020

**Dates: Thursdays from September 10 to December 10, 2020
(excluding Thanksgiving, November 26)**

Location: These classes may be taken at the Memphis School of Preaching (3950 Forest Hill-Irene Road in Memphis, TN) or on-line (live or archived) at www.msopmost.org [many other classes are already archived there].

Course offerings with times and instructors:

Ezra through Esther (#607)	11:00 A.M.
Keith A. Mosher, Sr.	
Early Church History (#663)	2:00 P.M.
Daniel F. Cates	
Luke (#623)	6:00 P.M.
Tom Wacaster	

For whom:

These classes are available for any who wish to attain a greater Bible knowledge!

Please consult the on-line FAQ (msop.org/most-faq) if you have any questions.

***MOST PROGRAM: SYLLABUS FOR "EZRA THROUGH ESTHER"
COURSE #607***

INSTRUCTOR: Keith A. Mosher, Sr. D.Min.

Begins September 10, 2020 and ends December 10, 2020

Text: King James or American Standard for class work: others may be mentioned if needed.

Read the text at least three times during the semester.

Commentaries may be used outside of class, but tests will come from class notes.

Class begins with an overview of Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther and the historical context of the writings. See John 5:39 and recall the biblical mandate that the Christ would arrive on earth in the country of Palestine [Genesis 12:3].

The "purposes" of each book and its major theological concepts will be discussed as well as a textual examination. God's prophets will also be mentioned and their purposes evaluated in light of the fact that two of them mentioned the king of Persia a century to a century and a half before that ruler was born [Isaiah and Jeremiah]!

For those who are taking the course for a certificate, please write an introduction to one of the books no longer than ten pages double-spaced in the style of the school and no shorter than eight pages with the works cited [at least ten] from books in the school library and not from the internet.

THE BOOK OF EZRA

AUTHOR:

"Jewish tradition has it that Ezra wrote Ezra and Nehemiah and then the two books of Chronicles." (Raymond Kelcy - FWCC Lectureships, 1961)

Pulpit Commentary, in its introduction to the book of Ezra state that "Bishop A. Henry assigns the first chapter to Daniel, the second to Zechariah, and chs. III-VI to Haggai." The author of the introduction, however, takes issue with this view and states, "The simple view, that Ezra, who is admitted to have written at least one section, really composed the whole, using for the most part his own words, but in places inserting documents, is to the full as tenable as any other hypothesis."

In his discussion of authorship, Young goes into some detail to examine the "scholars of the negative critical school" then draws the conclusion that "although the book itself does not in its entirety claim to be the work of Ezra, nevertheless tradition seems to be justified in making such an assumption."

Horne observes, "It is evident that the author of the book of Ezra was personally present at the transactions recorded in it, the narrative being in the first person. *** That the last four chapters of this book were written by Ezra himself there can be no doubt... The Jews, indeed, ascribe the whole of this book to Ezra, and their opinion is adopted by most Christian commentators."

From the evidence presented in my research, I see no valid reason for assigning the authorship to any except the one whose name the book bears -- Ezra.

DATE OF THE BOOK:

If one agrees that Ezra wrote the book, he must also agree that it was written between 465 B. C. and 424 B. C. Young says "It was

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seems clear that the ministry of Ezra is to be placed during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465 B.C.-424 B.C.). Rawlinson, in Pulpit Commentary gives the following observation concerning the date: "The last event recorded in the Book of Ezra is the reformation of religion effected through Ezra's influence in the spring of B.C. 457, the year after his arrival at Jerusalem. The date of B.C. 457 is therefore the earliest that can be assigned to it. It may have been written a year or a few years subsequently, but can scarcely be given a later date than B.C. 444, the year of Nehemiah's arrival; since if that event had taken place when the author wrote, he would almost certainly have mentioned it."

EZRA - THE MAN:

Ezra was a priest, being a descendant of Eleazar, the son of Aaron. He was a scribe, teacher, interpreter, and copier of the law of Moses. His main work was religious reform. He, like Joshua, has no biblical record of blight in his life. By the Jews he was, and is, considered second to Moses in rank of importance. *(He gave them the law)*

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK:

- I. THE RETURN UNDER ZERUBBABEL (1:1 - 2:70)
 1. The decree of Cyrus (1:1-4)
 2. The response to the decree (1:5-11)
 3. A list of the people returning (2:1-70)
- II. BUILDING ENTERPRISES (3:1 - 6:22)
 1. The altar of burnt offering erected (3:1-3)
 2. Offerings renewed and Feast of Tabernacles observed (3:4-7)
 3. Work on the temple (3:8-13)
 4. Hinderances from adversaries (4:1-5)

6. Haggai and Zechariah encourage the work to resume, and approval is obtained from Darius (5:1 - 6:12)
7. The temple finished and dedicated (6:13-22)

III. THE RETURN OF THE SECOND GROUP (7:1 - 10:44)

1. The decree of Artaxerxes and Ezra's expedition (7:1-28)
2. A list of those going with Ezra (8:1-14)
3. Events at the river Ahava (8:15-36)
4. Ezra mourns upon learning of intermarriages with foreigners (9:1-4)
5. Ezra's prayer (9:5-15)
6. The Reformation (10:1-44)

EVENTS COVERED IN THE BOOK:

The book presents a plain account of the return of God's people from Babylonian captivity. Under decree of Cyrus the Great the Jews who desired to do so could return to Jerusalem to re-establish their religion. Zerubbabel led about fifty thousand Jews in returning to Jerusalem in 536 B.C. These people, as they arrived in their land, went to those cities which belonged originally to their respective families. They later assembled in Jerusalem, the altar of burnt offerings was erected, and various offerings were renewed. (During this period of time the Feast of Tabernacles was again observed.)

In the second year after their return construction work on the temple was begun. The adversaries in the land offered to help in the building, but their help was rejected. Because of this rejection the adversaries made false accusations against the Jews, causing suspension of the work by Artaxerxes the king. Af-

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the adversaries made complaint causing Darius to have search made for the decree of Cyrus. Upon finding the decree, Darius enforced it to the effect that no interference was to be given to the building of the temple. The Temple was finished in the sixth year of the reign of Darius. The Passover was again observed.

Some eighty years later (458 B.C.) Ezra led another company of Jews, about six or seven thousand (1,754 males) to Jerusalem. He brought silver, gold, and sacred vessels to the high priest. The vessels were weighed and the weight duly recorded.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem Erza learned that the former company had inter-married with the people of the land. This caused much sorrow on his part; sorrow which caused him to make a prayer of confession and intercession to God. Ezra then called upon the people to put away the "strange wives" from them, a thing which they did.

The book ends with religious reform being accomplished, giving a list of those who had foriegn wives.

PLACE OF THE BOOK IN THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION:

The book shows the providence of God in keeping his people, the Jews, alive though captive. It shows the restoration of them to their land, the land promised through Abraham, in which they would dwell until the Messiah should come.

It further points out that God will have His way in the lives of those who will submit to him.

FINAL OBSERVATION:

In chapter seven and verse ten we have set forth the natural and

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logical order of one's response to God's word. Here it is stated, "For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances."

It is my conviction that many church problems would be immediately dissolved if this formula were adhered to today.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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