

Who Returned? Ezra 2:1-70 Explained

Scriptures for Today: Ezra 2:1-70

""Ezra 2:1-70

Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; 2 Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: 3 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. 4 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. 5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. 6 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. 7 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 8 The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. 9 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. 10 The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. 11 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. 12 The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. 13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. 14 The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. 15 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. 16 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. 17 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. 18 The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve. 19 The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. 20 The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. 21 The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty and three. 22 The men of Netophah, fifty and six. 23 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. 24 The children of Azmaveth, forty and two. 25 The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three. 26 The children of Ramah and Geba, six hundred twenty and one. 27 The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two. 28 The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. 29 The children of Nebo, fifty and two. 30 The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six. 31 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 32 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. 33 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. 34 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. 35 The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty. 36 The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. 37 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. 38 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. 39 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen. 40 The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. 41 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight. 42 The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, in all an hundred thirty and nine. 43 The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, 44 The children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon, 45 The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, 46 The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmai, the children of Hanan, 47 The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, 48 The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, 49 The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, 50 The children of Asnah, the children of Mehumim, the children of

Nephusim, 51 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, 52 The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, 53 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah, 54 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha. 55 The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda, 56 The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, 57 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami. 58 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two. 59 And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel: 60 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. 61 And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: 62 These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. 63 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim. 64 The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, 65 Beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women. 66 Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; 67 Their camels, four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty. 68 And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: 69 They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments. 70 So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.'"

Introduction — From Glory to Ruin to Remnant

To understand Ezra 2, we must feel the weight of what happened before it. Israel once stood at the height of glory under David and Solomon. The Temple was built. The presence of God filled the house. Silver was abundant. Enemies were subdued.

But the nation drifted. Idolatry crept in. Kings rebelled. Prophets warned. The people refused. Judgment came. Babylon invaded. Jerusalem burned. The Temple was destroyed. The people were carried away.

What once was glory became rubble. But God had promised through Jeremiah that exile would not be the end.

""Jeremiah 29:10

For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.'"

Ezra 2 is that return. It is not flashy. It is not dramatic. It is a list of names. But it is one of the most powerful chapters in the Old Testament. Because it proves this: God did not forget His people.

The Return Identified

""Ezra 2:1-2

Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; 2 Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:""

“These are the children of the province.” They are no longer an independent kingdom. They are under Persia. Sin reduced them. But notice this: “They went up out of the captivity.” They were carried away. Now they rise up and return.

Exile was judgment. Return is mercy. And God names their leaders. Zerubbabel — from David’s royal line. Jeshua — the high priest. The kingly line survived. The priestly line survived. God preserved structure through judgment. And that line will continue until Jesus Christ is born.

Now, look closely there at verse 2. This is not a random list of travelers. This is structured leadership. Zerubbabel stands first because he is the governor — a descendant of David, serving under Persian authority. The throne of Israel is gone, but the Davidic line is not. God preserved it.

Then you see Jeshua, the high priest, son of Jozadak, from the line of Aaron. The royal line survived. The priestly line survived. Civil leadership and spiritual leadership stand side by side at the beginning of restoration. That pairing is not accidental. God restores order before He restores walls.

The other names listed are not filler. These are recognized heads — leading men, family representatives, organizing leaders of the returning remnant. This was not a mob wandering back to ruins. This was a structured return under identified leadership. Exile scattered them, but restoration regathered them with order. That matters.

God does not rebuild His people through chaos. He rebuilds through covenant structure, through named leaders, through recognized responsibility. Ezra lists them because restoration begins with order.

The Families of Israel

""Ezra 2:3-35

The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. 4 The children of

Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. 5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. 6 The children of Pahathmoab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. 7 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 8 The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. 9 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. 10 The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. 11 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. 12 The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. 13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. 14 The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. 15 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. 16 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. 17 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. 18 The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve. 19 The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. 20 The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. 21 The children of Bethlehem, an hundred twenty and three. 22 The men of Netophah, fifty and six. 23 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. 24 The children of Azmaveth, forty and two. 25 The children of Kirjatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three. 26 The children of Ramah and Geba, six hundred twenty and one. 27 The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two. 28 The men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. 29 The children of Nebo, fifty and two. 30 The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six. 31 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 32 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. 33 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. 34 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. 35 The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty.'"

Why record all of this? Because God wasn't just restoring a nation — He was restoring families. It is families. It is names. It is households. God counts them. This is important to God. Your name and your family is important to God. Exile did not erase their identity.

Babylon did not erase who these people were. They return "every one unto his city." They are going back to the land God gave their fathers. This isn't just people moving from one country to another. This is God bringing His people back home.

The Priests

""Ezra 2:36–39

The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. 37 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. 38 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. 39 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.'"

They didn't rebuild houses first. They didn't start with walls. They started with the priests. Why? Because if you don't fix worship, nothing else matters. You can have walls and still be wrong with God. You can have houses and still be under judgment.

The first thing that had to be right was the altar. Because without sacrifice, there is no forgiveness. And without forgiveness, there is no future. So before they rebuilt the city, they made sure worship was back in place.

Levites, Singers, and Gatekeepers

""Ezra 2:40-42

The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. 41 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight. 42 The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, in all an hundred thirty and nine.""

Notice something here. There are only seventy-four Levites. That's small compared to the thousands of families listed earlier. That should get your attention. The spiritual leadership was thin. Exile had taken a toll. But they came back. The singers came back. The gatekeepers came back.

The people who led worship and guarded the house of God showed up. That tells you something. They weren't just rebuilding houses. They were putting worship back in place. They understood that if the house of God was going to stand again, someone had to sing, someone had to serve, and someone had to guard it.

The Temple Servants

""Ezra 2:43-58

The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, 44 The children of Keros, the children of Siahah, the children of Padon, 45 The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, 46 The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmi, the children of Hanan, 47 The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, 48 The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, 49 The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, 50 The children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim, 51 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, 52 The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, 53 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah, 54 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha. 55 The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda, 56 The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, 57 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami. 58 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two.""

This section lists the temple servants, called Nethinims, and the servants of Solomon. These were not famous men. They were workers. They carried, cleaned, guarded, prepared — they did the jobs nobody notices. But God lists them by name.

He records the governor. He records the priests. And He records the workers. That tells you something. God does not just care about the leaders. He cares about the people who serve. When He brings restoration, He brings back everyone — not just the visible names, but the faithful hands.

The Uncertain Genealogies

""Ezra 2:59–63

And these were they which went up from Telmelah, Telharsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel: 60 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. 61 And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: 62 These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. 63 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.""

This part is serious. Some of these men said they were priests, but they could not prove it. Their names were not found in the records. And because of that, they were not allowed to serve.

That might sound harsh, but it wasn't personal — it was necessary. You don't just claim priesthood. You don't just step into holy service because you say you belong there. It had to be verified.

God's house was not going to be rebuilt on guesses and assumptions. If worship was going to be restored, it had to be done the right way.

The Total

""Ezra 2:64–67

The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, 65 Beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women. 66 Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; 67 Their camels, four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.""

Look at the total. Forty-two thousand three hundred and threescore. Add the servants, and you're close to fifty thousand people. That sounds like a lot — until you remember what Israel used to be. In the days of David and Solomon, the nation was massive. Armies in the hundreds of thousands. Cities full. Influence everywhere. Now? Fifty thousand come back.

This is not the old kingdom. This is a small group walking into ruins. But don't miss this — God has always worked through smaller numbers. It only takes a remnant that is willing. It only takes a group that will obey. The strength of restoration was not in their size. It was in the fact that God brought them back.

Freewill Offering

""Ezra 2:68-70

And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: 69 They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments. 70 So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.""

When they arrived in Jerusalem, the first thing they did wasn't build houses for themselves. It wasn't secure property lines. It wasn't rebuild defenses. They gave. They looked at the ruins of the house of the LORD, and they gave what they could.

Gold. Silver. Garments for the priests. They didn't wait until everything was stable. They didn't say, "Let's get settled first." They put God's house first.

Now think about that and think about today's world. The church would come behind most things for most people and most families. They would always make sure they are okay first before they think about their church. It's true. But that's not how it should be for God's people. And most people don't like that in today's world. "Never put the church above your own things."

That's the attitude of this world and all the Christian's out there. And that shows you the difference here in Ezra and the difference in these people. After they had lost everything, they knew who they needed to put first. We don't quite get it because we haven't lost everything. But this is a warning for that today.

Their hearts were right before their walls were rebuilt. They understood that if anything was going to stand again, it had to start with honoring the Lord. So they gave according to their ability. Not because they were rich. Not because it was easy. But because they knew what mattered most.

Practical Applications

- 1. God does not forget His people.** This chapter is a long list of names for a reason. Babylon tried to erase them. Exile scattered them. The Temple was burned. The city was flattened. But God still knew exactly who belonged to Him. Every family. Every household. Every servant. They may have felt small in Babylon, but they were never forgotten in heaven. Just because the world pushes you aside does not mean God has misplaced you.
- 2. If you are going to rebuild, you have to know who you are.** They didn't just wander back randomly. They went back to their cities. They went back to where their fathers had lived. They remembered where they came from. You cannot rebuild your future if you've forgotten your foundation. That's why genealogy mattered. That's why records mattered. Identity mattered. If you don't know who you are before God, you won't rebuild correctly.

3. **Put worship first or nothing else will stand.** Look at the order. Priests. Levites. Singers. Gatekeepers. Before walls. Before houses. Before security. They made sure the house of God would function again. Because if worship is wrong, everything else eventually collapses. You can rebuild a city and still be spiritually empty. They understood that if God was not in the center, the rest of it was pointless.
4. **Don't despise small beginnings.** Forty-two thousand sounds impressive until you compare it to what Israel once was. This was not the glory days of Solomon. This was a small group walking into rubble. But God has never needed the majority to work. He works through those who return. He works through those who obey. It only takes a willing remnant for God to start rebuilding.

Conclusion

Ezra 2 is not just a list of names. It is a picture of God bringing His people back when they deserved to be finished. The city was destroyed. The Temple was gone. They had been carried away in chains. But God was not done with them. He kept His word. He brought them home. He rebuilt through a remnant. And He knew exactly who belonged to Him.

That is what this chapter shows us. Judgment is real. Consequences are real. But if God says there will be a return, there will be a return. Exile was not the end of their story — and it is not the end when God is still involved.

This is the roll call of people who came back. And God still calls people back. If you've been going the wrong way, it's time to get the priorities back in order.

Let's pray.