

## **Dr. Tiberius Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 2, Ezra 3-4**

### **Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

#### **1. Abstract of Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 2, Ezra 3-4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

Dr. Tiberius Rata's lecture discusses Ezra chapters 5-6, focusing on the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem after a 16-year delay. The lecture highlights the roles of prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who inspired Zerubbabel and Jeshua to resume the project. Opposition from Persian governor Tattenai led to an appeal to King Darius, who, after reviewing historical records, authorized the temple's completion. The lecture concludes with a description of the temple's dedication and the celebratory Passover feast, emphasizing God's providence in using pagan rulers to fulfill his purposes.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Rata, Session 2 – Double click icon to play in Windows  
media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and  
click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical  
Books → Ezra/Nehemiah).**



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### 3. Briefing Document: Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 2, Ezra 3-4

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Tiberius Rata's teaching on Ezra 3-4:

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Tiberius Rata on Ezra 3-4

##### Introduction:

This document summarizes the key points from Dr. Tiberius Rata's second session on the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, focusing on Ezra chapters 3 and 4. Rata highlights the spiritual reformation at the heart of the return from exile, the importance of worship, and the opposition faced during the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. He also draws parallels between the events in Ezra and the Exodus event, and emphasizes the timeless lessons that these passages provide.

##### Key Themes and Ideas:

1. **Spiritual Reformation as Primary:** Rata emphasizes that while there is physical rebuilding, the core focus of Ezra is a spiritual reformation, starting with a return to worship and sacrifice.
  - **Quote:** "Remember that Ezra deals with a spiritual reformation; there is a physical reformation as well, but again, there is a spiritual reformation that's important here, and as we can see here, it starts with the sacrifices to God."
  - **Implication:** The return is not just about rebuilding structures but about restoring a proper relationship with God through obedience and worship.
1. **Reinstating Sacrificial System:** A major aspect of the spiritual reformation is the rebuilding of the altar and the reinstitution of sacrifices, according to the Law of Moses.
  - **Quote:** "The first thing they did was build the altar... To offer burnt offerings on it as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God."
  - **Importance:** The sacrifices are a central element of worship and signify a return to obedience to God's commandments. The reference to "the law of Moses" is significant in refuting the JADP hypothesis.
  - **Specific Actions:** The people build the altar, offer burnt offerings morning and evening, and observe festivals including the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths).

1. **Unity and Purpose:** The people's unified effort in returning and rebuilding reveals their commitment to God and their purpose.
  - **Quote:** "The Bible says they came as one man, shows their unity of heart and purpose."
  - **Significance:** Unity of purpose among God's people is key to achieving God's work and a sign of spiritual renewal.
  
1. **The Importance of Obedience to the Law:** The returnees show great commitment to obeying even the smallest details of the Law of Moses, understanding that it's directly correlated with God's blessing.
  - **Quote:** "Now, they desire to obey the law even in the smallest of details. And they understand because they understand that in the Law of Moses, there was a strict correlation between obeying the law and God's blessings."
  
1. **The Significance of Festivals:** The re-establishment of festivals, especially the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) is a key aspect of remembering God's provision during the Exodus.
  - **Quote:** "It was primarily a Thanksgiving festival to the Lord, a way of showing gratitude to God for His provision during the Exodus event."
  - **Joy:** The theme of joy is connected with the festivals; this is the only festival where the Israelites were commanded to rejoice before the Lord, a theme which continues in Nehemiah.
  
1. **Freewill Offerings:** Beyond required sacrifices, freewill offerings are a spontaneous expression of gratitude and a sign of a living faith.
  - **Quote:** "The soul of the worshiper might simply be overflowing with joy over God and His benefits. Such freewill offerings were the essence of a living faith."
  - **Application:** This should be a daily attitude of thanksgiving, not just something done during special festivals.
  
1. **Preparation for Temple Building:** The sourcing of materials and labor for the new temple mirrors the preparations for the original Temple of Solomon.
  - **Quote:** "What we see here is that the preparation for the building of the temple parallels the building of the original temple during the Solomonic era."

- **Details:** This includes the use of cedar from Lebanon, employing masons and carpenters, and obtaining funding and authorization from the Persian king Cyrus.
1. **Rebuilding Begins:** The temple foundation is laid in the second year of their return, accompanied by praise and worship, signifying both a physical and a spiritual restoration.
    - **Quote:** "So again, we see both a physical restoration, but also, we see the spiritual dimension of the restoration."
    - **Worship:** This includes priests, Levites, trumpets, and the singing of "His steadfast love endures forever."
  1. **Mixed Reactions to Temple Foundation:** While some celebrated, older members who had seen the former glory of Solomon's temple wept upon seeing the relatively modest foundation, recognizing it would not match the splendor of the original.
    - **Quote:** "There were some old people who saw the glory of the first house, and now when they see the second one, the bible says, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid."
    - **Lesson:** This leads to the question of whether people can learn from the past without being held back by it.
  1. **Worship as a Response:** Worship is defined as a response to God's character and actions.
    - **Quote:** "Worship should be a response to who God is and what he has done."
    - **Worship Beyond Music:** Rata notes that worship involves more than just music, but also teaching, giving, and bringing oneself as a living sacrifice.
  1. **Opposition to God's Work:** Chapter 4 introduces the theme of opposition from those who claim to worship the same God but have different motivations.
    - **Quote:** "Chapter four talks about the source of opposition, the persistence of opposition, the many faces of opposition and then the consequences of opposition."
    - **Source:** The opposition comes from people who had been placed in the land by previous Assyrian leaders and who also worshiped other gods. They are later identified as Samaritans.

- **Discerning Spirits:** The leaders of Israel display discernment to see that these individuals were not genuine, and that God's work must be done only by the people of God.
1. **Persistent Opposition:** Opposition tactics include discouragement, fear, and bribery of officials to hinder the building.
    - **Quote:** "The people of the land discouraged the people of Judah (verse 4), made them afraid to build, and bribed counselors to frustrate their purpose from the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, until the reign of Darius, king of Persia."
    - **Implication:** Opposition to God's work is common, but it should not be viewed as a sign of doing something wrong.
  1. **Many Faces of Opposition:** The opposition uses Aramaic in letters to the king, portraying the rebuilders as rebellious and wicked, attempting to manipulate the king with lies.
    - **Quote:** "When you reject the truth, you have to replace it with a lie. And that's exactly what's happening here."
    - **Motivation:** The opponents' motivation is financial, as they fear losing taxes if the city is rebuilt.
  1. **Temporary Setback:** The king orders the work to cease, showing the temporary success of the opposition, although it is short lived in the long run.
    - **Chronological Note:** Rata highlights the non-chronological structure in Ezra 4, which jumps back in time to show that the opposition occurred before the completion of the temple. This is to highlight that despite opposition, God's work will continue.
    - **God's Work Will Prevail:** Rata concludes by emphasizing that despite opposition, God's work will ultimately succeed, and that even amidst the battle, the Christian should be encouraged.
    - **Quote:** "But even so, God's work will go on, and God will succeed because it's not God's, it's not man's. It's God's work."
    - **Christian Life:** The Christian life is portrayed not as a playground, but a battlefield. Opposition should be expected, but is not the final word.

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Rata's session on Ezra 3-4 underscores the critical link between spiritual renewal and outward actions, and the inevitable opposition faced when following God. The return from exile is portrayed as a journey of faith, marked by a renewed commitment to worship, obedience, and the acknowledgment that God's steadfast love endures forever. Rata uses historical context to draw lessons relevant to Christian living today, reminding listeners of the need for discernment, a daily attitude of thanksgiving, and unwavering faith that God's work will succeed despite opposition.

## 4. Study Guide: Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 2, Ezra 3-4

### Ezra-Nehemiah Study Guide: Session 2, Ezra 3-4

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What was the first action the returning Israelites took upon arriving in Jerusalem, and why was it significant?
2. What is the significance of mentioning "the law of Moses" in the context of rebuilding the altar, and what does it suggest about the time period?
3. Who were the "people of the lands" who caused fear among the returning Israelites, and why were they opposed to the rebuilding efforts?
4. What three major festivals did the Israelites observe after their return, and what did these festivals represent?
5. What does the text suggest about the nature and purpose of the freewill offerings?
6. How did the preparations for the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra 3 parallel the construction of Solomon's temple?
7. Describe the mixed reaction of the people when the foundation of the second temple was laid, and what does it reveal about their experiences?
8. Who were the primary adversaries who opposed the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra 4, and what were their motivations?
9. What tactics did the adversaries use to hinder the rebuilding of the temple, and how were they effective?
10. How does the narrative in Ezra 4 shift chronologically, and what is the purpose of this shift?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The first action was rebuilding the altar for sacrifices. This was significant because it re-established their worship practices and marked the beginning of their spiritual reformation.

2. Mentioning the law of Moses emphasizes the established nature of God's law by this time and highlights the parallel between the exodus and the return as significant moments in their history. It also works against the JADP.
3. The "people of the lands" were non-Yahweh worshipers, including those from surrounding nations like Ammon, Moab, Edom, Samaria, and Egypt. Their opposition stemmed from their own religious differences and the threat the rebuilding posed to them.
4. The Israelites observed the Feast of Booths, the Passover, and the Day of Atonement. These festivals were key elements of worship that marked the spiritual reformation. They also served as a form of thanksgiving for God's provision during the exodus.
5. Freewill offerings were spontaneous acts of worship and gratitude to God. They represented a living faith that responded to God's work and benefits daily, beyond just annual feasts.
6. The preparations included hiring masons and carpenters, acquiring cedar from Lebanon, and paying for the materials with food, drink, and oil, all of which mirror those used during Solomon's time.
7. The older generation wept with disappointment due to the second temple's perceived lack of glory compared to the first, while the younger generation rejoiced with excitement over the rebuilding effort. This mixed response reveals the varied experiences and perspectives of the people.
8. The primary adversaries were the Samaritans and other foreigners who had been settled in the land during the exile. They were motivated by a combination of religious opposition, as well as the fear of losing power, prestige, and wealth.
9. The adversaries used tactics of discouragement, fear, corruption, and lies. They bribed counselors, wrote false accusations to the king, and employed propaganda that ultimately caused the work to cease.
10. The narrative shifts chronologically by moving from the time of Artaxerxes back to the time of Darius. This is done to emphasize that even though there was opposition, the work still continued, and God's work will always prevail.



## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer each question with a well-developed essay of approximately 4-5 paragraphs.

1. Analyze the relationship between worship and the restoration of the temple in Ezra 3. How does the text demonstrate the connection between physical and spiritual restoration?
2. Compare and contrast the perspectives of the older and younger generations at the laying of the second temple's foundation. What does their reaction tell us about the nature of tradition and faith?
3. Discuss the various ways in which the adversaries attempted to stop the rebuilding efforts. What does this reveal about the nature of opposition to God's work?
4. Evaluate the significance of the chronological anomalies in Ezra 4. How does this contribute to the author's message about the sovereignty of God?
5. Drawing from the text of Ezra 3-4, how can the lessons of the returning exiles apply to the modern follower of Christ? What timeless truths can be gleaned from this narrative?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Altar:** A structure used for offering sacrifices to God. In Ezra 3, its rebuilding was the first step to re-establishing worship.
- **Burnt Offerings:** Sacrifices completely consumed by fire, signifying atonement for sin and devotion to God. These were performed daily.
- **Feast of Booths (Tabernacles):** A festival of thanksgiving to God for his provision during the Exodus, and one of the three most important celebrations. It is a time of rejoicing and remembering.
- **Freewill Offerings:** Voluntary acts of worship made out of joy and gratitude to God. These could be given anytime.
- **JADP (Documentary Hypothesis):** A theory suggesting that the Pentateuch was compiled from several distinct sources written centuries after the time of Moses.
- **Hesed:** A Hebrew word often translated as "steadfast love," "loyal love," or "loving kindness," referring to God's covenantal love for His people.
- **Lingua Franca:** A language used for commerce and common understanding between peoples who speak different languages. In the time of Ezra, Aramaic was the lingua franca of the Near East.
- **Samaritans:** A mixed population living in the northern part of the former kingdom of Israel. They were partly descended from non-Israelite peoples.
- **Tishri:** The seventh month of the Jewish calendar (roughly September/October), which includes significant festivals like Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the Feast of Tabernacles.
- **Yahweh:** The personal name of the God of Israel. Sometimes used in contrast with the more general word for God, Elohim.

## 5. FAQs on Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 2, Ezra 3-4, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ: Ezra 3-4: Rebuilding, Worship, and Opposition

1. **Why was rebuilding the altar such a significant first step for the returned exiles, and what did it symbolize?** The rebuilding of the altar was crucial because it allowed the returnees to reinstitute the sacrificial system, which was central to their worship of God. It symbolized their return to covenant obedience, their renewed dedication to Yahweh, and a re-establishment of their spiritual life after the exile. The altar, placed outside the temple, facilitated burnt offerings as prescribed in the Law of Moses, reinforcing the connection to the Exodus event and God's established laws.
2. **What is the significance of the seventh month (Tishri) in Ezra 3, and which feasts were observed at this time?** The seventh month, Tishri (roughly September/October), was significant because it was a time for major Jewish feasts. The returned exiles observed Rosh Hashanah (the New Year), the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths). These feasts were not just cultural celebrations, but a means to show gratitude, seek atonement, and remember God's provision, particularly his deliverance during the Exodus.
3. **How did the returnees' observance of feasts and offering of sacrifices demonstrate their understanding of worship?** The returnees' meticulous observance of feasts and sacrifices illustrated that worship was not merely ritualistic but a response to God's character and actions. They followed the Law of Moses, understanding the connection between obedience and God's blessings. Their freewill offerings further emphasized a personal, heartfelt gratitude to God, showcasing that worship should be an attitude of thanksgiving present in all times. This demonstrated a vibrant, living faith rather than just rote tradition.
4. **What parallels can be drawn between the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra and the construction of Solomon's temple?** The preparations for the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra closely mirrored the construction of Solomon's temple. Both involved the use of skilled masons and carpenters, procuring valuable cedar wood from Lebanon, and providing payment through food, drink, and oil. The project was also commenced in the second month of the year, just like Solomon's project.

The inclusion of names of the leaders and specific divine names ("Yahweh" and "Elohim") also connect the projects.

5. **Why did some of the people weep while others rejoiced at the laying of the temple foundation, and what lesson can be learned from this?** The older generation who had seen the splendor of Solomon's temple wept because the foundation of the new temple seemed inferior in comparison. They recognized the rebuilt structure would not match the former glory. However, the younger generation rejoiced, embracing the new start and demonstrating gratitude for what God was doing in the present. The lesson is that while it is good to learn from the past, we should not let the past hinder our joy or God's current work.
6. **What were the sources and tactics of the opposition the returnees faced in Ezra 4?** The opposition came from foreigners who had been settled in the land during the exile, notably the Samaritans. They initially offered to help with the temple building, claiming to worship the same God, but their true motives were to sabotage the project. Their tactics included discouragement, instilling fear, corrupting counselors through bribery, and ultimately writing false accusations to the Persian king, portraying the rebuilt city as rebellious to prevent its restoration.
7. **How does Ezra 4 show the persistence and many faces of opposition to God's work?** Ezra 4 portrays persistent opposition through various means. It spanned multiple rulers, from the reign of Cyrus to Darius and Ahasuerus, showing a continuity of hostility. The methods of opposition also varied, including subtle discouragement, fear-mongering, bribery, false accusations, and political maneuvering through writing royal decrees. This illustrates that opposition to God's work can take many forms and is not a one-time event, but rather a constant struggle.
8. **What is the key takeaway regarding opposition to God's work, as highlighted in Ezra 3 and 4?** The key takeaway is that opposition to God's work is not unusual, and it does not indicate that one is doing something wrong, rather, it often is a sign that one is doing something right. This opposition is persistent, employs lies and corrupt means, and can seem to be successful temporarily. However, ultimately, God's work will prevail because it is His, not man's, and that brings comfort and encouragement to believers. The Christian life is likened to a battlefield, where we must persevere, knowing that in the end, God's will and promises will be fulfilled.