

ARE WE

**And the God who forgives,
allows do-overs, keeps covenant**



Ezra and the God who ...

... forgives, allows do-overs, keeps covenant

- **God forgives** • the necessity of forgiveness in view of **God's expectations**
- **God allows do-overs** • the privilege and obligation of **starting anew**
- **God keeps covenant** • forgiveness & do-overs flow from **keeping covenant**



Introduction

What's Ezra about?

- **Israel's history**
 - **Past**
 - **Present**
 - **Future**



Introduction

What's Ezra about?

- **Israel's history**
 - **Past** • Abraham & covenant -> Moses & law -> Canaan -> Judges -> United kingdom -> Divided kingdom -> Captivity/exile
 - **Present** • All Israel released from captivity -> struggling to rebuild and restart what once was **physically** (Jerusalem and temple) • **spiritually** (worship, holiness, faithfulness)
 - **Future** • overcome “bad” history -> be satisfied with being a “lesser” nation -> be **faithful** to God -> **wait** for Messiah



Introduction

What's Ezra about?

- **God's expectations for Israel**
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Introduction

What's Ezra about?

- **God's expectations for Israel**
 - **Past** • God's covenant with Abraham -> bless all nations through him (-> Isaac -> Israel) -> Christ
 - **Present** • **restore** Israel (remnant) • **rebuild** the temple • **restart** worship • **restore** character (be holy/faithful)
 - **Future** • providentially sustain/protect Israel -> leading to Messiah's arrival



Ezra and the God who ...

Forgives

- **God knows** • our frame, we are but dust -> we can be tempted -> we can succumb to temptation -> we can become guilty of sin, alienated from God
- **God knows** • that ...
 - We **cannot** forgive ourselves • that we cannot **earn** forgiveness in any way
 - That **only** he can forgive • "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mk 2.7)



Ezra and the God who ...

Forgives

- **God's nature** • **always** forgiving
 - “To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.” (Dan 9.9)
 - “They refused to obey, And they were not mindful of Your wonders That You did among them. But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion They appointed a leader To return to their bondage. But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness, And did not forsake them.” (Neh 9.17)



Ezra and the God who ...

Allows Do-Overs

- **God knows that ...**
 - We can sin • We will/do sin • We will need forgiveness
 - We will only be what God wants us to be on an ongoing basis if ...
 - We are **aware** of our sin • **Repent** of our sin • **Seek** God's forgiveness
 - To be acceptable in his sight ...
 - We must not only be forgiven by him ...
 - We must **return** to where we were/what we were doing before we sinned



Ezra and the God who ...

Allows Do-Overs

- **Ezra is, in large measure ...**
 - An account of Israel's "do over"
 - In fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy, God moved Cyrus to "free" Israel
 - Cyrus directed Israel to **return** to Judah
 - Cyrus directed Israel to **rebuild** the temple
 - Ezra documents ...
 - The names of those returning • Restoration of worship • Rebuilding the temple
 - Challenges to overcome • Ezra's return • Repentance of intermarriages, etc.



Ezra and the God who ...

Keeps Covenant

- **God to Noah** • Gen 9.12ff
- **God to Abraham** • Gen 17.7ff
- **God to Israel/Moses** • Ex 2.24ff
- **God to Israel after Israel sinned against God:** “Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.” (Lev 26.44-45, Neh 1.5, 1 Jn 2.1ff)

