**Who’s Who**

Ezra 2 (Simple Inductive)

**Topic:**  Faithfulness

**Subject:** We will live lives of worship and obedience in response to God’s faithfulness

**Complement:** When we recognise his faithfulness through the bringing of Israel back from

exile.

**Purpose:** Audience to remember that God is faithful, and they should live lives of

 worship and obedience.

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| **Intro**  |
| 1. Arouse interest 2. Raise need | * Why bother with a long list of names we cannot pronounce?

We heard about how genealogies can be evangelistic tools for some people groups. But for most of us, it is a sure tool to bring us to sleep. So why waste precious real estate in the bible? In Ezra chapter 2 alone, 90% of the verses are primarily listings of people. * Well, most of us presented projects on different parts of Singapore recently.

We dug up loads of information on the population. Actually, each year before the population statistics is released, a lot of work would have gone into finding real people to put a face to the information. We call these human interest stories, because they turn dry information into stories of lives. In a similar way, genealogies in the Bible not only highlight the truthfulness of what we are reading, but also provide a human face to the point God is making.  |
|  | * So what can we learn from Ezra chapter 2?
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| 3. Subject  | * Seeing how God treated the people of Israel in the past will help us better appreciate his character and anticipate how he will treat us.
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| Subject restatement | * Seeing how the Lord was faithful to his covenant with Israel

by bringing them back from captivity, tells us, He too will be faithful in his promises to us as well.  |
| 4. Pray  | * Before we dig into the text, let us pray.
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| 5. Background | * In the Old Testament, Ezra is placed after the book of 2 Chronicles, because if it forms what is part of the post-exilic history books.
* We read in Daniel that Israel’s disobedience led them to captivity in Babylon.
* In time, Babylonia power waned, and the Medo-Persian empire took over.

When the Persians took over, Cyrus encouraged the peoples he conquered to develop their own culture and continue their religion. * It is no wonder, that we’ve heard Peng Chye share from chapter 1 about Cyrus letting the people return to the land, along with articles taken from the temple.
	+ It is here that we start Ezra chapter 2.
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| 5. Preview Passage | * Since in the earlier part of the worship service we have read Ezra 2, let us jump straight into the text.
* Please keep your Bibles open to Ezra chapter 2 as we explore what it says.
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| **MP I : God is faithful to His covenant by bringing Israel back from exile (1).**  |
| RSP-I ASP-I B | * Verse 1 reads:

“Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia.” * “Now” “kai,” – whether in English or Greek, there is a subtle reference back to the first chapter –
	+ reminding us of verse 1:

“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation”; * + reminding us that it was the Lord who brought the people back from exile.
* In fact, despite the long years,
	+ the Lord had not forgotten about the people of Israel;
	+ that the Lord had not forgotten about his covenant with Israel.
* In fact, Moses had prophetically talked about this situation way back in Deuteronomy 4.
	+ He not only predicts Israel’s disobedience and exile,
	+ but also a bringing back from exile,
	+ because the Lord will not forget his covenant with Israel.
* The same God who brought Israel back from exile,
	+ the God who does not forget his covenant,
	+ is still the same faithful God we worship.
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| T | * Just like the human interest stories in our newspapers, God is not vague about the people who are in a relationship with Him.
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| **MP II : Details of people whom the Lord brought back (2-67).**  |
| TSP II-A | * This is shown by the long list of names in versus 2-67.

The list can be divided in four sections. * First, right at the start, in verse 2,

a list of the leaders who are named individually,that is, unlike subsequent sections, they are not grouped by families or roles. * Perhaps giving honour by placing them at the start of the roll call, just as we would read the guest-of-honour’s name first when making a dinner speech.
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|  | * Next, from verses 3-35

we have a listing of people according to families and location of homes.  |
|  | * Then, in verses 36-58 and 64-67, another chunk of people were listed by their roles and functions.
	+ v36 – priests
	+ v40 – Levites
	+ v43 – temple servants
	+ v64 – servants
	+ v65 – singers
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| Explanation | * What is the big idea behind this detailed breakdown?
	+ Tyndale Old Testament commentary says:

The thousands of homecomers are not lumped together, but (in characteristic biblical fashion) related to those local and family circles which humanize a society and orientate an individual… That is true from an individual, post-modern focus on the person. * There is more – The New American Commentary draws out:

[postexilic community] represented the continuation of God’s redemptive plan. God’s providential care is repeatedly emphasized… In fact, the author emphasized that God can use even foreign rulers to fulfil his purposes for the Jewish community… This continuation of the people of God also meant continuation of the covenant. In other words, the list reinforces the idea of a covenantal relationship between God and His people. * On a side note, the list of names also reminds us of the Abrahamic promise that Israel will be a blessing to the nations.
	+ For example, these two families that were previously prisons of war, but now included in this community brought out of exile by the Lord.
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| T SP-II BT | * In contrast, there is also a negative list in verses 59-63,

of people who could not serve as priests because they were considered unclean or could not prove their priestly status. * This is not just not having your name in a list –
	+ it meant these people could not serve in the temple;
	+ it meant they have no means of livelihood.
	+ Why? Hubbard and Barker’s Word Biblical Commentary explains that the concern for racial purity is more serious with priests because they might desecrate the cult.
* So while God is faithful, there is a right response required of us.
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| **Conclusion (68-70).**  |
| 1.  | * Now, let we see how the Israelites correctly responded to God’s faithfulness.
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| MI | * + v68 they made free-will offerings
	+ v69 they gave to the work of the rebuilding
	+ v70 Now the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all the rest of Israel in their towns.
		- This description of the living arrangement indicates a submission to God’s order;
		- in other words, obedience to God.
* The example that the Israelites set out for us here therefore is,
	+ Living lives of worship and obedience in response to God’s faithfulness.
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| T2. R | * For our part, that means:

that just as we see God’s faithfulness to Israel,we can recognise that it is the same God who is faithful to us. * And just like the Israelites, let us offer ourselves and our possessions to the work of the Lord
* Let us be obedient in the places He has placed us.
	+ Studying hard as SBC students;
	+ Serving well in the churches and homes He has place us in.
* Living lives of worship and obedience in response to God’s faithfulness.
	+ What is one area you can work on? Start now.
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