

Ezra and Nehemiah

David Rountree

Name and Introduction

1. Formerly one book (Ezra) → 1 & 2 Ezra → 1560 Geneva Bible = Ezra and Nehemiah
2. Ezra = "help", Nehemiah = "Yahweh comforts"
3. Israel captured by Assyria in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:4-6)
4. Judah captured by Babylon in 586 BC (2 Kings 25)
5. Cyrus of Persia issued the decree to return in 538 BC.

Outline and Contents

- I. First return from exile in Persia (538 BC). Cyrus was king.
 - a. Return from exile (Ezra 1-2). As many as wanted could return.
 - b. Rebuilding of the Temple led by Zerubbabel (Ezra 3-6).
- II. Second return from exile in Persia (458 BC) Artaxerxes was king.
 - a. Ezra's journey and reforms (Ezra 7-10).
 - b. As many as wanted to go with Ezra were allowed. Ezra developed civil magistrates for God's people in Jerusalem.
- III. Third return from exile in Persia (444BC) Artaxerxes was king.
 - a. Nehemiah leads God's people to rebuild the city wall (Neh. 1-7).
 - b. They make a covenant to keep God's law (Neh. 8-10).
 - c. The walls are dedicated to God (Neh. 11-12).
 - d. Nehemiah visits Jerusalem again for further reforms (Neh. 13).

Other Books Contemporary to Ezra and Nehemiah

1. Esther — she became queen of Persia. Read between Ezra chapters 6 and 7.
2. Haggai and Zechariah — Prophets associated with the first return of Zerubbabel.

A Brief Look at Ezra

1. Ezra 1:1-6
2. Ezra 6:14-15
3. Ezra 7:10

Messages from Ezra

1. God uses Gentiles, even non-Christians to carry out his purposes for the good of his people.
2. God uses those who are faithful to him to reform his people. Why not let him use us?
3. God sends his word to his people to encourage and strengthen them (cf. Haggai 2:1-5; Zechariah 1:6-17).
4. God is concerned that his people overcome all opposition to worship him.

A Brief Look at Nehemiah

1. Nehemiah was a sad cup-bearer (2:1; 1:3,4).
2. Nehemiah was a hard worker (4:6; 21-23; 6:15).
3. Nehemiah sought conformity to the law of God (8:1)

Messages from Nehemiah

1. Zeal to see God's kingdom and people grow and prosper according to the word of God.
2. The importance of prayer and hard work in doing all God requires in his word.
3. Caution. Nehemiah took his time and planned an effective strategy for his work.
4. Courage. Nehemiah was never willing to give up his godly pursuits even though at times he had to stand alone. His position was one of no compromise when he knew what God wanted.