

Correspondence Bible Study

Lesson #14 – Ezra & Nehemiah

PRAYER:

Almighty Father, You restored Your temple and Jerusalem by raising great men to the task. I thank You for restoring me to a right relationship to You through Jesus Christ. Help me to have a deep love for Your laws as did Ezra. Help me to meditate upon it day and night. Show me how to serve You with complete trust and loyalty. In Christ's name. Amen.

Course Notes:

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are a natural follow through of 1 & 2 Chronicles. It is thought the same person could have compiled all four books. Taken all together, the four books trace the history of God's people from Adam through the generations up to about 400 B.C. In that regard, Nehemiah would be the last of the historical books of the Old Testament. The rest of the Old Testament books are about certain people and the roles they played in the history portrayed in Genesis – Nehemiah. In one sense, the initial study of Old Testament history is completed here in Nehemiah. The rest of the books will flesh out the events you have already studied.

As you know. Babylon conquered the southern nations of Judah in 586 B.C. You can be sure that the top priority of God's people was to return and rebuild their fallen nation. Uppermost in their hearts would be to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed. As you will see, there was also a great desire to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls of protection.

Here are the major people, events and dates of Ezra – Nehemiah.

- Fall of Jerusalem 586 B.C.
- Sheshbazzar / Zerubbabel – Return 537 B.C.
(most likely the same person)
- Temple rebuilding begun 586 B.C.
- Temple finally completed – see picture 516 B.C.
- Ezra returns to Jerusalem 458 B.C.
- Nehemiah returns 445 B.C.
- Jerusalem wall rebuilt 445 B.C.

Questions:

1. The nation of Israel was never a world power like Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, or Rome. Often, they were pawns to be controlled by the dominate country. What was the turn of events that helped the captives of Israel in Ezra 1?

2. Ezra 1:1 – The prophecy mentioned from Jeremiah 25:11-12 says they would be captive for _____ Years. There are two ways to see the fulfillment of the prophecy. The first deportation of Israelites by Babylon was in 605 B.C. Those who first returned came in 537 B.C., very close to 70 years. A more exact figure would pertain to the temple. It was destroyed in 586 B.C. and finally rebuilt under Zerubbabel in 516 B.C., exactly 70 years later.

3. Ezra 3, 4, 5, 6 – Zerubbabel was appointed to be like a governor over Judah. What were some of his major accomplishments? (See picture of temple)
4. Ezra 4, 5, 6 – Give some of the reasons there was opposition to the Jews building a new temple?
5. Ezra himself was of the priestly clan. His love was for the Law of God. His return to Judah in 458 B.C. would mark a religious revival. According to Ezra 9 & 10, what were the reforms that needed to be made by the Israelites?
6. Nehemiah would be much like Zerubbabel in his love for his homeland. His goal was to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. In 445 B.C. when he returned, he was appointed governor with authority to carry out his task. Once again, there is opposition. Look in Nehemiah 4 & 6. Why were some opposed to the wall?
7. Nehemiah 4 shows the commitment of the Jews. What did they do to be ready for any trouble?
8. Nehemiah 6 - In one of the greatest feats of determination and cooperation, the walls of Jerusalem were completed in _____ days. What message did this give to those opposed to Israel?
9. Nehemiah 8, 9 & 10 – Ezra reads the Law of God (most likely Genesis-Deuteronomy). After recapping the nation's history from Abraham to the present in chapter 9, the Israelites confess and promise once again to remain true to God, chapter 10. They had done this many times in their history. Do you think this time would be any different?
10. In the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, we see some hints of the legalism that would become the hallmark of the New Testament Pharisees. In the 400 years between these men and Christ the Law of God would become a fetish and a means unto itself. This was never the intent of the Lord. Jesus spent most of His time trying to undo this thinking.

Your questions on Ezra & Nehemiah...

Begin reading Esther.